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BALKAN BATTLE GROUNDS



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

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

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Foreword

Yugoslavia has been identified as one of those places where they produce more history than they can consume locally. In the United States, where widespread and unapologetic ignorance of history is commonplace, the grip of long-ago battles and long-dead kings on the thinking of apparently educated, cultured, Westernized people in the former Yugoslav federation can be baffling. William Faulkner had the old South in mind when he wrote, “The past is not dead. It is not even past,” but his observation certainly applies to the former Yugoslavia as well. To understand the former Yugoslavia’s present and future, therefore, a study of its history becomes essential. Thorough and accurate in its research and analysis, this work aims to advance the reader’s understanding of the military events that have shaped the devolution of Yugoslavia and the evolution of its daughter states.

The United States really has no choice but to try to understand the history of the former Yugoslavia. Since the end of the Cold War, the former Yugoslavia has been the point of origin of new enemies and potential allies. It is the locus of open-ended US military deployments. The former Yugoslavia has become the central issue of US relations with Europe, east and west. All the elements of US national security policy—military, diplomatic, developmental, and intelligence—will most likely have to engage the multifaceted realities of the former Yugoslavia more deeply than with those of happier lands.

To accept that the United States will be a vital part of the postwar shaping of the Balkan states, yet to be in ignorance of what actually went on in the wars that turned Yugoslavia into the former Yugoslavia, would be foolish. Imagine a traveler from those lands stepping off the packet from Trieste to Baltimore in 1866, aware only of newspaper accounts of a long and bloody civil war. He knows who has won, but remains ignorant of the military particulars of the war. This hypothetical traveler would have puzzled at references to Pickett’s Charge, General Sherman and his March to the Sea, or Andersonville and would have been unconscious of the many myths growing from their hard realities. He would not understand that these wars would shape American life, politics, and culture for generations. The wars of the former Yugoslavia had their own versions of all these in full measure. Both myths and realities will shape the futures of these countries.

We are all entitled to our own opinion. We are not entitled to our own history. The misuse of history has been widespread in portrayals of events in the former Yugoslavia. This applies not only to the mythmakers and self-exculpators in the region but also to those watching it from the United

States, as any reading of newspaper op-ed pages during the recent Kosovo crisis would make painfully obvious. The “lessons” of the former Yugoslavia are regularly invoked to demonstrate a wide variety of propositions about an equally wide variety of topics, some appropriate, others less so. If, in the United States, future military and political analysts seek to use these lessons as more than rhetoric, they will have to turn to the history of the recent Balkan wars.

This work, the first comprehensive military analysis of the wars of the former Yugoslavia, aims to present, objectively and analytically, such a history. If the journalistic accounts and contemporaneous analyses of regional specialists were the proverbial first draft of history, then this two-volume book is surely the second. It has used the full spectrum of open sources and a plethora of maps to tell the story of the wars in the former Yugoslavia, from the events leading to the first shots in Slovenia to the Dayton ceasefire in Bosnia. It aims not least at military narrative but also at analyzing the complex parallel processes at work on the battlefield and in the emergence of professional national armed forces. It examines the relationship of local and regional actions and trends within a national and international context. These relations and connections may not have been obvious in the “first draft,” but they are here, set out along with the narrative of military actions and accompanied by detailed maps.

The history of the most prolonged series of armed conflicts in Europe since 1945 has obvious applicability to those who will have to deal with the region. Staff colleges, regional analysts, and others will find this book a framework for contemplating the nature of contemporary and future warfare in the former Yugoslavia and similar regions. They, like the lay readers, will have to deal with the long-lasting results of such emotionally charged military actions as the ethnic cleansing in Bosnia, the siege of Srebrenica, and the Sarajevo marketplace shelling incidents. In these pages they will find the raw material of such events professionally researched, accurately presented, and soberly analyzed.

David C. Isby
Washington DC, 1999

Preface

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

Since the breakup of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in the years 1990-92, much has been written about the genesis of the crisis, the diplomatic efforts to end the ensuing wars, and the war crimes that these wars spawned. Many journalists, and a number of United Nations military officers, have published personal accounts of their time spent in Yugoslavia, Bosnia in particular. To date, however, we know of no comprehensive analysis of the 1990-95 war in Yugoslavia as military history. Our objective in preparing this study was to detail the military events of 1990-1995 and analyze why campaigns and battles proceeded as they did and whether they achieved the political objectives or war aims for which they were fought.

A key goal in our study was to dispel the many myths that have sprung up with regard to the conflict. Chief among these myths is the perception that the war was fought by hordes of heavily armed "paramilitary" thugs, operating outside of any government or only loosely controlled by a government, or that the so-called "armies" consisted of nothing more than loosely organized regional warlords and militias and that it was these thugs who were responsible for the "ethnic cleansing" that infamously distinguished so many of the campaigns. In fact, virtually all of the fighting was done by professionally led, relatively well-organized citizen armies, and the contrary view is largely the product of mirror-imaging by Western officers who regularly disparaged the appearance, discipline, and professionalism of the armies involved. In opposition to these superficial assessments, our research showed that each army quickly developed a regular structure with a centralized staff controlling a hierarchy of formations and units including specialized tactical and support elements, such as air defense, transport, training, military police, and communications. Each force had a defined chain of command and all the features of a regular army, including a general staff that developed operational and tactical doctrines to achieve strategic objectives successfully, a professional or professionalizing officer corps,

procedures for the promotion or replacement of officers, and a training establishment for officers and enlisted personnel. Having evolved from, in many cases, reservist territorial forces and locally formed ad hoc militias who learned their first lessons on the battlefield, these armies did not meet Western professional standards. They were not in business to fight the West, however, only each other, and gauging their military effectiveness by the standards of NATO or the former Warsaw Pact has led to a distorted view of the conflict.

Although there were many highly publicized clashes between civilian and military leaders and occasional claims of “rogue” military commanders acting without political authorization, all of the military forces were subordinate to their civilian leaderships and responded to political direction on key issues:

- *Professionalism and the Officer Corps*: All of the militaries succeeded in professionalizing their officer corps and fighting forces—establishing full-time officer corps functioning in obedience to higher authority and with a common doctrine. Professionalization was largely a “top-down” process, beginning with the senior military leadership (usually former Yugoslav People’s Army officers) and progressing down through the ranks. The armies also formalized their military structures, established and enforced standards of conduct for their officers and troops, and either incorporated independent militias or disbanded those that resisted their control. Discipline might be uneven within individual units of the forces, but military police elements enforced obedience to orders from general staff to brigade level.
- *Military Doctrine*: Although they lacked the doctrinal history and sophistication of Western militaries, the various armies each developed combat doctrines tailored to their military capabilities for the pursuit of defined political-military strategies. The manpower-short Bosnian Serbs, for example, sought to use their advantages in artillery, firepower, mobility, and training to minimize casualties. Conversely, the Bosnian Army consciously adopted a strategy of attrition and limited territorial gains that employed light infantry tactics suited to its superiority in numbers and its deficiencies in equipment.
- *Training*: All of the combatants worked actively to develop a professional officer corps with a uniform program of education. They made the most of the personnel inherited from the Yugoslav People’s Army (JNA) and either used former JNA officer cadre and training schools or established their own training centers for basic and advanced training, officer courses,

and a variety of other schooling. All regularized their rank structures and command organizations. Troop instruction evolved from ad hoc, personal weapons training to moderately effective regular programs including small-unit exercises and preattack rehearsals.

- *Combat Operations:* The scope of combat operations steadily increased during the war, and the adversaries reached the capability of planning and undertaking complex military operations involving tens of thousands of combatants over frontages of dozens or hundreds of kilometers. Coordination and execution of actual operations would still be flawed, but they would be based on a well-established cycle of political direction, planning, instruction, logistic support, and combat.

The myth of the so-called “paramilitaries” has persisted, although few, if any, major independent paramilitary units operated after 1992. Of the original independent forces, nearly all were either incorporated into the contending armies or disbanded; the rest were only nominally independent. Many units that carried odd or irregular unit designators, such as the “Black Swans” or “Panthers,” were former paramilitary units that had been absorbed into the regular armies and were firmly under their command and control. Throughout the war, all of the so-called Serb “paramilitaries” were in fact volunteer units formed by the Yugoslav and Serb armies and attached to regular units or were military formations—such as Arkan’s Serbian Volunteer Guard—covertly formed, trained, and directed by Serbian State Security.

In addition, we believe that misunderstandings regarding the nature of the forces involved have led to a perception in some quarters that the 1990-1995 wars involved a large number of insurgents operating in the mountains as part of a protracted guerrilla war. With the sole exception of the Ten-Day War in Slovenia—which escapes classification—the Balkan conflict involved conventional, positional warfare, more akin to World War I than Tito’s partisan struggles in World War II. Trench and bunker lines, fronted by extensive minefields, faced each other throughout Croatia and Bosnia across a no man’s land that would have looked familiar to men of the 1914-18 war. Until late 1995 most combat operations were attempts to gain control over key roads, hills, and villages a few kilometers or meters from the frontline, not rapid strikes deep into enemy territory.

Finally, in detailing the full extent of the combat operations in Yugoslavia, we hope to take the spotlight off the siege of Sarajevo and place it on the trenches lacing the mountains of Croatia and Bosnia. The status of Sarajevo

was key to the war aims of both the Muslim-led Bosnian Government and the Bosnian Serb Republic, as well as a potent symbol in the West of the wars' brutalities. The presence, however, of Western media in the city—and less frequently, elsewhere—distorted Sarajevo's centrality to the conflict. We hope to refocus attention on other battlefields where the outcome of the war was actually decided.

Given the dearth of primary archival material, the authors' research for this project relied heavily on local and Western daily press accounts—by radio, television, and wire services—contemporary local newspaper or magazine interviews with military commanders, articles in wartime and postwar official military journals, and the memoirs of some of the commanders. Many of the local press reports, articles, and books provided a surprising amount of specific information on military operations, including geographic objectives, order of battle, commanders, and the outcome and aftermath of the operations. The challenge facing the authors was to use their experience as intelligence analysts to ensure that the various unclassified sources they used—primarily of Balkan origin—did not distort the record of events they have attempted to capture.

Typically, in researching an individual campaign or battle, the authors would cull the local daily radio and wire service reports, supplemented by Western press reports, to develop a timeline of military events. These events were then tracked on 1/50,000-scale terrain maps. Comparison of the opposing sides' reports made it possible to deduce the battle's actual evolution and outcome. Contemporary and postwar accounts in military journals, magazines and newspapers, and the published memoirs of leading participants, were used to fill gaps, add unit information, and describe where the battle fit into the overall campaign.

This study is organized in two volumes to make it useful to both the nonspecialist general reader and to professional soldiers, Balkan scholars, and military historians. Volume I is a narrative covering the genesis of Yugoslavia's breakup in 1990 through the end of the Bosnian war in October 1995. It is divided into an introduction and sections covering 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 1995 section that combines Croatia and Bosnia. Volume II, which will appear within a year, consists of a set of annexes covering the 1991 War in Croatia and the 1992-1994 periods of the Bosnian war. These provide more detailed accounts of individual battles, campaigns, and other topics, such as the organization of the Bosnian Serb

Army and the status of the UN Protection Force. Because many parts of Volume I are summaries of an annex in Volume II, the source references are frequently given in the appropriate annex. For the year 1995, however, the authors dispensed with separate annexes and incorporated most of the information that would have been included in an annex within the main text or in supporting endnotes. A separate Map Case accompanies Volume I.

The recent book *Knin Je Pao U Beogradu (Knin Fell in Belgrade)* was received as this study was being prepared for publication, and the authors were unable to fully incorporate information from this book in Volume I. Written by Major General Milisav Sekulic, a senior former Krajina Serb Army Main Staff officer, this book sheds new light on the Krajina Serb Army—especially the July 1995 operation against Bihać and the Croatian offensive against the Krajina in August 1995. As time permits, an addendum in Volume II will address this information.

We gratefully acknowledge our debt to BBC Worldwide Limited/Penguin, and to authors Laura Silber and Allan Little for allowing us to quote liberally from their book, *Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation*, which helped provide much of the political context for our military analysis. We consider their work the best overall account of the conflict yet published, integrating political, military, and humanitarian events into an easily readable narrative. We particularly appreciate their incisive analysis of the origins of the breakup and the events preceding the outbreak of the Croatian war in September 1991. Their study was one of the few to detect the splits between the Yugoslav People's Army and Slobodan Milošević in 1990–1991 and to note that, at least initially, the Yugoslav/Serb side was not a monolith.

The conclusions, judgments, and opinions we have expressed in 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
December 2001

Glossary

Key Military Terms and Equipment

Military Forces and Organizations

ARBiH	<i>Armija Republika Bosna i Hercegovina</i> —Bosnian Army
HV	<i>Hrvatska Vojska</i> —Croatian Army
HRM	<i>Hrvatska Ratna Mornarica</i> —Croatian Navy
HRZ	<i>Hrvatsko ratno zrakoplovstvo</i> —Croatian Air Force
HRZ i PZO	<i>Hrvatsko ratno zrakoplovstvo i protuzracna odbrana</i> —Croatian Air Forces and Air Defense
HVO	<i>Hrvatsko Vijeće Odbrane</i> —Croatian Defense Council/Bosnian Croat Army
JNA	<i>Jugoslovenska Narodna Armija</i> —Yugoslav People's Army (prewar)
JRM	<i>Jugoslovenska Ratna Mornarica</i> —Yugoslav Navy
NDH	<i>Nezavisna Država Hrvatska</i> —Independent State of Croatia (WW II Croat state)
RSK	<i>Republika Srpska Krajina</i> —Krajina Serb Republic
RV i PVO	<i>Ratno vazduhoplovstvo i protivvazdusna odbrana</i> —Yugoslav Air and Air Defense Force
SSNO	<i>Savezni Sekretarijat za Narodnu Odbranu</i> —Federal Secretariat of National Defense
SVK	<i>Srpska Vojska Krajina</i> —Krajina Serb Army
TO	<i>Teritorijalna Odbrana</i> —Territorial Defense
VJ	<i>Vojska Jugoslavije</i> —Yugoslav Army
VRS	<i>Vojska Republike Srpske</i> —Bosnian Serb Army

V i PVO	<i>Vazduhoplovstvo i Protivvazdusne Odbrana</i> —Bosnian Serb Air and Air Defense Force
ZNG	<i>Zbor Narodne Garde</i> —National Guard Corps (pre-1992 Croatian military)

Interior Ministry, Internal Security, and Intelligence Organizations

MUP	<i>Ministarstvo Unutrasnje Poslova</i> —Ministry of Internal Affairs
SBP	<i>Specijalne Brigada Policija</i> —Special Police Brigade [RS]
UB	<i>Uprava Bezbednosti</i> —JNA/VJ Security Directorate
KOS	<i>Kontraobavestajna Sluzba</i> —old name for JNA Security Directorate
SDB	<i>Sluzba Drzavne Bezbednosti</i> —State Security Service [Serb—old term]
RDB	<i>Rezor Drzavne Bezbednosti</i> —State Security Department [Serb—new term]
SJB	<i>Sluzba Javne Bezbednosti</i> —Public Security Service
SIS	<i>Signurnosno Izvestajna Sluzba</i> —Security and Intelligence Service (HV/HVO)
SSUP	(<i>Savezni Sekretarijat za Unutrasnje Poslove</i>)—Federal Secretariat of Internal Affairs

Political Parties

HDZ	<i>Hrvatska Demokratska Zajednica</i> —Croatian Democratic Union (Croatia)
SDA	<i>Stranka Demokratske Akcije</i> —Party of Democratic Action (Bosnian Muslim)
SDS	<i>Srpska Demokratska Stranka</i> —Serbian Democratic Party (Bosnian Serb)
SPS	<i>Socialisticka Partija Srbije</i> — Serbian Socialist Party

Military Echelons

General Staff/ Main Staff	<i>Generalstab</i> (JNA and ARBiH), <i>Glavni Stozer</i> (HV/HVO), <i>Glavnistab</i> (VRS and SVK)
Corps	<i>Korpus</i> (JNA, VJ, VRS, SVK, ARBiH)/ <i>Zbor</i> (HV/HVO)
Division	<i>Divizija</i>
Brigade	<i>Brigada</i>
Regiment	<i>Puk</i>
Battalion	<i>Bataljon</i> (JNA, VJ, VRS, SVK, ARBiH)/ <i>Bojna</i> (HV/HVO)
Artillery or Air Defense Artillery Battalion	<i>Divizion</i>
Company	<i>Ceta</i> (JNA, VJ, VRS, SVK, ARBiH)/ <i>Satnija</i> (HV/HVO)
Artillery Battery	<i>Baterija</i>
Platoon	<i>Vod</i>

Primary Brigade Types in Yugoslav Conflict

Guards	<i>Gardijska Brigada (gbr)</i>
Liberation	<i>Oslobodilacka Brigada (obr)</i>
Mountain	<i>Brdska Brigada (bbr)</i>
Motorized	<i>Motorizovana Brigada (mtbr)</i>
Mechanized	<i>Mehanizovana Brigada (mbr)</i>
Armor	<i>Oklopna Brigada (okbr)</i>
Infantry	<i>Pesadijska Brigada (pbr)</i>
Light Infantry	<i>Laka Pesadijska Brigada (lpbr)</i>

Yugoslav People's Army/Yugoslav Army/Bosnian Serb Army/Krajina Serb Army Military Ranks

Army General	<i>Armijski General</i> (four stars)
Colonel General	<i>General-Pukovnik</i> (three stars)
Lieutenant Colonel General	<i>General-Potpukovnik</i> (two stars)
Major General	<i>General-Major</i> (one star)
Colonel	<i>Pukovnik</i>
Lieutenant Colonel	<i>Potpukovnik</i>
Major	<i>Major</i>
Captain 1st Class	<i>Kapetan I Klase</i>
Captain	<i>Kapetan</i>
Lieutenant	<i>Porucnik</i>
Junior Lieutenant	<i>Potporucnik</i>

Croatian Army/Bosnian Croat Army Military Ranks

Staff General	<i>Stozerni General</i> (four stars)
Corps General	<i>General Zbora</i> (three stars)
Colonel General	<i>General-Pukovnik</i> (two stars)
Major General	<i>General-Bojnik</i> (one star)
Staff Brigadier	<i>Stozerni Brigadir</i> (no US equivalent)
Brigadier	<i>Brigadir</i> (US colonel equivalent)
Colonel	<i>Pukovnik</i> (US lieutenant colonel equivalent)
Major	<i>Bojnik</i>

Captain	<i>Satnik</i>
Senior Lieutenant	<i>Natporucnik</i>
Lieutenant	<i>Porucnik</i>

Bosnian Army Military Ranks

Army General	<i>Armijski General</i> (overall Bosnian Army Commander)
Division General	<i>Divizion General</i> (two stars)
Brigadier General	<i>Brigadni General</i> (one star)
Brigadier	<i>Brigadir</i> (no US equivalent—not a general officer rank)
Colonel	<i>Pukovnik</i>
Lt. Colonel	<i>Potpukovnik</i>
Major	<i>Major</i>
Senior Captain	<i>Nadkapetan</i>
Captain	<i>Kapetan</i>
Senior Lieutenant	<i>Nadporucnik</i>
Lieutenant	<i>Porucnik</i>

Weapons

Tanks	
M-47	US-manufactured MBT (90-mm gun)
M-84	Yugoslav-manufactured MBT (125-mm gun), variant of the T-72
T-72	Soviet-manufactured MBT (125-mm gun)
T-54/55	Soviet-manufactured MBT (105-mm gun)
T-34	Soviet-manufactured WW II medium tank (85-mm gun)

	Light Tanks
PT-76	Soviet-manufactured light amphibious tank (76-mm gun)
	Tank Destroyers
M-18 Hellcat	US-manufactured WW II tank destroyer (76-mm gun)
M-36B2	US-manufactured WW II tank destroyer (90-mm gun)
SU-100	Soviet-manufactured WW II tank destroyer (100-mm gun)
	ACVs
M-80	Yugoslav-manufactured IFV (20-mm cannon)
M-60	Yugoslav-manufactured APC (12.7-mm machinegun)
M-60 PB	Antitank version of the M-60 with 2 x 82-mm recoilless rifles
BTR-50	Soviet-manufactured tracked APC, used as command vehicle
BOV	Yugoslav-manufactured 4 x 4 wheeled APC
M-83 BOV-1	Antitank version of the BOV with 6 x AT-3 ATGM
BOV-M	Militia/police variant of the BOV
M-86 BOV-VP	Military police variant of the BOV
	Reconnaissance Vehicles
BRDM-2	Soviet-manufactured amphibious scout car
	Artillery
<i>203 mm</i>	
M2	US-manufactured 203-mm (8-inch) towed howitzer [alternate designator for M115]
<i>155 mm</i>	
M-1	US-manufactured 155-mm towed howitzer [alternate designation for M-114]
M-65	Yugoslav-manufactured variant of US M-1/M-114 105-mm towed howitzer
M-114	US-manufactured 155-mm towed howitzer [alternate designation for M-1]

M-59 "Long Tom"	US-manufactured 155-mm towed field gun
M-46/84	Yugoslav-manufactured 155-mm gun-howitzer [M-46 gun with a 155-mm barrel]
<i>152 mm</i>	
D-20	Soviet-manufactured 152-mm towed howitzer
M-84 NORA	Yugoslav-manufactured 152-mm towed gun-howitzer
M-1937	Soviet-manufactured 152-mm towed gun-howitzer [Soviet designator ML-20]
<i>130 mm</i>	
M-46	Soviet-manufactured 130-mm towed field gun
<i>122 mm</i>	
2S1	Soviet-manufactured 122-mm tracked SP howitzer
D-30	Soviet-manufactured 122-mm towed howitzer
M-38	Soviet-manufactured 122-mm towed howitzer [Soviet designator M-30]
<i>105 mm</i>	
M-56	Yugoslav-manufactured 105-mm towed howitzer [fires US-pattern ammunition]
M2A1	US-manufactured WW II 105-mm towed howitzer [alternate name for M101]
M-18/43	German-manufactured WW II 105-mm towed howitzer
M-18/61	German-manufactured WW II 105-mm towed howitzer [upgraded M-18/43 adapted to fire US-pattern ammunition]
M-101	US-manufactured WW II 105-mm towed howitzer [alternate name for M2A1]

<i>100 mm</i>	
T-12	Soviet-manufactured 100-mm antitank gun
<i>76 mm</i>	
M-48B1	Yugoslav-manufactured 76-mm mountain gun [“Tito gun”]
M-42 ZIS-3	Soviet-manufactured 76-mm field gun
FROG-7 (9P113 “Luna-M”)	Surface-to-Surface Rockets Soviet-manufactured 544-mm unguided rocket launcher [450-kg warhead]
262-mm/12 tube LRSV M-87 “Orkan”	Multiple Rocket Launchers Yugoslav-manufactured truck-mounted MRL
128-mm/32 tube M-77 “Oganj”	Yugoslav-manufactured truck-mounted MRL
128-mm/32 tube M-63 “Plamen”	Yugoslav-manufactured towed MRL
128-mm/12 tube M91	Croatian-manufactured towed MRL
122-mm/40 tube APR-40 BM-21 “Grad”	Romanian version of the Soviet-manufactured BM-21 truck-mounted MRL
107-mm/12 tube Type 63 MRL	Chinese-manufactured towed MRL
LRL-128-mm M-71 “Partizan”	Single-Tube Rocket Launchers Yugoslav-manufactured single-tube rocket launcher
LRL-107-mm Type 85	Chinese-manufactured single-tube rocket launcher
M-69	Mortars Yugoslav-manufactured 82-mm mortar
M-74	Yugoslav-manufactured 120-mm mortar
M-75	Yugoslav-manufactured 120-mm mortar
UBM-52	Yugoslav-manufactured 120-mm mortar

	Recoilless Rifles
M60A	Yugoslav-manufactured 82-mm recoilless rifle
M79	Yugoslav-manufactured 82-mm recoilless rifle
Antitank Guided Missiles (ATGM)	
9K11/9M14 (AT-3 Sagger a.k.a. Maljutka)	Soviet-manufactured ATGM, 120-mm warhead
9K111/9M111 (AT-4 Spigot a.k.a. Fagot)	Soviet-manufactured ATGM, 120-mm warhead
9P148/9M113 (AT-5 Spandrel a.k.a. Konkurs)	Soviet-manufactured ATGM, for mounting on ACVs
9K115/9M115 (AT-7 Saxhorn a.k.a. Metis)	Soviet-manufactured ATGM, 120-mm warhead
MILAN	West European-manufactured ATGM, 125-mm shaped-charge warhead
TF-8 (Red Arrow 8)	Chinese-manufactured ATGM, 120-mm warhead
Armbrust	Antitank Rocket Launchers German-manufactured disposable antitank rocket launcher
M57	Yugoslav-manufactured 44-mm rocket-propelled grenade
RBR M80 ("Zolja")	Yugoslav-manufactured copy of 64-mm US LAW antitank rocket
RBR M79 ("Osa")	Yugoslav-manufactured 90-mm antitank rocket launcher
Small Arms	
M48	Yugoslav-manufactured bolt-action rifle [copy of German WW II Gewehr 98 k]
M53	Yugoslav-manufactured 7.92-mm machinegun [copy of German WW II MG-42]
M56	Yugoslav-manufactured 7.62-mm submachinegun

M57	Yugoslav-manufactured 7.62-mm copy of the Tokarev TT-33
M59/66A1	Yugoslav-manufactured 7.62-mm rifle, variant of the Simonov SKS
M60 "Tromblon"	Yugoslav-manufactured rifle grenade
M70	Yugoslav-manufactured 7.62-mm assault rifle, variant of the AK-47
M72	Yugoslav-manufactured 7.62-mm light machinegun, variant of the RPK
M76	Yugoslav-manufactured 7.92-mm sniper rifle
M84	Yugoslav-manufactured 7.62-mm general purpose machinegun, variant of the PKM

Aircraft

Jet Aircraft	
G-2/N-60 Galeb	Yugoslav-manufactured trainer version of the J-21 Jastreb [two seats, straight wings]
G-4/N-62 Super Galeb	Yugoslav-manufactured fighter/ground attack aircraft [two seats, swept wings]
IAR-93	Romanian version of the J-22 Orao.
IJ-22	Recce version of the Orao
INJ-22	Trainer/recce version of Orao
J-21 Jastreb	Yugoslav-manufactured ground attack aircraft [one seat, straight wings]
J-22 Orao	Yugoslav-manufactured ground attack aircraft [one seat, swept wings]
MiG-29 Fulcrum	Soviet-manufactured fighter aircraft. Twin tails.
MiG-21 Fishbed	Soviet-manufactured fighter aircraft. Turbojet engine in fuselage
NJ-22	Two-seater trainer version of the J-22 Orao
NJ-62	Super Galeb combat capable trainer
N-62R	Super Galeb trainer

Propeller Aircraft	
AN-2 Colt	Soviet-manufactured general purpose aircraft. A biplane
J-20 Kraguj	Yugoslav-manufactured light ground attack aircraft
UTVA-60	Yugoslav-manufactured utility aircraft. Resembles a Cessna
UTVA-66	Yugoslav-manufactured utility aircraft. Resembles a Cessna
UTVA-75	Yugoslav-manufactured utility aircraft. Resembles a Cessna
Helicopters	
Mi-8 "Hip C"/HT-40	Soviet-manufactured transport helicopter [57-mm rockets, door guns]
Mi-8 "Hip E/F"	Soviet-manufactured transport helicopter [3,000-kg payload]
M-17 "Hip H"	Soviet-manufactured transport helicopter [4,000-kg payload]
Mi-24 "Hind"	Soviet-manufactured attack helicopter [1,500-kg ordnance payload]
SA-342/HN-42	Yugoslav license-manufactured (French) "Gazelle" light attack helicopter
SA-342/HN-45 GAMA	Yugoslav license-manufactured "Gazelle" light attack helicopter [mounted with AT-3 ATGM and/or SA-7 SAM]
SA-342/HI-42	SA-342 "Gazelle" recce version
Surface-to-Air Missiles (SAMs)	
SA-2 Guideline ("Dvina")	Soviet-manufactured towed SAM [1 missile per launcher, Fan Song radar]
SA-3 Goa ("Neva")	Soviet-manufactured towed SAM [2 to 4 missiles per launcher, Low Blow radar]
SA-6 Gainful ("Kub")	Soviet-manufactured vehicle-mounted SAM [tracked carrier, 3 missiles per launcher, Straight Flush radar]
SA-7 Grai 1 ("Strela-2M")	Soviet-manufactured Manpad SAM [S-2M is the Yugoslav-manufactured variant]
SA-9 Gaskin ("ZRK-BD Strela-1"/ 9M31)	Soviet-manufactured vehicle-mounted SAM [4 x 4 BRDM-2 carrier, 4 missiles per vehicle, IR seeker]
S-10	Croatian-produced copy of the SA-13 (Strela-10) [6 x 6 wheeled carrier]

Self-Propelled Antiaircraft Guns

BOV-3 Antiaircraft version of the BOV 4 x 4 wheeled APC with 3 x 20-mm cannon

M-53/59 "Praga" Czech wheeled SP antiaircraft gun with 2 x 30-mm cannon

ZSU-57-2 Soviet-tracked SP antiaircraft gun with 2 x 57-mm cannon

Towed Antiaircraft Guns

40-mm/1 L-70/L-60 Bofors (Swedish)-manufactured AA gun

20-mm/3 M55
(A2/A3/A4) Yugoslav-manufactured triple-barrel 20-mm AA gun

20-mm/1 M75 Yugoslav-manufactured single-barrel 20-mm AA gun

The Balkan Crises: Chronology of Significant Events, 1991-1995

1991

- 28 March 1991 The presidents of Yugoslavia's six republics meet in Croatia to discuss the country's future.
- 25 June Slovenia and Croatia declare independence. Fighting breaks out almost immediately after these declarations when the Yugoslav People's Army (JNA) moves to maintain control over Slovene border stations.
- 5 July With fighting continuing in Slovenia, the EC foreign ministers impose an arms embargo on the former Yugoslavia until the situation normalizes.
- 7 July The EC troika of foreign ministers travels for its third visit to Yugoslavia and arranges the **Brioni accords**. All Yugoslav parties agree to start negotiations on the country's future by 1 August to accept EC monitors, to lift the blockades of Army facilities, to restrict the Army to its barracks, and to deactivate the militias.
- 13-17 July The EC sends 50 monitors to Yugoslavia to begin work in Slovenia.
- 18 July The Yugoslav Federal Presidency orders the JNA to withdraw from Slovenia within three months, marking de facto recognition of Slovenian independence and an end to the military conflict. Army shifts focus to fighting in Croatia.
- 29 July EC foreign ministers propose a new cease-fire in Slovenia, more monitors, and joint patrols by the JNA and the local Serb forces.
- 4 August The Serbs and the JNA reject the efforts of another EC troika visit trying to mediate a cease-fire, expand monitors to Croatia, and start negotiations among the Yugoslavs on a political settlement.
- 27-28 August French President Mitterrand hosts consecutive visits from Croatian President Tudjman and Serbian President Milosevic in an effort to bring the two sides together.
- Late Summer-Early Fall Serbian President Milosevic steps up financial and armed support to Serbs in the Krajina and Slavonian regions of Croatia. Local Serb forces supported by the JNA wrest most of the Serb-majority areas from Croatian control.

1 September	Dutch Foreign Minister van den Broek, on behalf of the EC, travels to Belgrade. An agreement is reached on a new cease-fire, an expansion of the monitor teams, and a conference to be held in The Hague.
7 September	An EC conference on peace negotiations opens in The Hague under the chairmanship of Lord Carrington.*
18 September	Macedonia declares independence.
25 September	The UN Security Council imposes an arms embargo on the former Yugoslavia (Resolution 713).
1 October	The EC agrees to extend its monitors into Bosnia-Hercegovina.
3 October	Serbia and Montenegro seize control of Yugoslavia's Federal Presidency.
18 October	At The Hague, the EC offers a detailed plan for a political settlement based on a loose association of states: voluntary participation, protection for minorities, limited common institutions (a court for human rights, an economic council to manage a customs union, and a nonbinding council for political and security cooperation). Only Serbia does not accept the plan by a deadline of 5 November, despite revisions offered in subsequent negotiations.
8 November	The EC imposes sanctions against all Yugoslav states but says it will rescind them for republics that cooperate with the peace process.
25 November	Yugoslav and Croatian Army leaders agree to a comprehensive cease-fire as a prerequisite for a deployment of UN peacekeeping forces to Croatia.**

* On 4 October at The Hague, EC ministers reach an agreement with Serbian President Milosevic and Croatian President Tudjman to negotiate a complete settlement for Yugoslavia. The EC proposes that at the end of the negotiations there will be recognition for those republics that desire independence, there will be a loose association of the Yugoslav states, minority rights will be protected, there will be no unilateral changes in borders, the Croatians will lift their blockades of the Army barracks, and the Yugoslav Army will withdraw from Croatia. When Serbia stalls on the 4 October agreement, EC foreign ministers on 6 October threaten to impose economic sanctions if there is not compliance by midnight on 7 October. They say that they will resume cooperative relations with those republics that are working for peace and that they will seek a trade embargo through the UN for those that are not.

** This follows UN Secretary General Perez de Cuellar's announcement on 15 November that he will send envoys Cyrus Vance and Philip Goulding to Yugoslavia to explore the feasibility of a UN peacekeeping operation. Authorized by UNSC Resolution 724, an advance party arrives in Yugoslavia on 15 December to explore a UN peacekeeping role. The **Vance Plan** for deployment of UN peacekeeping forces in Croatia evolves out of this fact-finding mission.

- 2 December The EC ends economic sanctions against all Yugoslav republics except Serbia and Montenegro.
- 16 December The EC Council of Ministers agrees to recognize within a month any republic that meets EC criteria—protect human rights, support EC and UN peace efforts, abide by CSCE standards, accept financial obligations—in talks that had resumed on 8 December.
- 23 December Germany recognizes Slovenia and Croatia.
- 24 December Macedonia, Slovenia, Croatia, and Bosnia- Hercegovina apply to the EC for recognition as sovereign states.
- 31 December UN envoy Cyrus Vance visits Belgrade on a peacekeeping mission as fierce fighting continues in Croatia.
- 1992**
- 2 January 1992 Croatian and Serbian military commanders and political leaders agree to a UN plan to deploy peacekeeping forces. (**Vance Plan**).
- 9 January The EC reconvenes the peace conference in Brussels.
- 10 January The EC lifts sanctions against Montenegro.
- 15 January EC member states and 15 other countries, including the United States, recognize Croatia and Slovenia as independent states.
- 13 February An EC-sponsored conference on Bosnia opens in Lisbon.
- 21 February UNSC passes Resolution 743 establishing a peacekeeping force in Croatia.
- 27 February–
1 March Bosnia holds a referendum on independence from Yugoslavia. Bosnian Serbs react violently to the vote in favor of independence. President Izetbegovic tries to mollify and engage the Serbs by including them in his government.
- 7 March An advance team of UN peacekeepers arrives in Yugoslavia.
- 9 March The EC peace conference reconvenes in Brussels.
- 10 March The United States and the EC agree to coordinate on recognition of former Yugoslav states.

- 18 March** During EC-sponsored talks in Sarajevo, Serb, Croat, and Muslim leaders agree on a framework for establishing ethnic cantons (**the Cutilheiro plan**). The plan states that there will be no change in external borders; three cantons based largely on ethnic criteria will be created; and a weak central government will handle economic, foreign, and defense affairs. All other functions—including administration, social security, culture, environment, housing, transport, and education—will be controlled by the cantonal governments.
- 6 April** The EC agrees to recognize Bosnia-Hercegovina; it delays a decision on Macedonia. The Serbs move almost immediately to partition the republic.
- 27 April** Serbia and Montenegro proclaim a new Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and declare it the successor state to Yugoslavia.
- 24 May** Unofficial presidential and parliamentary elections in Kosovo result in a landslide victory for the ethnic Albanian party and its leader Ibrahim Rugova.
- 27 May** The EC adjourns the Lisbon conference on Bosnia after the Muslims walk out. (The continuing siege of Sarajevo and Serbian military gains prompt Izetbegovic to abandon the Cutilheiro plan.) The EC also reimposes economic sanctions on Serbia-Montenegro, including stopping all trade, freezing export credits and scientific cooperation, and seeking an oil embargo in the UN.
- 30 May** The UNSC passes Resolution 757 imposing economic sanctions on Serbia and Montenegro.
- 31 May** Milosevic's Socialist Party wins local and federal assembly elections in "the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia" (FRY).
- 4 June** A NATO ministerial meeting in Oslo goes beyond NATO's traditional defensive role and proposes troops and equipment for peacekeeping operations outside the area of its members.
- 15 June** Dobrica Cosic is elected President of the new Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.
- 27 June** An EC summit accepts military operations under the UN to keep Sarajevo airport open if necessary, agrees to recognize Macedonia only if it changes its name, supports suspension of "Yugoslavia" from the CSCE, and agrees to send observers to Kosovo.

- STANFORD LIBRARIES
- 28 June Mitterrand makes a quick trip to observe the situation at the Sarajevo airport in preparation for a possible emergency airlift.
- 1 July Milan Panic becomes Prime Minister of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.
- 2 July Planes from EC countries join the airlift to the reopened Sarajevo airport.
- 2 August Croatian President Tudjman wins reelection and his Croatian Democratic Union retains a majority in parliament.
- 13 August The UN passes Resolutions 770, which authorizes "all necessary measures" to facilitate delivery of relief supplies, and 771, which demands access to detention camps.
- 14 August The CSCE decides to send "missions of long duration" to the former Yugoslav republics to monitor human rights.
- 26-28 August The EC/UN conference in London on former Yugoslavia—which includes representatives of the Serbian, Croatian, and Bosnian parties—reaches agreement to dismantle detention camps, lift sieges of major cities and allow UN supervision of heavy weapons, start continuous negotiations on terms for a political settlement. It also supports "substantial" withdrawal by Bosnian Serbs, international monitors of sanctions and human rights, a tribunal to investigate human rights violations, more UN escorts for aid convoys, talks on autonomy for Kosovo, permission for refugees to return, FRY recognition of Bosnia, more humanitarian aid, and lifting of sanctions and reconstruction aid to reward compliance. This conference sets up subsequent talks in Geneva to discuss the crisis and minority rights.
- 3 September The Steering Committee of the International Conference on Former Yugoslavia holds its first meeting in Geneva with envoys Vance and Owen chairing the meeting.
- 29 September CSCE countries offer to provide personnel for sanctions assistance missions to Balkan states neighboring the former Yugoslavia.
- 30 September At urging of international mediators Vance and Owen, Croatia and the FRY agree to recognize existing international borders, allow refugees to return, and demilitarize the Prevlaka Peninsula.
- 6 October The UN Security Council (UNSC) adopts Resolution 780, which establishes a commission of experts to examine evidence of war crimes in former Yugoslavia.

7 October	The EC announces the availability of \$160 million in aid for refugees; this brings total aid to almost \$400 million.
8 October	NATO announces it will send 100 personnel to the UN headquarters in Bosnia.
9 October	UNSC adopts Resolution 781, which establishes a no-fly zone over Bosnia.
14 October	NATO agrees to provide AWACS data to help to enforce the no-fly zone.
27 October	Vance and Owen propose draft constitution as part of the Vance-Owen Plan for Bosnia, which is to be organized into a decentralized federation of 10 autonomous provinces.
3 November	FRY Prime Minister Panic narrowly survives a confidence vote in the upper house of the federal assembly.
16 November	The UNSC adopts Resolution 787, which provides for naval interdiction of ships trying to evade sanctions against Yugoslavia, tightens sanctions, and calls for a study of safehavens.
22 November	NATO and WEU naval forces begin patrolling the Adriatic to enforce sanctions.
11 December	UN Security Council resolution 795 approves sending 760 observers to Macedonia.
12 December	An EC summit in Edinburgh threatens further economic sanctions ("total isolation") and agrees to an aid package for Macedonia.
20 December	FRY holds republic and federal elections. Milosevic defeats Milan Panic for the Serbian Presidency. Milosevic's Socialist Serbian Radicals dominate parliamentary elections.
29 December	FRY Prime Minister Panic loses a vote of confidence in the national assembly.
1993	
2 January 1993	Vance and Owen present a new plan for 10 provinces that would carry out most governmental functions in Bosnia. The boundaries are largely determined by ethnicity, but geographical, historical, and economic factors are taken into account. They also propose a framework for the constitution and military arrangements, including a cease-fire. Bosnian Croats immediately

	accept the whole plan; Bosnian Serbs accept the constitutional principles and the military accord; the Bosnian Government accepts only the constitution.
14 January	NATO offers its command and control structure for enforcing the no-fly zone over Bosnia.
30 January	UN/EC-mediated Bosnian peace talks break down in Geneva.
22 February	The UNSC adopts Resolution 808 initiating the formation of an international war crimes tribunal.
27 February	Bosnian peace talks reopen in New York.
5 March	The United States begins airdrops of humanitarian aid over eastern Bosnia.
8 March	EC foreign ministers agree to implement stronger sanctions if the FRY fails to push the Bosnian Serbs to accept the Vance-Owen Plan.
25 March	Bosnian President Izetbegovic signs the Vance-Owen Plan, isolating the Serbs as the only warring party not to sign it.
28-30 March	German and then French aircraft join the US-led program of airdrops for humanitarian relief over eastern Bosnia.
30 March	UNSC Resolution 815 extends the mandate of UNPROFOR in Croatia for three months.
31 March	UNSC Resolution 816 authorizes the enforcement of the no-fly zone over Bosnia.
5 April	WEU offers to help enforce sanctions by patrolling the Danube.
7 April	UNSC Resolution 817 accepts the "Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" as a UN member.
12 April	NATO begins air patrols to enforce the no-fly zone over Bosnia.
17 April	UNSC Resolution 820 imposes stiffer sanctions on Serbia-Montenegro. It ends transshipments except for humanitarian needs, bans passage of "Yugoslav" vessels, trains, aircraft, and trucks through territory of UN members. It also authorizes impounding violators, freezes funds of Yugoslav entities, and forbids shipping through Yugoslav waters.

- 29 April Envoys Vance and Owen convene talks between the Bosnian parties and the leaders of the other former Yugoslav republics in Athens.
- 1-2 May The UN, the EC, Bosnian factional leaders, Serbian President Milosevic, Federal President Cosic, and Croatian President Tudjman meet in Athens. In return for concessions on access corridors between the provinces, Bosnian Serb leader Karadzic accepts the Vance-Owen Plan (the last factional leader to do so), conditional upon ratification by the Bosnian Serb assembly.
- 6 May The Bosnian serb assembly overwhelmingly (51 to 2 with 12 abstentions) rejects the Vance-Owen Plan.
- Secretary Christopher meets with the EC troika in Brussels. All agree on the importance of unity and that no options are excluded.
- UNSC Resolution 824 declares Sarajevo and five other Muslim enclaves in Bosnia “safe areas” under UN protection.
- 7 May NATO authorizes planning for a peacekeeping force in Bosnia. Believes 60,000 troops would be needed.
- 10 May EC foreign ministers, meeting in Brussels, summarize their position: the Vance-Owen Plan is the political goal; the EC will provide personnel to hold Milosevic to his promise to stop aid to Bosnian Serbs; the United States and Russia should provide troops to protect the “safe areas”; no options are excluded, but any action will have to be under UN auspices; and they express concern about continuing Croatian violence in Bosnia.
- 15-16 May A Bosnian Serb referendum confirms the Bosnian Serb assembly rejection of the Vance-Owen Plan, despite support from Serbian President Milosevic.
- 19 May WEU ministers in Rome back UN and EC efforts in the Balkans and agree to study how WEU might assist, with focus on sanctions monitoring on the Danube.
- 22 May The United States, Russia, France, the United Kingdom, and Spain, meeting in Washington, agree to a **Joint Action Plan**: continue humanitarian aid, rigorously enforce sanctions and no-fly zone, United States is to protect UNPROFOR with airstrikes if it is attacked and requests help, offer to place monitors on Bosnia’s border with Serbia, move quickly to set up war crimes tribunal, view Vance-Owen process as a foundation for a political settlement, and not exclude tougher measures.

- 25 May UNSC Resolution 827 establishes an international tribunal to prosecute war crimes in the former Yugoslavia.
- 2 June WEU-organized ships and personnel begin arriving in Romania to help enforce sanctions. Later expanded to Bulgaria and Hungary.
- 4 June UNSC Resolution 836 authorizes troops for the safe areas in Bosnia and permits them to use force, including airpower, to defend themselves.
- 8 June EC foreign ministers, meeting in Luxembourg welcome the Joint Action Plan and reaffirm their position stated in May. They urge others to contribute troops to protect the safe areas.
- 9 June WEU personnel and boats begin patrolling the Danube to enforce sanctions.
- 10 June NAC meeting in Athens agrees to offer its airpower to protect UNPROFOR, if attacked. United States announces willingness to send a small force to Macedonia.
- 16-17 June Croatian President Tudjman, Serbian President Milosevic, and Bosnian President Izetbegovic meet in Geneva with UN and EC envoys Stoltenberg and Owen to discuss reworking the Vance-Owen Plan into an ethnic partition of Bosnia-Herzegovina.
- 18 June Bosnian President Izetbegovic walks out of the Geneva talks after objecting to proposals presented to partition Bosnia-Herzegovina.
- UN Security Council resolution 842 authorizes the United States to send troops to Macedonia. Resolution 844 authorizes reinforcement of UNPROFOR to provide armed protection of the “safe areas” with airpower.
- 19 June Serbian President Milosevic presents his plan to partition Bosnia into three ethnic republics at negotiations in Geneva.
- 19-20 June The Krajina Serbs overwhelmingly vote in favor of unification with other Serb states in a referendum.
- 21-22 June EC summit in Copenhagen reaffirms its preference for keeping Bosnia intact, unwillingness to recognize changes in borders made by force, and desire to prosecute war criminals. It also calls for more humanitarian aid and implementation of the UN “safe areas.” German Chancellor Kohl urges lifting the arms embargo, but the others are not interested.

- 21 June** The Geneva negotiations are postponed to allow Bosnian President Izetbegovic to return to Bosnia-Herzegovina to consult with his government on Milosevic's proposal.
- 22 June** Croatian Serb leader Hadzic announces that the Krajina referendum was only a test of will and that the Krajina Serbs do not plan to unify rapidly with the Bosnian Serbs.
- 23 June** Geneva talks reopen with Bosnian Croat member of the Bosnian Presidency Franjo Boras heading the government delegation.
- The first round of talks in two months between Croatian Government and Croatian Serb officials opens in Geneva but ends after one day.
- 24 June** Frenchman Lt. General Jean Cot replaces Sweden's Wahlgren as commander of UN forces in the former Yugoslavia.
- 25 June** The Bosnian Presidency meets in Zagreb to discuss the latest proposal tabled in Geneva outlining a confederal arrangement of nearly autonomous states.
- The "Yugoslav" parliament elects Zoran Lilic—a Milosevic ally—to replace ousted federal president Cosic.
- 28 June** A joint Serb-Croat proposal for a confederal settlement is put forward in Geneva. The Bosnian Presidency sends a delegation to the talks although Izetbegovic does not attend.
- 29 June** The Bosnian Presidency meets in a closed session in Sarajevo to discuss the various proposals tabled in Geneva on ethnic division of Bosnia-Herzegovina.
- 30 June** The UN Security Council adopts a resolution extending UNPROFOR's mandate in Croatia for three months.
- 6-8 July** Talks between Croatian Government and Croatian Serb officials on the Krajina reopen in Geneva but end without an agreement.
- 10 July** A Bosnian Presidency delegation meeting with international mediators Owen and Stoltenberg presents a counterproposal to Croat and Serb plans to divide Bosnia-Herzegovina based on a federal arrangement.

- 28 July Peace talks reopen in Geneva after President Izetbegovic's boycott of the negotiations over the ongoing Serb siege of Sarajevo. The Muslims discuss a confederal settlement at this round, abandoning their federal plan.
- 30 July The Bosnian Government rejects the "union" peace plan proposed by Owen and Stoltenberg that was a combination of the Vance-Owen and Serbian plans for a tripartite confederation.
- 2 August NAC meeting in Brussels agrees to study US proposal to use NATO air-power to lift the siege of Sarajevo and other cities.
- 3 August With President Izetbegovic again boycotting the talks because of the continuing Serb siege of Sarajevo, the Croat members of the Bosnian Presidency withdraw from the Presidency's delegation and join the Croatian delegation to protest Bosnian Government operations against Croats in central Bosnia.
- 8 August Bosnian Serb Army commander General Mladic reaches a partial agreement with the UN on a phased withdrawal from Serb positions on mountains around Sarajevo.
- 9 August Follow-up NAC meeting in Brussels approves operational plans for airstrikes in Bosnia and agrees UN Secretary General will have to authorize the first strike.
- 16 August The warring parties—meeting again in Geneva—agree "in principle" to turn Sarajevo into a demilitarized, UN-administered city for an interim period after a settlement is reached.
- 18 August UN officials announce that NATO is ready to carry out airstrikes to support UNPROFOR in Bosnia if the Secretary General asks for them.
- 20 August After presenting a draft settlement package including a proposed map for a confederal partition of Bosnia-Herzegovina, international mediators Owen and Stoltenberg adjourn the Geneva talks for 10 days. Owen asks the EC to administer Mostar for two years as part of a peace settlement.
- 27 August President Izetbegovic tells the Bosnian Government Assembly that the UN/EC peace proposal is unacceptable; the assembly decides to reject it and push for more territory.
- 28 August The Bosnian Serb assembly unconditionally accepts the proposed peace accord. The Bosnian Croat assembly endorses the plan but stipulates the

	Croats will have to be given more territory. The Bosnian Croat assembly also declares a Bosnian Croat republic.
31 August	Negotiations reopen for two days in Geneva. Once again, Izetbegovic walks out over territorial issues.
1 September	President Izetbegovic begins bilateral consultations with Bosnian Serb leader Karadzic and Bosnian Croat leader Boban on territorial adjustments.
7 September	WEU council authorizes planning for assistance in the administration of Mostar.
9 September	Croatian forces capture three Serb-controlled villages in the Krajina, sparking intense fighting.
10 September	Bosnian Serb soldiers protesting war profiteering begin a mutiny in Banja Luka.
12 September	Informal meeting of EC foreign ministers accepts idea of administering Mostar. EC will ask WEU to provide police.
13 September	Peace talks resume in Geneva.
14 September	Presidents Tudjman and Izetbegovic meet in Geneva in an effort to rebuild trust between the Croats and the Muslims.
15 September	Croatian Government and Croatian Serb leaders sign a cease-fire agreement. UN forces are deployed to implement it.
	NAC meeting in Brussels authorizes planning to participate in implementation of a peace plan in Bosnia.
16 September	Bosnian Serb leader Karadzic and protesting soldiers negotiate an end to the Banja Luka mutiny.
20 September	Presidents Milosevic, Tudjman, and Izetbegovic meet with mediators Owen and Stoltenberg on the aircraft carrier HMS Invincible in the Adriatic. The Invincible Plan becomes the basic EC goal for the negotiations. Under the plan, 49 percent of Bosnia goes to the Serbs, 33 percent to the Muslims, and 17.5 percent to the Croats, with a figurehead central government. The Muslims will have access to the Adriatic via a port on the Neretva River and the right to use Ploce and Neum; they will also have access to the Sava River. A 3-kilometer corridor will connect the Muslim enclaves in eastern

- Bosnia. Sarajevo will not be divided and will be administered by the UN for two years; there will be a similar arrangement under the EC in Mostar.
- 23 September Croatian Foreign Minister Granic tells Croatian assembly members that Zagreb has initiated discussions with the Bosnian Government to unite Croat and Muslim areas of Bosnia and to provide for the unified territory's subsequent confederation with Croatia.
- 27 September The Bihać citizens' assembly declares independence for the Muslim enclave under a proposal put forth by Bosnian Presidency member Abdic.
- 28 September Bosnian Muslim political, intellectual, and religious leaders—meeting in Sarajevo—recommend that acceptance of the latest peace proposal be conditioned on the return of territory seized by force. The Bosnian Cabinet accepts the plan unconditionally but calls for UN/NATO enforcement.
- 29 September The Bosnian assembly follows the recommendation of the Muslim leaders' "assembly" and votes to accept the latest peace proposal with the condition that territory seized by force be returned to the Bosnian Government.
- 1 October The Bosnian Croat assembly votes to withdraw territorial concessions made to the Bosnian Muslims.
- 2 October The Bosnian Serb assembly votes to withdraw territorial concessions made to the Bosnian Muslims.
- 4 October UN Security Council Resolution 871 extends UNPROFOR's mandate in Croatia for six months. The resolution makes a vague link between Serb behavior in Croatia and any decision to lift sanctions against Serbia.
- 6 October NAC meeting in Brussels authorizes planning to extend NATO air cover to UNPROFOR units in Croatia.
- 10 October The Krajina Serb assembly votes to hold legislative and presidential elections on 21 November. The assembly subsequently postpones the elections to 12 December.
- 16 October President Tudjman is reelected head of Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) at ruling party's congress.
- 20 October President Milosevic dissolves the Serbian assembly after apparently concluding that the no-confidence motion against the government proposed by the Serbian Radical Party was likely to pass. A new legislative election is scheduled for 19 December.

The Bosnian Presidency elects Muslim Nijaz Durakovic and Croats Stjepan Klujic and Ivo Komsic to fill vacancies created by the withdrawal of Croat members and the dismissal of Bihać strongman Fikret Abdic.

- 22 October Fikret Abdic concludes peace agreement with Bosnian Serb leader Karadzic in Belgrade. President Milosevic and the Serbs recognize Abdic's "Autonomous Province of Western Bosnia" on the basis of the Geneva plan. Abdic and Bosnian Croat leader Boban earlier signed an agreement ending their confrontation in Bosnia and subordinating local Croat military forces in the Cazinska Krajina to Abdic.
- 25 October Bosnian Presidency names Foreign Minister Haris Silajdzic as new Prime Minister. Muslims dominate new cabinet formed on 31 October; only four of 21 posts go to Serbs and Croats.
- 29 October At a special EC summit in Brussels, community leaders appeal for a return to negotiations, promise more aid, and call for the establishment of corridors for relief convoys and reinforcement of UNPROFOR. The leaders do not adopt a French proposal to use force to open aid corridors or Owen's plan for a "global" negotiation that would put all issues on the table.
- 3 November Krajina Serbs pull out of "secret" negotiations with Croatian Government in Norway following announcement of Croatian President Tudjman's peace initiative, which calls for restoration of Croatian sovereignty over the Krajina.
- 10 November Bosnian Croat leader Boban names Jadranko Prlic as Prime Minister of "Herceg-Bosna." The Bosnian Croat assembly approves a new government on 19 November, but Prlic is criticized for including ministers who are not members of Bosnia's HDZ party.
- 12 November Boban replaces Slobodan Praljak with General Ante Roso, a former Croatian special forces commander, as the commander of the Bosnian Croat Army (HVO).
- 22 November European Union foreign ministers agree to offer gradual suspension of the sanctions against Serbia/Montenegro if the Bosnian Serbs make territorial concessions to the Muslims, a peace plan is implemented, and Belgrade cooperates with a "modus vivendi" in the Krajina.
- 29 November EU foreign ministers present proposal to the leaders of the various Bosnian factions along with Croatian President Tudjman and Serbian President Milosevic.

- 30 November Croatian President Tudjman and Serbian President Milosevic leave Geneva while the Bosnian warring parties continue negotiations mediated by Owen and Stoltenberg.
- 30 November UN war crimes tribunal announces it will begin trials in April 1994.
- 1 December UNPROFOR Commander Cot says that the UN cannot put up indefinitely with disruptions of the relief convoys and threatens to reconsider the humanitarian effort in the spring.
- 2 December Talks end in Geneva without an agreement, following discussions on the government's map and a Serb proposal to divide Sarajevo into "twin cities" in which the Muslims would retain the central city with the Serbs controlling the southern and western suburbs. The faction leaders agree to reconvene at an unspecified date.
- 12 December "Republic of Serb Krajina" parliamentary and presidential elections are held. Knin mayor Milan Babic falls just short of the majority necessary to avoid a second round of presidential elections scheduled for 23 January.
- 19 December French Defense Minister Leotard says that France will reassess its participation in UNPROFOR in the spring of 1994 if no settlement is reached by that time. The United Kingdom, Spain, Canada, and Belgium have similar positions.
- 20-21 December Bilateral meetings between the warring parties and Serbian President Milosevic and Croatian President Tudjman are held in Geneva prior to broader meetings in Brussels with EU foreign ministers.
- 22 December The foreign ministers of the EU meet with the Serb, Croat, and Muslim leaders of Bosnia and urge them to accept the Invincible Plan. The parties will reconvene in Geneva on 18 January.
- 1994**
- 4 January 1994 French Foreign Minister Juppe calls on NATO to take firmer action in Bosnia. Paris wants a NATO Summit to open supply routes for humanitarian aid, endorse the Invincible Plan, and renew its commitment to help enforce a peace settlement.
- 5 January British General Malcolm Rose named to command UN forces in Bosnia after Belgian General Briquemont asks to be relieved, citing insufficient resources for his mission.

- 4-5 January** Bosnian Prime Minister Silajdzic and Croatian Foreign Minister Granic fail to reach agreement on territorial issues after two days of meetings in Vienna.
- 9-10 January** Croatian President Tudjman and Bosnian President Izetbegovic meet in Bonn with Tudjman claiming progress toward a cease-fire in central Bosnia. Izetbegovic disagrees, calling the meetings a failure.
- 11 January** NATO summit in Brussels states that there must be a political settlement acceptable to all sides rather than continued attempts at military victory, commends EU/UN peace efforts, promises to help implement a peace agreement, and reaffirms willingness to use airstrikes to protect the UN safe areas and make it possible for relief workers to do their jobs. France and the United Kingdom call for airstrikes if the Bosnian Serbs hinder UN operations at Srebrenica and Tuzla. Bosnian Serb leader Karadzic threaten to rescind concessions to the Bosnian Government if NATO attacks.
- Boutros-Ghali orders the rotation of UN troops in Srebrenica and the opening of the airport at Tuzla and gives Akashi authority to approve close air support if troops performing those missions are attacked.
- 12 January** Croatian President Tudjman announces that Bosnian Croat leader Boban will no longer attend peace negotiations.
- 18-19 January** Bosnian Government and Bosnian Serb negotiators at EU-sponsored peace talks in Geneva fail to reach a settlement, accusing each other of intransigence.
- 19 January** Croatian Foreign Minister Granic and Federal Republic of Yugoslavia Foreign Minister Jovanovic sign an agreement to begin normalization of relations between Croatia and the FRY. They agree to exchange diplomatic representatives in February.
- 21 January** British Defense Minister Rifkind acknowledges London has been discussing whether to withdraw its troops from UNPROFOR but says the United Kingdom will not act unilaterally.
- 23 January** Republic of Serbian Krajina Interior Minister Martic wins the Krajina presidential elections in the second round of voting. Knin Mayor Babic had narrowly missed winning the election in the first round in December.
- 26 January** French Army General Bertrand de Lapreste is named to replace French General Cot as Commander of UN Peacekeeping Forces in the former Yugoslavia. He is expected to report for duty in March.

- 6 February EU mediator Owen responds to the 5 February mortar attack on the Sarajevo market by urging an acceleration of negotiations on demilitarizing Sarajevo and turning the city over to the UN to administer. Boutros-Ghali asks NATO if it is ready to attack artillery firing on civilians in Sarajevo.
- 7 February EU foreign ministers reiterate their call to use "all the means necessary including the use of airpower" to lift the siege of Sarajevo as a way to begin implementation of the EU peace plan (the Invincible Plan).
- 8 February Bosnian Croat leader Boban announces his resignation in favor of a collective presidency to be formed to govern the Bosnian Croat republic.
- 9 February NATO gives the Bosnian Serbs 10 days to pull heavy weapons 20 km back from Sarajevo or put them under UN control; the Bosnian Government is also to put their heavy weapons under UN control. If not, NATO will consider the weapons legitimate targets for airstrikes.
- 10-12 February The warring parties fail to overcome differences at peace talks in Geneva supervised by EU negotiator Lord Owen.
- 12 February Zagreb and Belgrade announce details formalizing their agreement to open representative offices in their respective capitals in late February or early March. They also announce agreement to reopen the Zagreb-Belgrade highway.
- 17 February The United Kingdom, France, Spain, and Sweden agree to redeploy some of their troops in Bosnia to Sarajevo in response to UNPROFOR Commander Rose's call for reinforcements.
- 19 February Croatian Foreign Minister Granic and Bosnian Prime Minister Silajdzic meet in Frankfurt to discuss a possible Croat-Muslim federation in Bosnia and its eventual confederation with Croatia. They make little progress but agree to continue expert level discussions in Zagreb the following week.
- 20 February 400 Russian troops redeploy from UN-protected areas in Croatia to Sarajevo as part of an agreement negotiated by Russian envoy Churkin to ensure Serb compliance with NATO's ultimatum to withdraw heavy weapons from the 20-km exclusion zone or place them under UN control. UN and NATO officials determine that the Bosnian Serbs effectively complied with the NATO ultimatum.
- 21 February The Bosnian Croat assembly elects former Bosnian Croat Justice Minister Zubak to head an emergency presidential council to replace Mate Boban as head of the government of the self-proclaimed Republic of Herceg-Bosna.

- 23 February** Bosnian Government and Croat forces sign a cease-fire agreement to be implemented on 25 February.
- 28 February** In NATO's first-ever combat mission, US planes shoot down four Bosnian Serb aircraft violating the no-fly zone.
- 1 March** Bosnian Prime Minister Silajdzic, Croatian Foreign Minister Granic and Bosnian Croat leader Zubak sign a framework agreement in Washington to establish a Croat-Muslim federation in Bosnia. The parties agree to meet in Vienna to negotiate details of the agreement.
- Bosnian Serb leader Karadzic agrees to open Tuzla airport after Russia offers to send observers.
- 12 March** Negotiators meeting in Vienna reach agreement on a Croat-Muslim federation in Bosnia and plan to sign a final accord in Washington later in the week.
- 13 March** Bosnian Government and Croat military commanders agree at a meeting in Split on guidelines for developing a joint military.
- 17 March** The Serbian assembly confirms the appointment of Mirko Marjanovic as Prime Minister and approves his cabinet. Socialists control all key posts in the new government with only token democratic opposition representation. Businessmen also figure prominently in the new cabinet.
- 18 March** Bosnian President Izetbegovic, Croatian President Tudjman and Bosnian Croat leader Zubak sign the Croat-Muslim federation accord in Washington.
- 22-23 March** Russian-sponsored talks between the Croatian Government and the Krajina Serbs adjourn without results. The parties agree to reconvene on 29 March.
- 23 March** A UN-sponsored agreement to allow freedom of movement in and out of Sarajevo signed between the Bosnian Government and the Serbs on 17 March takes effect. Key roads and a bridge linking Serb and Muslim neighborhoods open.
- 24 March** The Bosnian Serb "parliament" rejects participation in the Croat-Muslim federation and conditions participation in future peace talks on the lifting of UN sanctions against the former Yugoslavia.

- 27 March** The assembly of the self-proclaimed Bosnian Croat republic of Herceg-Bosna votes to endorse the Croat-Muslim federation and send representatives to the Bosnian assembly for further debate on the constitution.
- 30 March** A constituent assembly of Croats and the Bosnian assembly unanimously adopts the constitution for the Croat-Muslim federation. The Bosnian assembly approved the constitution before the constituent assembly was called.
- 1 April** The Croatian Government and the Krajina Serbs sign a cease-fire agreement at the Russian Embassy in Zagreb.
- 31 March** UNSC extends UNPROFOR's mandate for six months, approves 3,700 additional personnel, and asks NATO to extend close air support to UN troops in Croatia.
- 4 April** The Croatian Government and the Krajina Serbs begin implementation of a cease-fire agreement.
- 8-9 April** The UN Commander in Bosnia, General Rose, shuttles between Bosnian Serb Army Commander General Mladic and Bosnian Army General Commander Delic to negotiate a cease-fire in the Muslim enclave of Gorazde. His mission is unsuccessful, however, and Serb artillery attacks against Gorazde intensify.
- 10 April** In NATO's first-ever airstrike against a ground target, US planes bomb Serb positions attacking Gorazde. NATO conducts a second airstrike on 11 April following continued Serb attacks against the town. Russia complains it was not consulted. The Bosnian Serbs respond by detaining UN and NGO personnel and threatening to shoot down US planes, but the fighting eases.
- 14 April** Bosnian Government and Croat representative meeting in Sarajevo to discuss the Croat-Muslim federation agree on procedures to nominate presidential and prime ministerial candidates and decide to call a constituent assembly later in the month.
- 16 April** A British jet is shot down over Gorazde, as the Bosnian Serb assault on the enclave intensifies.
- 17 April** UN envoy Akashi negotiates a cease-fire agreement for Gorazde with Bosnian Serb leader Karadzic. The Serbs agree to release detained UN personnel and withdraw forces from the enclave although no deadline is specified. The Serbs reject the immediate deployment of UN troops to Gorazde.

- 18 April** UN Secretary General Boutros-Ghali asks NATO to launch airstrikes to protect the six UN “safe areas” in Bosnia.
- 18-19 April** EU foreign ministers call for cease-fire and demilitarized zone around Gorazde, release of detained UN personnel and unimpeded access for relief workers throughout Bosnia, and closer diplomatic cooperation between the EU, the UN, the United States, and Russia. But they give no indication how these goals are to be achieved.
- 21 April** The Krajina Serb assembly approves a “government of national unity” under Prime Minister Mikelic, President Martic’s nominee.
- 22 April** NATO orders Bosnian Serb forces to immediately halt attacks on Gorazde and pull back 3 km from Gorazde by 2001 EDT on 23 April or face airstrikes within a 20-km radius of the city. NATO also orders the Bosnian Serbs to withdraw all heavy weapons from a 20-km exclusion zone around Gorazde by 2001 EDT on 26 April. NATO agrees to extend the threat of airstrikes to cover all of the UN safe areas. The UNSC passes a resolution demanding the Bosnian Serbs pull back from Gorazde, implement an immediate cease-fire, and allow unimpeded freedom of movement for UN personnel in Bosnia.
- UN special envoy Akashi secures agreement from the Bosnian Serbs that they will end hostilities in Gorazde, withdraw heavy weapons from a 20-km exclusion zone, and guarantee freedom of movement for UN and relief personnel by 0600 EDT on 23 April.
- 23 April** Bosnian Government and Croat representatives meeting in Sarajevo fail to reach agreement on delineating cantons in the Croat-Muslim federation or filling leadership positions. They also cancel a constituent assembly of both sides scheduled for the end of the month.
- 26 April** The Contact Group—representatives of Russia, the EU, the UN, and the United States—meets for the first time in Sarajevo in an effort to bring the warring parties back to negotiations and work toward a cease-fire in Bosnia.
- 27 April** The UN authorizes 6,550 extra troops for the former Yugoslavia, bringing the approved total to 44,870. There are 33,300 actually deployed, including 17,000 in Bosnia.
- 3 May** Bosnian Serb leader Karadzic agrees to a UN proposal to post military observers around Brcko and to a cease-fire in the area.

- 3-4 May** UN Special Envoy Akashi negotiates an agreement with Bosnian Serb leader Karadzic to permit a British convoy to enter Gorazde and to allow Serb tanks to transit the Sarajevo exclusion zone under UNPROFOR control.
- 5 May** The Contact Group resumes shuttle diplomacy between Sarajevo and Pale. The UNSC passes a resolution warning all warring parties that offensive action around Brcko would result in serious consequences and calling for a cessation of hostilities throughout Bosnia and a resumption of negotiations.
- 6 May** French Foreign Minister Juppe revives France's threat to withdraw its forces if there is no quick progress toward peace.
- 7-11 May** Bosnian Government and Croat representatives meeting in Vienna reach agreement on details of delineating cantons in the Croat-Muslim federation and filling federation leadership positions.
- 13 May** Ministers from the Contact Group countries meeting in Geneva agree on a strategy to restart Bosnian peace negotiations. They call for a four-month cease-fire, 51 percent of Bosnian territory for the Croat-Muslim federation, and continuation of current sanctions against Serbia with the prospect of an easing if Belgrade cooperates with the peace process.
- 17 May** France announces it will withdraw 2,500 of the 6,900 French soldiers assigned to UNPROFOR in the former Yugoslavia over the next six months.
- 25-26 May** Contact Group representatives hold bilateral meetings with the Bosnian Government and the Bosnian Serb parties in Talloires, France. The parties do not reach an agreement but the negotiations are scheduled to reconvene in 10 days.
- 30 May** The Bosnian Constituent Assembly names Croat leader Kresimir Zubak as President of the Croat-Muslim federation and current Bosnian Vice President Ganic as its Vice President.
- 4 June** The Contact Group holds bilateral meetings with representatives of the Croat-Muslim federation and the Bosnian Serbs in Geneva but fails to bring them together.
- 8 June** Bosnian Government and Serb leaders sign a renewable monthlong cease-fire agreement at talks mediated by UN envoy Akashi. The agreement is to take effect on 10 June. The negotiations began only after the Bosnian Serbs

- complied with the Bosnian Government demand that they withdraw all “police” forces from within the 3-km exclusion zone around Gorazde.
- 14 June**
- Croatian President Tudjman and Bosnian President Izetbegovic meet in Sarajevo and pledge closer cooperation on economic issues, foreign relations, and integrating the Croat-Muslim federation and building its relations with Croatia.
- 16 June**
- The Contact Group meets in London to discuss a map to divide Bosnia. The warring parties are not represented at the meeting.
- 23 June**
- The Bosnian parliament unanimously elects Bosnian Prime Minister Silajdzic to head a cabinet composed of 11 Muslims and six Croats. It will run both the Bosnian and the Croat-Muslim federation governments until parliamentary elections in the fall.
- 28 June**
- The Contact Group, meeting in Paris, agrees on a map and a package of incentives to use to convince the warring parties to reach a settlement.
- 5 July**
- The foreign ministers of the Contact Group meet in Geneva and endorse the group’s proposal for a Bosnian settlement.
- 6 July**
- The Contact Group presents its peace plan to the warring parties in Geneva and gives them two weeks to respond to the proposal.
- 10 July**
- The G-7 and Russia endorse the Contact Group plan and urge the warring parties to accept it at a summit meeting in Naples.
- 11 July**
- The Bosnian Government agrees to extend by one month the Bosnian cease-fire that expired on 10 July. The Bosnian Serbs had agreed to the extension on 8 July.
- NATO’s North Atlantic Council reiterates its willingness to take part in implementing the Contact Group proposal and directs its military authorities to work with UNPROFOR to update contingency planning for such a role.
- 12-13 July**
- French Foreign Minister Juppe and British Foreign Minister Hurd travel to Bosnia to meet with the warring parties in an effort to convince them to accept the Contact Group peace plan.
- 18 July**
- The Bosnian assembly approves the Contact Group peace plan.

- 18-19 July The Bosnian Serb parliament debates the Contact Group proposal but does not reveal its final position.
- 20 July The Bosnian Serbs “conditionally” accept the Contact Group peace plan, which the group interprets as a rejection.
- 23 July The EU begins administration of Mostar.
- 25 July The Contact Group meets in Moscow to discuss their response to the Bosnian Serb rejection of the peace plan.
- UN Secretary General Boutros-Ghali recommends the withdrawal of UN troops from the Balkans and asks the Contact Group to organize an international task force to impose a peace plan.
- 27 July Bosnian Serbs cut off the main route into Sarajevo to all civilian and commercial traffic.
- 28 July Bosnian Serb assembly convenes to reconsider the Contact Group peace plan and rejects it for a second time.
- 30 July The Contact Group ministers meet in Geneva and agree to tighten sanctions on Serbia in response to the Bosnian Serb rejection of its peace plan.
- 3 August The Bosnian Serb assembly votes unanimously to hold a referendum on 27-28 August on the Contact Group proposal.
- 4 August President Milosevic announces an immediate political and economic blockade against the Bosnian Serbs.
- 5 August NATO planes strike Bosnian Serb ground target after Serbs remove heavy weapons from a UN-monitored collection point near Sarajevo.
- 5-6 August The Bosnian Serbs return the weapons to the UN depot to avert further airstrikes.
- Croatian and Krajina Serb officials resume stalled negotiations but no progress reported.
- 8 August UN commander Rose proposes a demilitarized zone around Sarajevo.
- 11 August UN commander Rose threatens both Bosnian Serb and Bosnian Army forces with airstrikes as fighting near Visoko spills into 20-km exclusion zone around Sarajevo.

- 13 August UN dispatches ICFY envoy Stoltenberg to Belgrade and Pale to meet with Serbian and Bosnian Serb officials. Bosnian Serb leader Karadzic again rejects the Contact Group plan.
- NATO aircraft fly over a weapons collection point near Sarajevo on Saturday preventing Bosnian Serb units from removing two tanks. Troops on the ground block two other attempts to remove weapons from UN-monitored sites.
- 14 August Serbs and Muslims sign a UN-brokered agreement to halt sniping in Sarajevo.
- 15 August UN announces weapons firings in Sarajevo over the weekend are the highest in weeks with more than 1,400 incidents recorded.
- Croatian refugees announced they will end their blockade of crossings into the UN-protected areas.
- 17 August Abdic declares a unilateral cease-fire between rebel Muslim and government forces in the Bihac enclave.
- 18 August Bosnian Serb assembly session elects a new government.
- 19 August Muslim rebel leader Abdic surrenders to Bosnian Government forces but later refuses unconditional surrender and flees Bihac.
- 20 August Bosnian Serb and Krajina Serb leaders sign a joint declaration calling for a unified Serb state.
- 20-21 August As many as 20,000 refugees flee the Bihac enclave into Krajina Serb-controlled territory. Croatian Government blocks their entry into Croatia.
- 22 August Bosnian Army forces capture Muslim separatist stronghold in the Bihac enclave.
- 24 August Russian Prime Minister Chernomyrdin pledges in meeting with Serbian Prime Minister Marjanovic to back efforts to ease sanctions against Serbia if Belgrade observes its commitment to break ties to the Bosnian Serbs.
- Federation parties agree to establish a joint political commission to work with the federation leadership to implement the federation agreement.
- 26 August Emergency session of the Serbian assembly adopts declaration supporting the Contact Group's peace plan.

- 27 August Russian Foreign Minister meets with Serbian President Milosevic in Belgrade to discuss easing of sanctions against Serbia and border monitoring issues.
- 27-28 August Bosnian Serb referendum overwhelmingly rejects Contact Group plan.
- 30 August Bosnian and Bosnian Serb Army commanders sign an antisniping agreement for Gorazde.
- 2-10 September Approximately 3,500 Muslims and other minorities are expelled from northern Bosnia in the single most intensive week of Bosnian Serb ethnic cleansing since the campaign intensified in mid-July.
- 3 September Russian Foreign Minister Kozyrev says Russia will withdraw its troops from Bosnia if NATO conducts airstrikes against the Bosnian Serbs or if the Bosnia arms embargo is lifted.
- 4 September UN mediators Owen and Stoltenberg meet with Milosevic to discuss Belgrade's embargo on the Bosnian Serbs. Milosevic tells Stoltenberg that he will accept a plan to place international monitors along the border.
- 6-7 September Contact group meets in Berlin to discuss monitoring proposal arranged by EU mediator Owen and accepted by Milosevic. The group agrees to request that the UN ease some sanctions against Serbia in exchange for Belgrade's acceptance of border monitors.
- 8 September French Foreign Ministry announces Belgrade will accept an international humanitarian mission along the federal border with Bosnia. The contact group agrees to recommend the UN tighten sanctions against the Bosnian Serbs and ease some sanctions against Belgrade.
- 9 September As many as 30,000 refugees from Velika Kladusa in the Bihać enclave remain in the Krajina Serb-controlled area.
- 10-11 September EU foreign ministers approve in principle the contact group plan for easing sanctions against Belgrade in exchange for Belgrade's acceptance of international monitors along its border with Bosnia. The EU is prepared to send 135 monitors. The ministers also voice strong opposition to lifting the Bosnian arms embargo.
- 14 September Bosnian President Izetbegovic and Croatian President Tudjman reach agreement on the creation of a Bosnian Muslim-Croat military command and of municipal and cantonal Federation authorities.

15 September	Bosnian Serbs divert power from powerlines in Sarajevo to Pale, leaving Sarajevo without electricity or water.
16 September	An advance team of 19 international border observers arrives in Belgrade. The mission, under the direction of Swedish general Bo Pellnas, will monitor the economic blockade imposed on the Bosnian Serbs by Belgrade to verify whether it is being implemented.
18 September	UN Commander Rose threatens both Bosnian Serbs and Muslims with NATO airstrikes after fighting between Bosnian Army forces and the Bosnian Serb Army results in the shelling of Sarajevo by the Bosnian Serbs.
22 September	US and British NATO fighter planes hit a Bosnian Serb tank in the Sarajevo exclusion zone after Bosnian Serbs attack a French armored personnel carrier.
23 September	The UNSC adopts a resolution to ease sanctions against Serbia once UNSYG Boutros-Ghali verifies that Belgrade's blockade of the Bosnian Serbs is effective. The Security Council also passes resolutions to tighten sanctions against the Bosnian Serbs and condemn ethnic cleansing.
27 September	Bosnian President Izetbegovic calls on the Security Council to lift the arms embargo but delay implementation for six months.
28 September	UN personnel make repairs to a damaged transformer restoring electric supplies and water to Sarajevo.
30 September	The UN Security Council votes to extend UNPROFOR's mandate for six months in Bosnia, Croatia, and Macedonia.
3 October	UNSYG Boutros-Ghali sets in motion the process to suspend phase one sanctions after receiving confirmation from ICFY chairmen Owen and Stoltenberg that Belgrade is meeting its commitment to close the border. The Belgrade airport will reopen and sporting and cultural exchanges will resume for 100 days starting 5 October.
7 October	NATO ambassadors urge UNSYG Boutros-Ghali to allow swifter airstrikes, possibly without warning, on a wider choice of targets if the Bosnian Serb violate exclusion zones or attack UNPROFOR.
28 October	USUN Ambassador Albright circulates a draft UNSC resolution calling for the arms embargo in Bosnia to be lifted in six months unless the Bosnian Serbs accept the contact group peace plan.

NATO and the UN reach agreement on the use of airstrikes in Bosnia. Airstrikes will be proportional to the violation, more timely, and without tactical warning unless civilians are endangered. The UN retains the authority to initiate and stop airstrikes.

- 3 November The UN General Assembly approves a nonbinding resolution to lift the arms embargo against Bosnia in six months if the Bosnian Serbs do not accept the contact group peace plan. UN Security Council members, who have sole authority to lift the embargo, endorse the resolution with five in favor and 10 abstentions.
- 9 November A single Krajina Serb jet aircraft takes off from Udbina airfield to attack two targets in Bihac, violating the no-fly zone in Bosnia. The jet's missiles hit an ammunition dump and a parcel of open ground in the surrounding area.
- 18 November Krajina Serb jets attack Bihac with missiles, napalm, and cluster bombs. The UNSC issues a presidential statement condemning the attack and calls for an end to actions that endanger UN peacekeepers. Croatian President Tudjman gives the UNSC permission to allow NATO to fly over Croatian territory.
- 19 November The UNSC unanimously authorizes NATO planes to strike targets in Croatia used by the Serbs to launch attacks on UN safe areas. The Krajina Serb assembly rejects a proposal initiated by international mediators Owen and Stoltenberg to restore economic links to the Croatian Government.
- 21 November NATO planes, at UN request, attack Serb-controlled Udbina airfield in Croatia, rendering it temporarily inoperable. The strike is intended to stop Serb attacks on the neighboring Bihac enclave in Bosnia.
- 23 November NATO planes attack Serb surface to-air-missile sites around Bosanska Krupa and Otoka in northwest Bosnia and in the area of Dvor, in retaliation for Serb attacks against British aircraft the previous day.
- 30 November UNSYG Boutros-Ghali arrives in Sarajevo to negotiate a cease-fire throughout Bosnia with Bosnian President Izetbegovic and Serb leader Karadzic. Karadzic refuses to meet the UNSYG, insisting that the meeting take place on Serb-controlled land.
- 2 December Croatia and the “Republic of Serbian Krajina” (RSK) sign an economic agreement as a first step to restoration of utilities, reopening road links, and reactivating an oil pipeline between Croat and Serb-controlled areas of Croatia.

- Contact Group Foreign Ministers meet in Brussels to discuss new initiatives designed to encourage the Bosnian Serbs to sign the Contact Group peace plan.
- 4 December British Foreign Minister Hurd and French Foreign Minister Juppe travel to Belgrade for talks with Serbian President Milosevic. Milosevic promises to use his influence to press the Bosnian Serbs to accept the Contact Group plan.
- 5 December A delegation of Bosnian Serb assembly members led by Bosnian Serb Foreign Minister Buha urges other assembly members to consider acceptance of the Contact Group plan, after a meeting in Belgrade with Serbian President Milosevic.
- 12 December Krajina Serb and/or rebel Muslim forces destroy a Bangladeshi UN armored personnel carrier in Velika Kladusa with an antitank guided missile. UNPROFOR Commander Rose and other UN officials in Sarajevo deny Bangladeshi requests for NATO air presence.
- 14 December Bosnian Serb leader Karadzic publicly invites former US President Carter to visit Bosnia as a mediator. Karadzic pledges to free all UN peacekeepers and Muslim soldiers held prisoner who are under the age of 19, guarantee freedom of movement for UN convoys, accept an immediate cease-fire around Sarajevo, and reopen Sarajevo airport.
- 18 December Former President Carter travels to Sarajevo for an hour-long meeting with Bosnian President Izetbegovic. Carter recommends that the Contact Group plan serve as the basis for further negotiations.
- 19 December Former President Carter, after a meeting with Bosnian Serb leaders in Pale, announces a Serb proposal for an immediate four-month cease-fire and an offer to continue talks based on the Contact Group plan. The points of the unilateral cease-fire are outlined in a statement issued by Serb leaders. Afterward, Karadzic denies he agreed to an immediate cease-fire but expresses the need "to explore the possibilities" of an immediate cease-fire.
- 19-20 December Military chiefs of NATO countries and countries with peacekeepers in Bosnia meet in The Hague to discuss ways to improve the UNPROFOR mission. The leaders call for more resources but do not discuss increasing the number of UN troops or giving the mission authority for more robust military action.
- 20 December Carter returns to Sarajevo where he obtains Bosnian President Izetbegovic's agreement to a four-month cease-fire, and, after a second meeting in Pale,

announces that Bosnian Serb leaders will accept a complete cease-fire throughout Bosnia to be implemented on 23 December. Carter then travels to Belgrade to hold talks with Serbian President Milosevic before returning to the United States.

- 21 December Croatia's Krajina Serbs allow the Zagreb-Belgrade highway to reopen as part of their mediated economic agreement signed on 2 December.
- 22 December UN Special Envoy Akashi obtains commitments from Bosnian Muslim and Serb officials to enact a cease-fire at noon on 23 December, after meetings in Sarajevo and Pale.
- 23 December Bosnian President Izetbegovic and Bosnian Serb leader Karadzic sign separate texts agreeing to a cease-fire valid until 1 January, after which there will be an anticipated four-month "cessation of hostilities."
- 24 December A seven-day cease-fire between Bosnian Muslims and Serbs starts at noon.
- 28 December Rebel Muslim leader Abdic agrees "in principle" to respect a cease-fire and end ethnic cleansing in Serb-controlled areas of Bosnia.
- 29 December The Bosnian Serb assembly endorses the 19 December Carter agreement and agrees to negotiations based on the existing Contact Group plan. Seven Serb deputies, who have maintained ties to Milosevic, break away from Karadzic's SDS party to form their own independent group.
- 31 December Bosnian Government and Serb officials sign separate texts, agreeing to a four-month comprehensive cease-fire to take effect at noon on 1 January. The agreement follows the temporary truce signed on 23 December and calls for UN troops to be positioned between the combatant forces in some areas. UNPROFOR will set up joint commissions to monitor the cease-fire.

1995

- 1 January 1995 The four-month cessation of hostilities agreement between the Bosnian Government and Bosnian Serbs takes effect at noon Sarajevo time.
- 2 January Bosnian Croat political and military officials, led by Federation President Zubak, sign the four-month cease-fire agreement after a two-hour meeting in Mostar with UN Commander Rose. Zubak attaches a separate annex affirming that plans presented by Milosevic and the Contact Group offer a good basis for reopening peace negotiations. Karadzic insists, however, that land swaps and constitutional issues must be decided before formal acceptance of the plan.

- 4 January** A joint commission of Bosnian Muslim and Serb leaders fail to reach agreement on implementing key aspects of the cease-fire agreement. The meeting, held at Sarajevo airport, is suspended following Serb complaints over the Bosnian Government's refusal to withdraw its troops from Mt. Igman.
- 6 January** Bosnian Muslim and Serb leaders again fail to reach agreement on implementing the cease-fire. Serb leaders declare they will not reopen key supply routes leading into Sarajevo until they are permitted to inspect the Mt. Igman DMZ to verify the withdrawal of government troops.
- 9 January** UN officials are unable to verify the Bosnian Government's withdrawal from Mt. Igman after a government guide argues that snow conditions are unsafe and refuses to lead UN officers to the last Bosnian hideout.
- 11 January** Bosnian Government and Serb officials sign an agreement providing for the withdrawal of government forces from Mt. Igman and the opening of supply routes into Sarajevo by 14 January.
- 12 January** Croatian President Tudjman informs UNSYG Boutros-Ghali by letter that Zagreb will not renew UNPROFOR's mandate in Croatia when it expires on 31 March. Tudjman states that UN headquarters can remain in Zagreb, but UN forces must withdraw before 30 June.
- The UNSC votes to extend limited sanctions relief in Serbia for another 100 days. The vote also mandates border monitors to prohibit fuel shipments from Serbia to Serb-held areas of Croatia.
- 13 January** The Contact Group holds talks with Bosnian Serb leaders in Pale.
- 14 January** Bosnian Serb soldiers block the opening of supply routes into Sarajevo, charging that government officials are abusing the agreement signed on 11 January by seeking passage for commercial traffic as well as humanitarian aid.
- 20 January** Bosnian Government and Serb officials exchange 101 prisoners in Sarajevo. The exchange is the first prisoner swap since October 1994.
- 23 January** Bosnian Serb leader Krajisnik and UN official Muratovic sign an agreement to open key supply routes into Sarajevo by 31 January. The agreement also provides for freedom of movement for the population, exchange of POWs, and evacuation of wounded from Gorazde.
- 24 January** British Major General Rupert Smith replaces General Michael Rose as commander of UN forces in Bosnia.

24-25 January	The Contact Group begins two days of shuttle diplomacy between Pale and Sarajevo to further the peace process. The group decides to suspend the talks after the Serbs refuse to accept the Contact Group plan as the basis for further negotiations.
26 January	The Adria oil pipeline, extending from Croatia's Adriatic coast to central Europe opens under the 2 December economic agreement between Zagreb and the Krajina Serbs.
30 January	The Zagreb Four (Z-4), the United States, EU, UN and Russia, presents its plan for a political settlement in Croatia to President Tudjman and Krajina Serb "President" Martic. The plan reestablishes Croatian control over all territory within its internationally recognized borders and gives considerable autonomy to Serbs in areas where they form a majority. Martic refuses to receive the plan, stating that Knin must first receive guarantees that UNPROFOR will stay in Croatia, while Tudjman says Zagreb will study the plan before further decision.
31 January	Serbian President Milosevic refuses to meet with Z-4 mediators and declines to discuss their plan for a political settlement in Croatia.
1 February	UN officials announce that Bosnian Serb leaders will allow the opening of a key route into Sarajevo to humanitarian traffic. The road will most likely remain closed to commercial traffic.
5 February	Senior officials of the Muslim-Croat Federation meet in Munich, Germany, with US and Contact Group representatives. They agree on a nine-point plan to strengthen the Federation and to nominate an international mediator to resolve disputed matters.
6 February	UN officials announce the opening of key supply routes around Sarajevo and across the airport to civilian traffic. Commercial traffic is still excluded.
8 February	The Krajina Serb "parliament" votes to suspend political talks and further steps in implementing the 2 December economic agreement with Zagreb until it reverses its decision to expel UN forces. The vote is accompanied by a measure declaring a war alert, one step below declaring a full state of war.
13 February	The Bosnian Serb assembly meets in Samac and again rejects the Contact Group plan. The assembly decides to prohibit unauthorized contacts between Bosnian Serb individuals or groups with the Contact Group in an effort to rein in dissident deputies who favor the Contact Group plan.

- 14 February** The five-nation Contact Group, at a meeting in Paris, agrees to a new initiative to lift sanctions against Belgrade in exchange for its recognition of Croatia, Bosnia, Macedonia, and Slovenia. In addition, Serbian President Milosevic must endorse the Z-4 plan providing for a political solution in Croatia.
- 18-19 February** Russian Foreign Minister Kozyrev travels to Serbia for two days of talks with Serbian President Milosevic concerning the new Contact Group initiative. Serbian officials refuse to consider the initiative until sanctions against Belgrade are lifted.
- 20 February** Krajina and Bosnian Serb officials form a joint defense council, headed by Bosnian Serb President Karadzic and Krajina Serb President Martic. They agree to pool military resources and pledge military cooperation if fighting resumes.
- 23 February** French, German, and British representatives of the Contact Group present Serbian President Milosevic with the group's new plan offering sanctions relief to Serbia in exchange for its recognition of the other former Yugoslav states. No official statements follow the meeting, but press sources indicate Milosevic has rejected the new offer.
- 6 March** Military commanders from the Croatian, Bosnian, and Bosnian Croat armies meet in Zagreb to sign an accord strengthening military cooperation. The accord provides the framework for possible coordination of Muslim-Croat military actions against Serbs in Croatia and Bosnia.
- 8 March** Deputies of the Krajina Serb Radical Party walk out of the Krajina Serb assembly after their demand for a no-confidence vote in Prime Minister Mikelic is refused.
- 8-10 March** Federation President Zubak and Vice President Ganic agree in Bonn, Germany, to take steps to strengthen the federation by 15 April.
- 10 March** Bosnian Croat General Santic, commander of Bosnian Croat forces in Bihac, is reported missing. Bosnian Croat officials accuse the Bosnian Government of detaining Santic, but Bosnian Army spokesmen deny involvement.
- 12 March** Croatian President Tudjman announces Zagreb's readiness to negotiate a new mandate with the UN Security Council for an international force to replace existing UN troops in Croatia. The new force would consist of approximately 5,000 troops, with 500 soldiers stationed along Croatia's borders with Bosnia and Serbia.

15 March	Bosnian Army Commander Delic announces that three government soldiers are being detained in connection with the early March disappearance of Bosnian Croat General Santic. Delic states that the incident was a “settling of personal scores” and not motivated by political or military reasons.
20 March	Croatian and Krajina Serb officials agree to open a section of the Belgrade-Zagreb railway by mid-April. Croatian officials agree to perform repairs to the railway by 27 March.
24 March	Bosnian Prime Minister Silajdzic and Croatian Prime Minister Valentic sign a federation agreement on economic and customs cooperation, the return of refugees, and the abolition of visas. The two officials also review an agreement that guarantees the federation access to the sea through Croatian territory and Croatia access through federation territory.
26 March	Bosnian Serb leader Karadzic orders the mobilization of the entire Bosnian Serb population to counter the Bosnian Government offensive, now in its second week.
27 March	The five-nation Contact Group, meeting in London, urges Sarajevo and Pale to extend the current cease-fire and pledges to continue its efforts to bring about negotiations.
28 March	The Croatian Parliament endorses a set of conclusions stating that any new UN mandate for Croatia must explicitly refer to Croatia in its name, establish effective control of Croatia’s borders, and provide for operational measures leading to peace.
29 March	The Bosnian Parliament endorses the 10 March Bonn Agreement to step up implementation of the Muslim-Croat federation.
31 March	The UNSC adopts three resolutions renewing the UN mandate in the former Yugoslavia and dividing UN troops into three separate commands for Croatia, Bosnia, and Macedonia. The new Croatian force, UNCRO (UN Confidence Restoration Operation in Croatia), will be reduced in number and tasked to monitor Croatia’s borders.
4 April	Contact Group officials, meeting in London, agree to press Sarajevo to extend the Bosnian cease-fire when it expires on 1 May. The group fails to agree on a strategy to gain Serbian recognition of Bosnia and Croatia.
8 April	Bosnian Serb and UN military generals sign an agreement pledging that both sides will not interfere with the movement of people and traffic along the main supply route between the airport and central Sarajevo. The agreement follows a tense standoff in which Bosnian Serbs blockaded French UN troops behind mines on 7 April.

- 11 April Members of the five-nation Contact Group arrive in Belgrade for talks on the peace process with Serbian President Milosevic. No formal statement is issued.
- 14 April A French UN peacekeeper is killed by an unidentified sniper in the Sarajevo suburb of Dobrinja.
- 15 April A second French UN peacekeeper is killed by sniper fire in Sarajevo. French Defense Minister Leotard goes to Sarajevo to discuss UN troop security and calls for emergency UN consultations, threatening a French withdraw from Bosnia if Paris' conditions for the continuation of the UN mission are not met.
- 15-16 April The Bosnian Serb assembly meets in Sanski Most to review the military and political situation in Serb-held Bosnia. Military and political leaders blame each other for recent military setbacks.
- 19 April The UNSC unanimously adopts a French resolution that calls on all warring parties in Bosnia to refrain from violence against UN forces, urges the extension of the cease-fire, and requests the resumption of negotiations for a peaceful settlement.
- 20-21 April UN Special Envoy Akashi talks in Sarajevo and Pale with Bosnian Government and Serb leaders on renewing the four-month cease-fire. Both Sarajevo and Pale refuse to renew the cease-fire.
- 21 April The United States, United Kingdom, Russia, France, and Germany approve a resolution to extend relaxation of minor sanctions against Serbia, but with stricter controls. The draft calls on Serbia to completely seal its borders with Bosnia, cut off communications with Pale, and requires renewal every 75 days instead of 100.
- UNSYG Boutros-Ghali recommends a report to the UNSC reorganizing UN forces in Croatia. The plan, not yet approved by Zagreb or Knin, reduces the number of troops in the force, provides for monitors on Croatia's borders with Bosnia, but does not specify the number of troops on the border or how many crossings will be monitored.
- 21-22 April US and German Contact Group officials are forced to spend the night at Sarajevo airport after Bosnian Serb officials refuse to ensure their safe passage into Sarajevo for talks with the Bosnian Government, while Serb leader Karadzic denounces the UN's limited easing of sanctions. The envoys leave the airport for Zagreb on 22 April.

- 24-25 April The Krajina Serb Army closes the Zagreb-Belgrade Highway for 24 hours in reaction to alleged interference by the Croatian Government and UNCRO officials with commercial traffic. The Krajina Serbs reopen the highway on 25 April.
- 1 May The Cessation of Hostilities Agreement expires in Bosnia amid low-level fighting.
- Croatian Army troops attack across UN lines into UN Sector West to take control of the Zagreb-Belgrade highway following a weekend of Serb and Croat killings along the road. Krajina Serbs respond by shelling nearby Croatian towns and taking 122 UN personnel hostage.
- 2 May Krajina Serbs rocket downtown Zagreb and nearby Pleso Airport in retaliation for the Croatian offensive in UN Sector West. Five people are killed, and more than 100 are injured.
- The Croatians continue their push into Sector West, seizing virtually all strategic points. President Tudjman declares victory.
- 3 May US Special Envoy Akashi brokers a cease-fire between Croatia and the Krajina Serbs following another Serb missile strike against Zagreb that hit a children's hospital and the national theater—killing one person and wounding 40.
- 7 May Bosnian Serbs shell Sarajevo in the first major attack on the city since the expiration of a four-month cease-fire on 1 May. Ten are killed and 40 are injured, according to press accounts.
- 9 May The United Nations begins evacuating Serbs from Sector West to Bosnia after Krajina Serb leaders threaten further rocketing of Zagreb if they are not allowed to go.
- 10 May UN Commander General Rupert Smith requests airstrikes on Bosnian Serb gunners in retaliation for the 7 May shelling of Sarajevo. He is overruled by UN Special Envoy Akashi who fears airstrikes will upset the recently brokered cease-fire in Croatia. Afterward, frustrated UN officials in Sarajevo call for a review of their role in Bosnia.
- 15 May General Milan Celeketic, chief of the Krajina Serb Army, submits his resignation to RSK President Martic. He blames not only the political leadership for losses in Western Slovenia but also himself for not upholding his promise to defend every “centimeter” of Serb territory.

- 16 May** UNSYG Boutros-Ghali, in a closed-door briefing of the Security Council, suggests that UN troops in Bosnia be reduced and regrouped in light the escalation of hostilities and threats to peacekeepers.
- 17 May** The UNSC adopts a resolution demanding that Croatian and Krajina Serb forces withdraw from UN separation zones in Croatia, including a warning of unspecified actions if the two sides do not comply.
- 20 May** The Krajina Serb assembly votes to unify with the Bosnian Serbs and calls for a joint session of the Krajina and Bosnian Serb assemblies by the end of May to formalize the unification.
- 24 May** UN officials issue an ultimatum to the warring parties in Bosnia to cease using heavy weapons around Sarajevo. They warn the Serbs to return four big guns taken from UN depots by noon 25 May or face NATO airstrikes.
- 25 May** NATO launches airstrikes against two ammunition bunkers near Pale after Bosnian Serbs ignore the ultimatum issued on 24 May. The Bosnian Serbs retaliate by shelling UN safe areas, taking UN troops hostage and killing 68 in Tuzla.
- 26 May** NATO launches a second round of airstrikes against the Pale ammunition depot at Jahorina Potok.
- 28 May** Bosnian Foreign Minister Ljubijankic is killed when the helicopter carrying him is shot down over the Bihać region. Krajina Serbs claim responsibility.
- 29 May** Bosnian Serb leaders rescind all prior agreements with the United Nations.
- 31 May** Lord David Owen announces his resignation as EU peace negotiator in the former Yugoslavia.
- Press reports indicate that Bosnian Serbs have taken a total of 372 peace-keepers hostage since the 25 and 26 May NATO airstrikes.
- 1 June** UN Secretary General Boutros-Ghali presents options to the Security Council for the future of peacekeeping forces in Bosnia. His preference is a reduction of UNPROFOR's mandate, consolidation of UNPROFOR troops, and an eventual reduction of force.
- 2 June** A US F-16 is shot down by Bosnian Serbs over Banja Luka while policing the Bosnian "no-fly" zone.
- 8 June** US Marines rescue F-16 pilot shot down on 2 June.

- 7-13 June Bosnian Serbs release 258 UN hostages. Twenty-six hostages remain in Serb hands, and 92 UN peacekeepers are blocked in place by Serb forces.
- 15 June The Bosnian Serb “parliament” votes to unite with its Croatian Serb counterpart.
- Bosnian Army troops massing north of Sarajevo remove weapons from UN depot at gunpoint. Shops, schools, and offices close in Sarajevo.
- 16 June Heavy fighting breaks out around Sarajevo as Bosnian Army begins probing attacks for an offensive to lift the siege of Sarajevo.
- UN Security Council authorizes a British-French-Dutch rapid reaction force (RRF) to protect UN peacekeepers in Bosnia. Arrangements to pay for the force are deferred.
- 18 June Bosnian Serbs release remaining 26 UN hostages in exchange for four Serb soldiers detained by United Nations.
- 20 June EU envoy Carl Bildt arrives in Split for his first visit to former Yugoslavia as international mediator.
- 28 June NATO gives provisional approval to a plan to send thousands of troops to Bosnia to cover withdrawal of UN peacekeepers if their mission collapses.
- 30 June German parliament approves cabinet’s decision to send soldiers and fighter aircraft to support the RRF in Bosnia, which could be Germany’s first foreign combat mission since World War II.
- 4 July US logistic troops arrive in Split to prepare the ground for the UN Rapid Reaction Force.
- 5 July UN Security Council renews for another 75 days the easing of some sanctions it imposed on the Yugoslav Republic in 1992.
- 9 July Bosnian Serb tanks push to within 1,500 meters of the town limits of Srebrenica. Bosnian Serbs detain seven UN Dutch peacekeepers during the incursion and take them to the town of Bratunac in Serb-held territory.
- 11 July NATO jets attack Bosnian Serb tanks entering Srebrenica after UN troops come under Serb fire.

- Bosnian Serb troops break through Dutch UN defenses and overrun Srebrenica safe area, forcing thousands of Muslims to flee north to a UN base at Potocari.
- 12 July UN Security Council demands Bosnian Serb forces withdraw from UN-declared safe area of Srebrenica. The European Union and NATO make similar statements, and NATO demands the immediate and unconditional release of Dutch peacekeepers held by Bosnian Serbs.
- 14 July Thorvald Stoltenberg is named special UN envoy to Bosnia. Bosnian Government refuses to cooperate with either Akashi or Stoltenberg, blaming the fall of Srebrenica on UN inaction.
- Bosnian Serb forces launch a major attack on the UN-declared safe area of Zepa.
- 18 July Bosnian Serb forces press attack on Zepa with tanks and artillery, while Bosnian Government troops disarm UN Ukrainian troops, hoping to use them as hostages against the Serbs. Serb atrocities associated with their capture of Zepa and Srebrenica eventually bring worldwide condemnation.
- 19 July Croatian Serb troops and their rebel Muslim allies open concerted attack on Bosnian Government positions in the northwestern Bihac enclave. The number of refugees arriving in Tuzla from eastern Bosnia reaches 29,000 with 13,000 still missing.
- 21 July Senior officials from Contact Group and UN troop contributor nations meet in London to try to save the UN mission in Bosnia.
- 22 July Croatian President Tudjman, Bosnian President Izetbegovic, and Federation leader Zubak sign the Split Agreement for Croatia to provide Bosnia-Herzegovina urgent military assistance against the Serb offensive in Bihac.
- 25 July Croatian Army and Bosnian Croat forces begin an offensive in the Livno Valley of western Bosnia against the Bosnian Serbs. Krajina Serb leader Martic, Bosnian Serb General Mladic, and Bosnian Serb leader Karadzic are indicted by the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia.
- 26 July The US Senate votes to lift the arms embargo against the Bosnian Government.

- 4 August Bosnian Serb “President” Radovan Karadzic replaces General Ratko Mladic as Commander of the Bosnian Serb Army.
- Croatian forces launch an attack against the Serb-occupied UN Sectors North and South in Croatia.
- 5 August Croatian Army forces capture the Krajina Serb “capital” of Knin.
- 7 August Croatian Defense Minister Susak announces that all military operations in Sectors North and South are finished.
- 11 August Bosnian Serb “President” Karadzic reinstates General Mladic as top military leader.
- President Clinton vetoes Senate bill lifting arms embargo, orders new exploratory mission.
- 14 August United States sends a delegation headed by US Assistant Secretary of State Holbrooke on a tour of Balkan capitals.
- Bosnian Serbs begin a new wave of mass expulsions of Croats and Muslims from Banja Luka.
- 15 August A delegation of envoys headed by Richard Holbrooke press new peace initiatives at a meeting in Split, Croatia with Croatian Foreign Minister Granic and Bosnian Foreign Minister Sacirbey.
- 16 August Holbrooke and other envoys meet with Croatian President Tudjman to discuss the US initiative. Tudjman says he will cooperate.
- 17 August US envoy Holbrooke meets with Serbian President Milosevic to present the US peace initiative. Milosevic supports the plan.
- 19 August The Security Council criticizes Croatia and Bosnia for blocking deployment of the Rapid Reaction Force.
- 23 August Seventy-two Ukrainian UN peacekeepers withdraw from the eastern Bosnian enclave of Gorazde.
- A Bosnian Serb artillery round kills 37 civilians and wounds 85 others near the Merkale market in Sarajevo.
- NATO forces begin airstrikes against Bosnian Serb targets near Sarajevo, Mostar, Tuzla, Pale, and Gorazde.

- 30 August Bosnian Serbs reluctantly give Serbian President Milosevic authority to negotiate for them.
- 14 September NATO suspends bombing after Bosnian Serbs agree to move heavy weapons away from Sarajevo.
- 15 September Croatian offensive with Bosnian Army wins back 4,000 square kilometers of territory; tens of thousands of Serbs flee.
- 5 October President Clinton announces breakthrough in Holbrooke talks; prospect of cease-fire spurs fighting for last-minute land grabs.
- 14 October Frontline meetings of military commanders end most cease-fire breaches in northwest Bosnia.
- 12 November Presidents Alija Izetbegovic of Bosnia, Franjo Tudjman of Croatia, and Slobodan Milosevic of Serbia meet at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Dayton, Ohio, for open-ended peace talks.

Section I

Introduction

Slovenia 1990-1991

Chapter 1

Loosed Anarchy:

The Origins of the Balkan Conflict

*Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and
everywhere
The ceremony of innocence is drowned
The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity . . .*

W. B. Yeats, *The Second Coming*

When a nation dies, its passing ought to be marked by a signal event—the abdication of a monarch, the signing of a treaty, at least the lowering of a flag. No such ceremony signaled the end of the 45-year-old Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, though its death sentence was pronounced in Slovenia's declaration of independence in June 1991. By mid-July, all efforts to save the nation had failed; but, long after the demise of the Yugoslav Government, the country's death spasms shook all of Croatia and later Bosnia with more than four years of violence, cruelty, and bloodshed.

The Yugoslav catastrophe that burst on the periphery of Europe during the summer of 1991 may have seemed a sudden occurrence, but it had been a long time coming. A long powder train of ethnic differences, economic inequities, and faltering political arrangements had been smoldering for years. Decades of effort had forestalled the explosion, and, while some sought desperately—at least at the end—to cool the volatile elements that could blow Yugoslavia apart, others were just as consciously stirring the very ingredients that made the mix unstable and its detonation certain.¹*

The Yugoslav political system had been redesigned and patched over for decades but was finally tearing apart at the seams. Political strains, some of them the

result of regional economic differences, had torn gaps in the federal fabric, primarily between the northwestern Republics of Slovenia and Croatia and the federal capital in Belgrade. As early as the 1960s, the Slovenes and Croats began objecting to what they perceived as Serb domination of the federal governmental system.² This resentment was aggravated by the fact that their comparatively prosperous republics were making disproportionately large contributions to the federal budget while receiving comparatively little in return.

In an effort to mollify the discontented republics while still preserving the Yugoslav state, the 1974 Yugoslav Constitution—crafted while the Socialist Republic's creator, Josip Broz Tito, was still alive—massively restructured the governmental system and devolved tremendous authority from the federal government to the republics. The new document created a federation of six constituent republics (Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, and Macedonia), and two autonomous provinces, Kosovo and Vojvodina, which were semi-independent but nevertheless integral parts of Serbia. Each republic and province was represented by one person in an eight-member collective presidency.³ The 1974 Constitution also specified a system whereby (after Tito's death) the title of President would pass annually from one member of the collective presidency to the next in a preset sequence.

In the end, the rewired governmental system proved to be no more than a pacemaker for the Yugoslav nation—it could prolong its life but not stave off death indefinitely. Indeed, many were surprised that the elaborate system actually worked at all after Tito's death in 1980. But the convoluted wiring harness of federal and confederal arrangements, with a total of nine semicompeting governments, was blueprinted for confusion and eventual deadlock. The 1974 Constitution had inked over differences amongst the various

* Numbered endnotes follow each Section.

republics and ethnicities, but in no way resolved their fundamental differences.

The new constitutional system not only failed to cure the governmental ills of the 1960s but also came under even greater stresses during the 1970s and 1980s. Political differences among the republics continued to widen, and economic difficulties further aggravated internal tensions. Each segment of the population could be content enough during the expanding years of the 1970s, when the economic pie was growing and most were at least satisfied with the slice they had. This changed in the 1980s as unemployment rose, production fell, foreign debts escalated, and inflation became chronic.⁴ Interrepublic squabbling over each area's fair share of the tax burden and federal outlays grew increasingly acrimonious, and many individuals throughout Yugoslavia could easily be persuaded that their own personal woes were the fault of another ethnic group's duplicity and unfair advantages.

By the late 1980s, the failures within the Yugoslav system were all too evident, and Communism was rapidly losing credibility as a political and ideological motivator.⁵ The shrewdest of the country's politicians—most significantly, Slobodan Milosevic in Serbia and Franjo Tudjman in Croatia—correctly foresaw in the corresponding rise of ethnic nationalism a new political force that could replace it. Very calculatingly, they set about harnessing this ill wind for their own political gains. They knew well the potential hurricane force of the wind they were whistling up: ethnic nationalism had been a forbidden topic in Yugoslavia for four decades precisely because its very discussion threatened the cohesion of the Yugoslav state. When these individuals stirred their virulent strain of ethnic hypernationalism into the already volatile mix of economic dissatisfaction and political unrest, they created a witches' brew that could not fail to boil over the Balkan cauldron. Although there were many forces capable of tearing the country apart, more than any other single factor was the rise of ethnic nationalism, and specifically Serb nationalism, that brought about the death of Yugoslavia.

The beginning of the end for Yugoslavia is as difficult to pinpoint as its ultimate demise, but 24 April 1987 is as good a date as any. On that day the young Serbian

Communist Party chief, Slobodan Milosevic, paid a visit to Kosovo Polje ("the Field of Blackbirds"), the battlefield site that marked the defeat of the medieval Serbs by the Turks and the beginning of centuries of Ottoman rule in the region. In a classic Balkan paradox, by 1987 this most central of all Serb historical sites lay outside the modern Serbian heartland. No more than 10 percent of Kosovo Province's people were Serbs; the rest were ethnic Albanians, who endured not only the lowest average income of any Yugoslav ethnic group but also had suffered virtual disenfranchisement in a Serbian-run police state that grew increasingly harsh. As the Albanians' discontent with this state of affairs increased, the resulting siege mentality among the dominant but vastly outnumbered Kosovo Serbs was tinder waiting for a spark. Milosevic struck it. In an apparently unscheduled address to an unruly mob of Kosovo Serbs, Milosevic told them, "No one should dare to beat you!" (*"Niko ne sme da vas bije!"*) It was to become a rallying cry for the entire Serb nation.

Two years later, on 28 June 1989—the 600th anniversary to the day of the epic battle—a million Serbs turned out upon that same battlefield to hear Milosevic, by then the undisputed icon of the new Serb nationalism, speak. And speak he did:

*Six centuries later, again we are in battles and quarrels. They are not armed battles, though such things should not be excluded yet.*⁶

Milosevic's words cannot strictly be described as prophetic, for he was not merely the herald of things to come but also their primary composer and arranger. The chain of events set in motion in Kosovo in 1987 and 1989 was to have consequences greater and farther ranging than probably even Milosevic imagined at the time. Within three years the rising tide of Serb nationalism was to spread from Kosovo Polje to the streets of Belgrade, to the self-proclaimed Serb autonomous regions of Croatia, to the rings of artillery pieces shelling the Bosnian capital of Sarajevo. It was to prompt counterrhetoric and equally emotional responses by Yugoslavia's other ethnic groups—most

notably, Tudjman's Croats—as each action begat an equal and opposite reaction. When Slobodan Milosevic sowed the wind of Serb ethnic nationalism, he unleashed a whirlwind of forces that would ultimately encompass Yugoslavia's destruction.

Contributing to the highly charged setting of the 1980s, debates intensified rapidly toward the end of the decade over whether to allow the individual Yugoslav republics to hold multiparty elections, develop Western-style market economies, and assume increased political autonomy. On the one hand, Croatia and especially Slovenia grew increasingly independent and bold in their challenges to the federal government on these issues. On the other hand, the progressively more moribund and increasingly Serb-dominated federal institutions fought these separatist trends with diminishing success. The federal government retained effective authority only within the spheres of foreign policy, the economy, and defense. Even these domains had begun to erode as some of the individual republics undertook their own foreign and economic policies independent of—and at times at odds with—the federal government's. The time was fast approaching when the last central bastion of the Federation, defense, would be challenged by Slovenia's and Croatia's determination to establish their own autonomous armed forces.

While Croatia and Slovenia were attempting to engineer their departure from the Yugoslav federal system, the Serbian Government was focused on co-opting the collective Federal Presidency, which it accomplished by dictating the votes of Kosovo and Vojvodina and securing the cooperation of Montenegro. Constitutional amendments railroaded through the system in March 1989 all but eliminated the autonomy of Kosovo and Vojvodina, essentially giving Serbia two additional proxy votes in the Presidency. On all major issues, tiny Montenegro proved a loyal ally of Serbia, providing a unified bloc of half the votes in the eight-member Federal Presidency. At the very least, Milosevic could prevent the passage of any motion that he did not approve. With the support of any additional member of the Presidency, he could force a decision in his favor. Yugoslavia was becoming Serboslavia.

On 15 May 1991 the creakily rotating Federal Presidency system broke down completely when Serbia blocked the scheduled rotation of Stipe Mesic (the Croatian representative) to the Presidency. Not only did this create a fissure between the Croats and Serbs and their respective republics, but it also effectively pushed the Yugoslav state into political crisis without an executive branch. Nor were the federal government's problems confined to the executive. The legislative arm had effectively broken down in January 1990 when the Slovenian delegation walked out of the 14th Extraordinary Congress, visibly and dramatically marking the *de facto* death of the Communist Party in Yugoslavia.⁷ For its part, the judicial branch simply proved ineffective during a time of governmental crisis. The Federal Constitutional Court had overturned the Slovenian Assembly's declaration of autonomy on 14 January 1991, but the pronouncement remained a dead letter because the court had no mechanism for enforcing its ruling. So the independence-minded Republics of Slovenia and Croatia continued to move in the direction of autonomy, and Slovenia crystallized the debate over the future of the Yugoslav state when it announced that it would make a formal declaration of its secession from the Federation on 26 June 1991.

Because of the procedural convulsions racking the rest of the Federation's central institutions, at mid-1991 the Yugoslav military was the last fully functioning federal institution. The Presidency was in crisis, the legislature paralytic, and the constitutional court had faded into irrelevance. The Army was the only instrument federal authorities had left to deal with the centrifugal forces ripping the country apart. But the Army was a very blunt instrument, even for dealing with local armed insurrections; its leaders were even less prepared to combat amorphous political forces of democratic reform, ethnic separatism, and popular sovereignty. For this and other reasons, the Yugoslav People's Army was ill prepared and ill suited for the complex challenges it was about to face.

Chapter 2

“Brotherhood and Unity:”

The Yugoslav People’s Army Within a Dying State

From the very beginning of Socialist Yugoslavia’s history, the Yugoslav People’s Army (*Jugoslovenska Narodna Armija*—JNA) formed the cornerstone and much of the binding mortar of the nation and state.⁸ The JNA viewed itself as both the protector and the embodiment of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) with a special role in safeguarding the Yugoslav state and identity. As such, it was a nearly isolated subsociety within the larger Yugoslav society. More than any other entity, the JNA actually sought to make the Titoist slogan of *Bratstvo i Jedinstvo* (“Brotherhood and Unity”) a reality. After Tito’s death the Yugoslav People’s Army was in many ways the heart of a dying state and would be the last organ to fail.

The JNA had an important voice in federal decision-making on defense-related issues, although it traditionally did not take sides in politics per se. It was also politically conservative, and the Army’s senior leadership in particular clung to the ideal of Federal Yugoslavia long after most others had pronounced it dead.⁹ Most notably, Yugoslavia’s last Defense Minister, Gen. Veljko Kadijević—one of the tragic actors in the Yugoslav drama—would at the last be crusading virtually alone to save the Yugoslav state, even as the political leadership he served was acting in ways that could only carve it apart.

By law the JNA was supposed to mirror the ethnic composition of the country, but in practice the mirror distorted reality.¹⁰ While Serbs comprised some 36 percent of the population of Yugoslavia and Montenegrins less than 3 percent, Serbs and Montenegrins together held almost 70 percent of the JNA’s officer assignments. Conversely, Croats comprised some 20 percent of the Yugoslav population and Slovenes another 8 percent, but Croats and Slovenes combined held only 15 percent of the officer slots. Serbs and Montenegrins held over 60 percent of the general officer posts, while Croats and Slovenes combined held only about 20 percent. Macedonians, Hungarians, Muslims, and Albanians—who together totaled a quarter of the country’s population—held only 10 percent of the officer positions and general officer posts.

Because the Serbs controlled an even higher fraction of the command positions, with the other ethnic groups relegated to the staff and support functions, the real disparity was even more pronounced.¹¹

Despite its imperfect ethnic balance, the Army nevertheless considered itself a vital integrative factor in the Yugoslav state, and the onset of nationalism in Slovenia and Croatia in particular and the mustering of the JNA against Yugoslavia’s own constituent republics would leave the Army leadership aghast. There would be more and greater shocks to morale: non-Serb officers turning against their own Army, a humiliating JNA defeat in Slovenia and the blockade of Army barracks in Croatia. Finally, the federally sanctioned secession of Slovenia from the SFRY—and the official admission that the state that for four decades had been the JNA’s very *raison d’être* was no more—would rip the heart out of the force. By then the JNA could no longer maintain even the self-delusion that it was fighting for either Yugoslavia’s territorial integrity or its political system. Despite the senior leadership’s clinging belief in what remained of the “Yugoslav” ideal, by the time full-scale war broke out in Croatia, the JNA really did not know what it was fighting for.

The Yugoslav People’s Army as a Fighting Force

The JNA was a capable, professional, and generally well-equipped military organization, and to some extent it was isolated from the political and economic changes shaking the country. But it was still affected by the turmoil of the 1980s, and by the beginning of the 1990s the force was in something of a decline. Its budget had been declining steadily, although it still remained the largest federal expenditure by far. According to one estimate, the JNA’s budget fell from 70 percent of the federal budget (7 percent of Yugoslav GNP) to 50 percent of the federal budget (4 percent of GNP) during the decade before the war.¹² The JNA’s peacetime manpower had also been reduced over the years—from some 220,000 at the beginning of the 1980s to some 170,000 or so at the start of the 1990s—although it was still one of the largest armies in Europe.¹³

Organizationally, the JNA's Ground Forces had been restructured in the late 1980s into three military districts and one combined military-maritime district (going from six Soviet-style armies with boundaries that matched the individual republics to the four regional districts that crossed republic boundaries), all subordinate to the Yugoslav General Staff in Belgrade. At the same time, it was transforming itself from a division-based organization to a more flexible corps-brigade structure. The JNA had almost, but not quite, completed its reorganization by the onset of war in 1991. At the outbreak of the conflict, the JNA had one mechanized division and 16 corps in three military districts and the military-maritime district, with more than 40 armored, mechanized, motorized, and infantry brigades; two additional mountain brigades; and numerous independent artillery, antitank, antiaircraft, and engineer regiments generally subordinated at corps echelon.¹⁴

The JNA was adequately equipped in almost all categories, and well outfitted in some, notably artillery. It was armed with a mix of Soviet-pattern weapons, some Western-manufactured items (including artillery and radars), and domestically produced items of all types. In general, the Army's equipment was not the most modern, but it was rugged, serviceable, and dependable.

Yugoslavia had developed a fairly robust domestic arms industry—part of Tito's legacy of political and military self-sufficiency—capable of producing license-manufactured Soviet-pattern weapons and other weapons of indigenous design. Most of the JNA's major weapon systems—tanks, artillery, MiG-21 and MiG-29 fighters, surface-to-air missiles and radars, naval surface combatants, and so on—were either direct Soviet imports or license-produced variants of Soviet designs. The Yugoslav defense industry, however, was able to both design and produce a wide variety of other weapons, including APCs and infantry fighting vehicles, light subsonic combat aircraft, multiple rocket launchers, antitank rockets, antiaircraft guns, and assorted small arms. Yugoslavia's defense plants were scattered throughout the country, but a disproportionately large fraction of the defense industries was located in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which

was intended to be the last bastion of resistance to an invader.

Much of the Yugoslav military's arguably excessive heavy weapons inventory was either aging or outright obsolete (for example, T-55 and even T-34 tanks) and might have been knocked out in a straight-up fight against a sophisticated Western military force, but it was to prove perfectly adequate in a civil war against identical equipment from the same inventories. Indeed, the relative lack of sophistication of its equipment frequently proved an advantage because it employed a minimum of hard-to-maintain or unavailable components. This simple but effective equipment proved to be maintainable by a nation under an arms embargo. With limited spare parts, it could often be fixed without rear-area repair and maintenance facilities and stood up in the field through four consecutive years of combat. More advanced and more complex equipment might have given out much earlier under similar circumstances. Moreover, even 40- or 50-year-old weapons such as T-34 tanks and ZIS-3 field guns remained adequate for the roles they were used in (bunker busting, shelling from static positions, assaults on infantry lacking antitank weapons), allowing the more modern weapons in the inventory to be used elsewhere or for other tasks.

The Territorial Defense Concept

The “Territorial Defense” was intended to be the complement of the JNA within the bipartite Yugoslav national defense concept.¹⁵ The origins of Yugoslavia's Territorial Defense lay in the August 1968 Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia and Tito's subsequent fears that a similar fate could befall his nation. Tito's concerns led directly to a major restructuring of the Yugoslav military and its underlying defense concept. Concerned that his standing military could be rapidly crushed by the numerically superior Soviet forces, Tito elected to establish a two-tier military structure that included both the JNA and a sustainable “all-people's army” called the Territorial Defense (*Teritorijalna Odbrana*—TO).

Under the new Yugoslav defense philosophy, the JNA remained the national armed force: an active-duty, conventional military under centralized control from Belgrade. It retained all of the armor, mechanized fighting vehicles, and heavy artillery. Its mission was to challenge any invasion and delay the enemy advance long enough for the Territorial Defense to mobilize. The TO, conversely, had a decentralized command structure that could not be wiped out in a single blow and was essentially under the command of each republic's political authorities. The territorial defense system (much like that employed in Switzerland and Austria) relied upon countrywide military training for the entire male population and massive stockpiles of small arms, caches of light weapons such as mortars, and vast quantities of ammunition. The TO's military mission was to mount a protracted, partisan-type war against any invasion force even if much of the country was occupied. The real objective of the TO, however, was to deter invasion in the first place by making an invasion potentially so costly that it would be deemed more expensive than it was worth.¹⁶

The TO was (in manpower terms) much larger than the standing Army and could theoretically call upon some 1.2 million soldiers Yugoslavia-wide.¹⁷ The TO inventories, however, were much smaller and much cheaper, consisting almost entirely of small arms, grenade and rocket launchers, and mortars. According to one estimate, the TO had a fully mobilized strength of four to five times that of the regular Army but was funded at only about one-twelfth of its annual budget.¹⁸

Although the Territorial Defense was intended to serve alongside and reinforce the federal Army, it was becoming increasingly clear by the end of the 1980s that TO units were now semiautonomous military forces answering to the republics and were instead becoming *threats* to the JNA. At this point, the Army leadership secretly began drafting plans to neutralize these potentially hostile, rival militaries (specifically, in Slovenia and Croatia) lest they be used against the JNA in any future rebellion. In retrospect, the JNA's move to disable the Slovenian and Croatian territorial defenses can be seen as a turning point—one of the many markers pointing down the road to war.

The JNA's Spring 1990 Efforts To Disable the Slovenian Territorial Defense

The JNA's first efforts to disable Slovenia's defense by confiscating its republic-level weapons came on 17 May 1990. The Army had selected the date carefully. First, on 15 May the leadership of the Yugoslav Presidency was due to shift from the Slovenian representative, Janez Drnovsek, to the Serbian one, Borisav Jovic, who took office on 16 May. Jovic may have been the only member of the Presidency who was fully informed of the JNA's plans. Conveniently, the recently elected Slovenian republic government did not take office until 17 May and had been seated for only a few hours of its first day when the confiscations began.¹⁹

It is unclear to what extent the entire eight-member Federal Presidency approved the JNA operation to confiscate the TO inventories. Borisav Jovic's diary indicates that there was a Presidency meeting on 16 May to discuss "the situation in the country" and that the Presidency members adopted some sort of resolutions over Slovenian representative Drnovsek's objections. The following day, Jovic states that, "Formally, this was done by the head of the General Staff, but it was actually under our order. Extreme reaction by the Slovenians and Croatians, but they have no recourse." Jovic's diary entry from 21 May refers explicitly to Slovenian Republic President Milan Kucan and Drnovsek meeting himself and Defense Minister Kadijevic. He says they met to discuss the completed seizure of the Slovenian TO weapons, "based on the Presidency decision that the weapons be seized from all republican territorial defenses and placed under JNA control."²⁰ Drnovsek, on the other hand, later maintained that he had been told nothing of the JNA plan and that only Jovic knew about it. As Drnovsek put it, "My term expired on 15 May. On 17 May this disarmament was done. They had waited for my term to expire. Only Jovic was informed about it and, for the Presidency, it was a fait accompli. They never voted on it."²¹ The Federal Presidency probably adopted some sort of resolution on 16 May, but Jovic likely left it vaguely worded and probably intended to

use it as an ex post facto justification for the confiscations. Jovic and the JNA General Staff undoubtedly assumed that Drnovsek would not have knowingly supported the disarming of his own republic's Territorial Defense, and most likely kept both him and Croatian Presidency member Stipe Mesic in the dark regarding the timing and nature of the JNA confiscation plans.

Naturally enough, the new Slovenian republic leadership in Ljubljana had not been informed at all of the JNA's plans. Indeed, it first learned of the confiscations not through military reports but from municipal authorities across the republic, who began reporting that Army soldiers had arrived and taken the TO weapons away to unknown locations. Slovenian President Milan Kucan claimed to have heard of the impending confiscations only informally and began investigating when he first got alarmed calls from puzzled town mayors:

... I immediately tried to find General Hocevar, the commander of the Slovene TO. He said they were replacing the WW II arms with new ones. I was satisfied. I had no reason to disbelieve him. But the next morning messages came in from many municipalities that this was not at all what was happening—that all arms had to be handed in. I called General Hocevar again. He told me that he had been ordered to move the arms from the TO stores, that he had an order from Belgrade to conceal this from the Slovene leadership.²²

Slovenian Defense Minister Jansa had a similar recounting of events that day:

During the meeting of the Assembly on 17 May 1990, where we elected the new government, I received a telephone call from some municipality mayors, who reported to me that the Army was driving the weapons of the TO away from the municipal storehouses to unknown locations ... I telephoned the Republic Secretariat for People's Defense [i.e. the Slovenian Defense Ministry], where I had taken over not one hour before, and got through to the former secretary, Janko Kusar . . . We composed a telegram in a

few minutes, which stated that I prohibited the handing over of weapons and sent the telegram off to the municipal bodies.²³

Thanks largely to the new leadership's prompt actions, the JNA managed to seize only about 60 percent of the Slovenian Territorial Defense inventory. Jansa indicates that the Slovenian TO managed to retain all of its weapons from 12 municipal headquarters and part of the inventory of a 13th, although he does not specify the total number of municipal depots.²⁴ The Slovenian TO refused to hand over any more weapons, and President Kucan summoned additional police to guard the remaining weapons stores.^{25 26 27 28}

Through its efforts to seize Ljubljana's military stocks, the JNA had damaged but by no means crippled the Slovenian TO's ability to oppose the federal military. It had at the same time galvanized the little republic and spurred its new leadership into earnest preparations for the very resistance the JNA had sought to prevent.

Chapter 3 **Slovenia: Background to War**

When, in January 1992, Slovenia was welcomed into the European Community (EC) as an independent nation, it appeared to have sprung, like Athena from Zeus, full-grown from Yugoslavia. It was not so. The groundwork for Slovenia's independence bid had been laid months and years before, in a series of carefully chosen political, economic, and military steps that would culminate in a sharp struggle that was to last less than two weeks.

Of vital importance to Slovenia's independence preparations and eventual secession effort was the fact that it, unlike all the other Yugoslav republics, was ethnically homogeneous. Of the little republic's population of just under 2 million, over 90 percent were ethnic Slovenes. This meant that Slovenia could prepare for independence without the rending internal problems that confronted Croatia's and Bosnia's efforts to do the same. For instance, Croatia and Bosnia had ethnically mixed territorial defenses, intelligence services,

and police forces, all of which had divided loyalties. Even more critical was the fact that both Croatia and Bosnia also had large, Serb-majority districts that would be declaring autonomy from the republics at the same time that Zagreb and Sarajevo were working to break away from the Yugoslav central government. Slovenia had none of these problems. In addition, Slovenia's ethnic uniformity meant that the SFRY could let the future Slovenian state go without the political problem of leaving a residual Serb minority in a newly foreign country.

Industrially, Slovenia was the most advanced of all the Yugoslav republics. In 1991, just before the outbreak of general war, the average per capita income in Slovenia was \$12,618. By comparison, in Croatia—the next most advanced republic—it was \$7,179, and in Serbia it was only \$4,870, well under half the average income in Slovenia.²⁹ With slightly under 10 percent of the population, Slovenia produced 20 percent of Yugoslavia's Gross National Product.³⁰ Westward-leaning, the Slovenes not only sought to get out from under Belgrade's thumb but also hoped for closer economic and political ties to adjacent Austria and Italy. While still a Yugoslav republic, Slovenia was also making overtures to the European Community at a time when the tide of West European integration seemed to be at flood stage.

Politically, Slovenia's drive for independence became more or less explicit in April 1990, when the six-party center-right DEMOS coalition defeated the former Communists to win a parliamentary majority in the republic's first multiparty elections. DEMOS lost no time in firing a political shot across Federal Yugoslavia's bow, adopting a parliamentary declaration in July 1990 that asserted that republic laws would take precedence over the federal Constitution and that Ljubljana would form its own foreign and defense policies. From then onward, Slovenia's move toward independence would only gather more momentum. In September 1990, Ljubljana asserted its control over the republic Territorial Defense. In December 1990 the republic held a referendum on outright independence in which an overwhelming majority of the population voted for an "independent and sovereign state," and in March 1991 the republic refused to send

its annual levy of conscripts for their year of service in the federal Army.³¹

The issue of where Slovenian conscripts would serve—in the JNA or the Slovenian TO—had long been a point of conflict between Ljubljana and Belgrade and became a symbol of the entire sovereignty debate. It had first become an issue a full year earlier in March 1990, when the Slovenian parliament began trying to gain greater control over where its conscripts would serve and pressed the federal government to allow a larger percentage of Slovenia's conscripts to remain stationed in the republic. The Slovenian leadership hoped to gradually increase the percentage serving at home, until eventually all Slovenian recruits would serve within the republic. At this point, however, Ljubljana had no firm legal foundation for its demands—either under the federal Constitution or under the republic's own laws. The Yugoslav central government made some concessions during the summer and fall of 1990, agreeing to increase the percentage serving in Slovenia first to 15 percent and then 20 percent. Slovenia, in turn, sent part but not all of its annual conscript levy to the Army during the year. The dispute remained unresolved.³²

The debate advanced to a new level in October 1990 when the Slovenian Government attempted to replace Air and Air Defense Force Col. Gen. Ivan Hocevar, the Belgrade loyalist who held overall command of the Slovenian Territorial Defense. On the morning of 4 October 1990, General Hocevar received a letter directing him to hand over all responsibilities to his Slovenian-designated successor, Janez Slapar, the following day. During the rest of the day both the JNA and the Slovenian TO and police alerted some of their units. On the morning of 5 October, the JNA sent a detachment of the 14th Military Police Battalion from Sentvid barracks to the Slovenian Republic TO headquarters on Prezihova street in Ljubljana. Forewarned of the impending operation, though unable to prevent or stop it, the Slovenians had removed all personnel, arms, and equipment from the facility beforehand. Then once the JNA detachment had entered the building, the Slovenians cut off electricity and telephone

service to the building and besieged the federal MPs inside the building. The Slovenians listened anxiously for any reports of Army movements from their intelligence sources in the JNA's 14th and 31st Corps, for they were in no way ready for a serious confrontation if things had escalated any further. Fortunately for them, the Army made no further moves, and both sides settled down for an extended waiting game that was to last six months. In the end, the JNA vacated the building after removing everything of value.³³

As 1990 passed into 1991, relations between Ljubljana and Belgrade worsened. The Slovenian authorities learned through their intelligence sources that the JNA was preparing to forcibly appropriate their personnel records, which would have allowed the Army itself to call up Slovenian recruits. The republic responded first by increasing security around the district headquarters and later by hiding the records in police headquarters and other locations kept secret from the federal authorities. The debate intensified once again when the annual conscript levy again came due in March 1991. This time Slovenia refused outright to send conscripts to serve in the Yugoslav Army.³⁴ Ljubljana had thrown the gauntlet directly into the lap of the federal government.³⁵

Jansa's Army: The Emergence of the Slovenian Territorial Defense

As the debate over who would control the placement of Slovenian conscripts was playing out on the political level, Slovenian Defense Minister Janez Jansa was working tirelessly to build the Slovenian Territorial Defense into an autonomous military force capable of challenging the JNA. Jansa—only 33 years old in 1991—was originally a reserve sergeant whom the JNA had accused of leaking documents and tried for espionage in 1988. Despite (or rather because of) this, Jansa was named Slovenian Defense Minister by Prime Minister Lojze Peterle when DEMOS took power in 1990. Almost immediately, Jansa set himself to the task of taking over the existing Slovenian TO and transforming it into the future Slovenian army.

As Jansa took up this seemingly Herculean task, he at least had good starting material to work with. Although it had lost some of its weapons the previous spring and was still subject to the administration and

supervision of its future opponent, the JNA, the Slovenian Territorial Defense was a force in being, and its roughly 60,000 troops constituted a reasonably effective infantry force for limited combat roles. Jansa also had the nucleus of an officer corps, a body of both active-duty Territorial Defense and retired Slovene ex-JNA officers that could serve as the brains and backbone of his force.^{36 37}

Most vital for Jansa, though, was the fact that, like most of the Yugoslav TO's, the Slovenian TO's higher loyalties already lay with the local government, not Belgrade.³⁸ The Slovenian TO's particular advantage vis-a-vis the JNA was its ethnic homogeneity. Croatia and especially Bosnia could not simply transform their republic TO's into national militaries, since ethnic Serbs in both Territorial Defenses actively opposed the republic governments. Slovenia, on the other hand, started out with a standing military that was almost wholly loyal to the secessionist government.

The JNA's attempt to confiscate the Slovenian TO's weapons had been a tip of Belgrade's hand and enabled Ljubljana to flush out all of the Territorial Defense officers whose loyalties were with Belgrade. The Yugoslav Army had intended to keep tabs on the Slovenian TO through the approximately 40 active-duty JNA officers assigned to positions within the republic's military—many in key headquarters or command positions. A smaller number of Yugoslav-oriented officers served within the Slovenian TO and the reserves. By forcing each TO officer to show his true colors—for or against the JNA confiscations—the May 1990 weapons seizures allowed Ljubljana to identify exactly who could and could not be trusted during the secret process of planning for independence.

After the spring weapons confiscations in 1990, Jansa's objective was nothing less than to establish a "shadow" command structure and, indeed, an entire "shadow" army that left the normal organization of the Slovenian TO operating as normal but that bypassed any officers loyal to Belgrade and instead answered back to the Slovenian leadership. The plan was essentially to establish a giant, hidden pyramid of

underground cells, with each individual establishing contact with a network of trusted subordinates. The mechanism by which this plan was carried out had the unlikely title of the “Maneuvering Structure of the National Defense” (*Manevrska Struktura Narodne Zascite—MSND*).

The “Maneuvering Structure of the National Defense” was actually an odd and obscure Slovenian legal clause that allowed the republic to form an ad hoc defense structure if necessary by calling for detailees from the Territorial Defense, Civil Defense, police, and even civilians. It had never been taken very seriously and was regarded as something of a historical anomaly—a sort of World War II Home Guard:

The Army had been quietly sneering at this Slovenian peculiarity all the time, as those that they saw with this insignia truly did not arouse any respect with their ancient weapons and the elderly structure of the recruits. But the legal foundation was such that in case of necessity anybody could be called to perform tasks for national defense, regardless of their military status, and it is in these provisions that we found, after precise scrutiny, the legal foundations for organizing the Maneuvering Structure of the National Defense . . .³⁹

Shortly after the mid-May 1990 weapons seizures, Defense Minister Jansa and Interior Minister Igor Bavcar (with President Kucan’s somewhat reluctant support) began using the “Maneuvering Structure of the National Defense” as a legal mechanism by which they could covertly build the Slovenian TO and the Interior Ministry’s special police into a secret army, right under the noses of the federal authorities.

Descending from the republic headquarters were 13 regional subcommands, each of whose leaders were handpicked by the Slovenian leadership. These individuals, in turn, selected local National Defense leaders in each major municipality, and so on from there:

In a few weeks all of Slovenia had been covered . . . We introduced strict security measures. All documents and messages were carried personally or directly passed on by word of mouth. . . . The conspiracy was complete. The republic

coordination knew of the people only to the regional level. The regional chiefs mainly knew only of the municipal chiefs, and thereafter the selection was left to themselves. . . . The majority of key duties was accepted by officers of the permanent composition of the TO, who had refused to surrender their weapons . . . There were cases where the whole municipal or regional headquarters of the TO were included, except for the commander, who was an active officer of the JNA and who suspected nothing.⁴⁰

The speed and scope of the Slovenian accomplishments are truly remarkable. As Interior Minister Bavcar described it:

We had thought about it before the election. We knew when we came to the ministry that we would not know whom to trust and that we would have to build a new kind of organization that would be fully under our command. In three months we built an army of 20,000 armed people. And the JNA didn’t know.⁴¹

Slovenian forces began to conduct increasing numbers of exercises and drills, improving proficiency and identifying weaknesses. Although the troops were highly motivated, the exercises revealed a few serious weaknesses in the Slovenian Territorial Defense. Command and control still needed improvement, and antiaarmor and air defense capabilities were extremely limited. Perhaps most serious was a lack of mobility, a direct consequence of the original territorial defense concept. These locally raised, partisan-warfare forces had never been intended for mobile warfare and had been expected to remain in or near their hometowns. In a combat situation where the Slovenian TO was required to gain and keep the initiative this could pose a serious problem.⁴²

The Other Army: The Role of the Slovenian Interior Ministry Police Forces

At the same time as the Slovenian Territorial Defense was building itself into an autonomous fighting force,

the Slovenian Ministry of Internal Affairs (*Ministarstvo Unutarnjih Poslova*—MUP) was also preparing for war. The MUP played a variety of roles in the Slovenian bid for independence. Slovenian police authorities collected intelligence before the war, special police troops actively participated in combat against JNA forces, and the regular police played an important role in establishing roadblocks and maintaining order.

In the Yugoslav system, the MUP's "special police" were intended as specially trained, heavily armed paramilitary forces tasked with VIP protection, counterterrorism, and direct military combat roles. Because of the Yugoslav state's tradition of professional internal security forces, the MUP troops were generally experienced and elite soldiers and could be used as assault infantry to spearhead combat operations in combination with Army units. The municipal police, by contrast, were much more numerous and less specialized. They carried out largely routine law enforcement functions in each city, town, or village, handling traffic violations, robberies, acts of civil violence, and the like.

As with the Slovenian Territorial Defense, the Interior Ministry's preparations appear to have begun at least as early as July 1990—almost a year before the showdown with Belgrade began. A secret document entitled simply "25 July" outlined the Slovenian police's contingency plans in the event the JNA attempted to intervene in the republic. As circumstances changed, this document was modified over the course of the following year. By late November 1990 the Slovenian authorities had also covertly drafted a plan for securing Slovenia's international borders with police units.⁴³

Besides drafting plans, the MUP began training and preparing its police forces for the most likely tasks in the event of war. The training tempo remained high right up to the outbreak of the war, and the entire special police force had just completed additional training in the month before the conflict. In addition, the special police's elite "antiterrorist" unit was restructured and began training for new missions—which it was to successfully carry out in the confrontation against the JNA's own paratroops and special forces elements.⁴⁴

Arms and the Men: Slovenian Arms Procurement Efforts

Between the Slovenian TO and its special police forces, Ljubljana had available a body of capable, motivated combatants. Defense Minister Jansa and Interior Minister Bavcar were working to prepare them with improved skills, organization, and tactics. The Slovenian forces, however, were still seriously lacking in one vital area: arms.

Although the JNA confiscations had left the Slovenian TO short of weapons, it started off less badly than Croatia. Ljubljana managed to retain a substantial fraction of its TO weapons inventories and had a far smaller force to equip than Zagreb. As a result, Slovenia appears to have needed a less substantial arms-buying program than Croatia later did, trading for modest amounts of weapons on the international market. Slovenian President Kucan was also hesitant to support Jansa's covert weapons procurement program, viewing it as expensive and risky. Kucan's opinion changed when the October 1990 confrontation with the JNA at the Slovenian TO headquarters in Ljubljana revealed both the potential for hostilities and the comparative weakness of the Slovenian forces. Shortly thereafter, Kucan approved Jansa's program—knowledge of which was restricted to only five or six leading members of the government.

Procurement began within Slovenia itself with sly steps to recover individual small arms seized from the TO inventories and stored in JNA garrisons in the republic:

...in the first months, when TO was still permitted entry into some storage sites in the Army complexes, the TO drove away automatic rifles, hand-held mortars, pistols, ammunition and, in some cases, even rocket launchers, every day, under various guises. The rifles were wrapped in sleeping bags, guards were bribed, they used old friends in the barracks. . . . The commanders of the Army ammunition stores usually hushed up the loss of weapons to their superiors, if they

noticed it, thereby attempting to avoid responsibility. In this way we succeeded in returning to the TO a good 5,000 pieces of various infantry weapons in one year . . .⁴⁵

Additional weapons were purchased abroad. These included probably no more than a few thousand infantry arms.⁴⁶ Most noteworthy and significant was the Slovenian acquisition of a number of Singaporean-manufactured Armbrust antitank rocket launchers in December 1990. (The size of the purchase is still unknown but was probably not very large.) These weapons had both symbolic and military significance, as they gave the Slovenian forces a chance of countering the JNA's otherwise practically invulnerable armored forces. The Armbrust rockets were initially kept a secret, stored at the Kocevska Reka barracks, and issued to the newly formed Slovenian Special Forces. Jansa and his deputy Jelko Kacin, however, later opted to make a public, confidence-boosting show of defiance just before Slovenia's referendum on sovereignty at the end of December—visibly advertising Slovenia's capability and intent to resist the Yugoslav Army if necessary. One could make a case that the first shots of the Yugoslav war were not really fired on the battlefield, but rather on Slovenian television in the final days of 1990:

The republic, they decided, would openly declare itself armed and ready to repel any attempt by the JNA to interfere with its new democracy. Kacin flew to Kocevska Reka in a police helicopter. A Slovene television cameraman was waiting for him. There, Slovene troops fired two or three Armbrust missiles at an old and obsolete tank. The film was broadcast on Slovene television two days later. The Slovenes were raising the stakes.⁴⁷

In addition to weapons, a secret delivery of secure communications equipment (Operation KANAL) arrived from an unknown Western country on 17 June 1991. Working frenetically to set up the network, the Slovenian leadership was able to use the gear for secure communications with the municipal headquarters across the republic. Most field units, however, still lacked secure radios.^{48 49}

According to Jansa—whose figures appear low but still credible—even by the beginning of June 1991, the Slovenian TO had only about 23,000 infantry weapons (with limited ammunition) and a little over 1,000 antitank weapons of all types.⁵⁰ Assuming Jansa's previous figure of some 10,000 unconfiscated weapons is accurate, plus the 5,000 he later says were recovered by theft from JNA garrisons, this implies that Ljubljana must have covertly imported something like 8,000 small arms between May 1990 and June 1991.

The last, largest, and most important covert arms shipment (dubbed Operation BOR) was not to arrive in Slovenia until 21 June, only days before the outbreak of war. This consignment reportedly included 5,000 more automatic rifles and 5 million rounds of ammunition, another 1,000 antitank weapons (including a few AT-4 antitank guided missiles), and a few dozen SA-7 antiaircraft missiles. Jansa regarded this final arms shipment—particularly the antarmor weapons—as critical in Slovenia's bid for independence:

I still ask myself today if the Presidency of the Republic could have proposed its decision on armed resistance with a clear conscience on 27 June, if we had not received those weapons, which increased our capabilities for antitank combat by more than 100 percent.⁵¹

If Jansa's figures are to be believed, the Slovenian forces had no more than 30,000 small arms and some 2,000 antitank weapons of all types when the war broke out.⁵² This appears to be inadequate to outfit even the generally accepted figure of about 37,000 Slovenian TO troops that were mobilized during the war. However, the apparent shortfall could be accounted for by allowing for a number of possibly unarmed troops used in noncombat roles and others armed with personally owned hunting weapons and the like. Even if Jansa's figures are low, it is clear that the Slovenian TO would have been incapable of arming its fully mobilized paper strength of 60,000 or more had the conflict lasted longer than it did.⁵³

Behind the Curtain: The Intelligence War

Since the inception of the Yugoslav state, the federal intelligence apparatus had directed much—perhaps most—of its attention against the activities of ethnic nationalist groups within Yugoslavia. By the end of the 1980s, the intelligence directors in Belgrade were receiving increasingly worrisome indications that trouble was brewing in the northwestern corner of the country. The threat at the time was not armed insurrection but rather of creeping agitation for multiparty democracy within Slovenia—in some ways a greater threat to the Yugoslav state. The JNA Security Directorate (*Uprava Bezbednosti*—UB), which was better known by one of its Tito-era designators, the Counter-intelligence Service (*Kontraobavestajna Sluzba*—KOS), assigned one of its very best officers, Col. Aleksander Vasiljevic⁵⁴ (who had proved his abilities during the early 1980s in KOS operations against the ethnic Albanians in Kosovo) to monitor and combat these underground liberal political movements.⁵⁵ Before the start of the war, KOS reportedly had more than 130 officers and NCOs operating in Slovenia, with presumably an even larger number of informants and sources.⁵⁶

At first the battle for Slovenian independence was waged in the editorial rooms and across the pages of the newspapers and magazines. Probably the most important among these was the influential weekly magazine, *Mladina*. The Yugoslav civilian intelligence organization, the State Security Service (*Sluzba Drzavne Bezbednosti*—SDB)⁵⁷ was concerned enough about “politically incorrect” writings against the federal system that they reportedly recruited the publication’s editor in chief as an operative. In addition, the SDB bugged phones, recorded conversations, and watched the activities of numerous journalists.⁵⁸ At the same time the civilian intelligence organization was watching the “subversive” political movements and journalists, the KOS was watching for dissidents within the Army.

KOS also recruited at least one Slovenian political figure, Col. Milan Aksentijevic, a delegate to the Slovenian Assembly. At the time, Aksentijevic was both an active-duty JNA officer and the assembly member representing the Army, which under the Socialist

constitution held its own seat in the parliament. Among other things, Aksentijevic passed KOS the addresses of the delegates in the Republic Assembly, enabling the federal authorities to develop contingency plans (in the end, never implemented) for JNA military police to arrest all of the dissident Slovenian members of parliament.^{59 60}

The intelligence war heated up after 17 May 1990, with both the seating of the new Slovenian leadership and the JNA’s confiscation of Slovenian TO weapons. The extent of Belgrade’s infiltration of Slovenian institutions and the fact that Ljubljana had been completely blindsided by the move came as a rude surprise to the new Slovenian cabinet members:

With its staffing policies the GHQ [General Headquarters of the JNA] tried, in any manner it could, to replace all those officers in the Slovenian TO who, in the assessment of the military intelligence service, would give Slovenia precedence over Yugoslavia . . . It was clear during the confiscations how far Belgrade had gone with this . . . The secret police or national security service passed its exam in loyalty—or rather disloyalty—on this occasion. There was no warning from it, although the almost one-thousand-strong apparatus, with its connections and sources within the JNA, most surely knew of at least the last stage of the plan for disarming the Slovenian TO.⁶¹

The Slovenians began to build up their intelligence infrastructure at the same time they began to build and arm their military and police forces. The core of their organization appears to have been a comparatively small but reliable and capable group of intelligence officers under Ivan Borstner.⁶² According to Jansa, this group operated only partially in conjunction with Slovenia’s normal republic-level intelligence organization, the Security Intelligence Service (*Varnostna Izvestajna Sluzba*—VIS). The latter appears to have been ambiguous in its loyalties—at least until May 1991, when Jansa states it began to actively report on KOS activities in Slovenia. Despite Jansa’s lukewarm

endorsement of the service, it appears to have been fairly successful at shutting down KOS operations immediately before and during the conflict itself.⁶³⁶⁴

After May 1990 the Slovenians appear to have been much more active in the intelligence war, both defensively and offensively. Defensively, the Slovenes opposed the KOS with very careful security measures, especially regarding the distribution and handling of the military planning documents that would have provided a damning indictment of the Slovenian Government had they been captured and exposed. The most extreme example of this security consciousness pertained to Defense Minister Jansa's comprehensive defense plan, which he had titled the "Possible Variants of Dissociation from the Defense Aspect." There never was a printed copy of this document, which listed Slovenia's timetables and planned responses to each potential JNA intervention contingency. Instead, Jansa himself kept a single copy on an encrypted computer diskette and projected the text onto a screen when necessary during meetings.⁶⁵

Offensively, the Slovenes began to turn many of the Federal SDB's and KOS's own tactics against them. For at least a year before the war (and probably much longer) the Slovenians actively collected intelligence against the federal authorities—at the time, still their own national government and military.⁶⁶ Slovenian police and intelligence organizations pored over the documents of the Federal Secretariat for National Defense, looking for relevant bits of information, and monitored the activities of JNA units through both clandestine means and analysis of the JNA's overt military journals such as *Narodna Armija*. By such means the Slovenes noted increased federal activity related to the State Border and Customs posts, including the arrival of additional personnel and stockpiles of food and heavy weapons.⁶⁷

The Slovenian authorities also monitored the federal planning activities in the headquarters of their own Territorial Defense:

In contrast to the intelligence held by the JNA about our activities . . . we had regular intelligence reports on the activities at [Belgrade-appointed Slovenian TO Commander] Hocevar's headquarters; this was . . . invaluable in helping to act correctly.⁶⁸

According to Jansa, by approximately the end of April 1991:

We had the data and plans of the JNA and its counterintelligence service (KOS) in our hands for the rapid disarmament of the Slovenian TO and police as well as the 'neutralization' of part of the republic leadership and the leaderships of some municipalities including the delegates of the republic parliament and presidents of some parties.⁶⁹

The Slovenes appeared to be well informed of JNA capabilities by the immediate runup to the war. All of the collected information on unit locations, manning equipment, and readiness was fed to a cadre of analysts who evaluated it and formulated their conclusions. The Slovenian analyses turned out to be remarkably prescient:

In June 1991, as a result of day-to-day analyses and our knowledge of conditions in Yugoslavia and thanks to our good intelligence data, we were almost convinced that the JNA Army would not be capable of carrying out an attack deploying a great enough number of forces during the declaration of independence of Slovenia and Croatia and that it would only be intervention and pressure on some key points, which could be escalated later by introducing new units of JNA reserve forces.⁷⁰

Jansa refers to at least one intelligence source within the JNA's own General Staff, who appears to have been able to complement the Slovenians' existing knowledge of JNA capabilities by providing vital information about JNA intentions—specifically, the JNA's plan to have a single, republic-wide show of force after Ljubljana's declaration of independence:

. . . on the basis of additional information from our source in the GHQ of the JNA, it became clear to us that the Army was indeed not planning any smaller skirmishes like the one at Pekre before 26 June, but that it was planning to "solve all its problems in Slovenia in one go."⁷¹

Perhaps most remarkable of all is an apparently completely successful series of double-agent operations the Slovenians ran against the federal government in 1990 and 1991. Reminiscent of the British “Double-Cross” operation against the German Abwehr during World War II, this double-agent program not only kept the Slovenians informed of Belgrade’s plans against the republic but also allowed Ljubljana to plant vital disinformation that was factored into those same plans:

We knew that KOS had collaborators in some republic bodies, the SDV, companies, and even some editorial offices. Through this network it succeeded in finding out that something was going on, but luckily we planted a counteragent on time, and the game rolled on. We planted information that special units of the TO were collecting in Kocevska Reka with new weapons.⁷²

The Slovenians had started out behind in the intelligence game at the beginning in May 1990. Slightly over a year later, by June 1991, the Slovenians had trounced the federal military and civilian intelligence apparatus—game, set, and match.

Chapter 4 **Slovenia: The 10-Day War**

The Eve of Battle

Both sides had begun to gird for battle by the beginning of May 1991. In particular, the JNA began attempting to improve the readiness of key units in the Fifth Military District, especially in its border, armored, and special operations units. The JNA’s efforts to improve readiness were partially covered by the actual exercise “OKOP” being conducted at the time.⁷³ Further afield, the JNA also began a large-scale callup of Army reservists in Serbia in early May 1991.

Visible tremors were shaking Slovenia by late May 1991, as another standoff escalated into open confrontation between the Slovenian Territorial Defense and the JNA. On 17 May 1991, Col. Gen. Konrad Kolsek, the JNA’s Fifth Military District commander,

demanded that the Slovenian Government stop its TO training activities at the recently established centers at Pekre and Ig. The Slovenians responded by deploying two “anticommando” companies for their defense. At the same time, Col. Gen. Blagoje Adzic, Chief of the JNA General Staff, personally issued instructions to Kolsek and the commanders of both JNA corps headquartered in Slovenia on how the two training centers would be closed down. JNA planning focused on the 710th Training Center at Pekre near Maribor—deemed the easier of the two targets—and incorporated the use of some special JNA units brought in from Varazdin and Zagreb. On 21 May, Kolsek met with Slovenian Prime Minister Peterle to demand the republic’s conscription records and the closure of both training centers. The Slovene delegation hoped to delay confrontation until they were better prepared and proposed further discussion with a moratorium on JNA intervention until 26 June. This was unacceptable to the JNA, which two days later sent six APCs and seven T-55 tanks—probably from the 31st Military Police Battalion and the 195th Motorized Brigade—to the 710th Training Center to demand the turnover of Slovenian recruits to the federal Army.⁷⁴

The situation escalated further on 24 May when the JNA detained the regional Slovenian TO commander and several others because of the dispute at the training center. Adzic had expected to hold the Slovenians hostage until the republic authorities agreed to close the training centers and to resume sending recruits to the JNA. Instead, the Slovenian Government responded by cutting off electricity and telephone service to JNA garrisons throughout the republic—a tactic it was to use again a month later when the war began in earnest. The kidnaped Slovenians were released after 14 hours of negotiation and confrontation, but the disagreements were anything but settled.^{75 76}

In retrospect, the JNA may have erred by not forcing a confrontation earlier than it did—either during the October 1990 confrontation at the Slovenian TO headquarters in Ljubljana or during the May 1991 dispute over the training centers. On both occasions, the

Yugoslav Army limited its military actions, and the Slovenians responded by cutting off the JNA's power and telephone service. But the JNA—and the political leadership directing it—were unwilling to escalate beyond this level. As events later unfolded, the JNA ended up having to make a major show of force anyhow, but against a much better armed and prepared foe. Certainly in October 1990, and even in May 1991, the Slovenian forces were not yet prepared for a direct military confrontation with the JNA.⁷⁷ Moreover, the JNA would have had the initiative in military operations at either time. When the conflict eventually began in June 1991, it was the Slovenians who were able to select the time, locations, and terms of the fighting—to their great advantage and the JNA's dismay.

As the federal government raised the ante and pushed closer to war, the Slovenes responded. A few days after the Maribor barracks confrontation, the JNA and Federal Interior Ministry airlifted more units to Slovenia. Ljubljana, in turn, canceled all leaves for police and Interior Ministry employees beginning on 20 June and fully mobilized its active and reserve police units several days before the conflict began. On 21 June, the JNA confiscated the Slovenian TO's lone squadron of combat aircraft, sending a group of pilots and military police to fly the 10 antiquated Kraguj monoplanes from Brnik airport to Cerkle.⁷⁸

By the last week of June, both sides had arrayed all their pieces on the board. It was now up to Ljubljana to play its opening gambit.

First Shots: The Battle for the Border Posts, Tuesday, 25 June–Friday, 28 June

Having announced six months earlier that it intended to secede from the Yugoslav Federation on 26 June 1991, Slovenia actually passed its declaration of independence on 25 June—a day earlier than expected. The seemingly trivial difference was in fact a critical and closely held element of the Slovenian plan for independence. The Slovenian objective was to gain surprise and time by secretly advancing what the federal authorities expected to be their timetable. By this ruse they expected to preempt federal actions to

secure and occupy border posts and other key facilities, with the enhanced legitimacy of a parliamentary resolution behind the occupying Slovenian forces.

I was constantly warning that the formal resolutions on the declaration of independence must be passed before 26 June, in a closed session, which would then allow us to gain a lead on possible responses of the Federation, especially military, and that we establish our sovereignty in the key triangle, border-customs-air control . . . One can imagine what the replacement of signposts on the border or the seizure of the Brnik flight control tower would be like if, on 15 June, the Army placed a detachment of military police or paratroopers armed to the teeth there . . . despite just one day's difference between the announced and the actual passing of the decision for independence, it was this one day that was of key importance. For, on 25 June, immediately after the declaration of the laws, we took over the customs, border crossings, and air traffic control without letting off one shot. In Belgrade they were convinced until virtually the last second that the declaration of independence would be on 26 June . . . For this reason they planned their intervention for the early hours of 27 June, for the time, they thought, when the Slovenian decision was still to have been on paper.⁷⁹

Slovenia had prepared carefully for the hour of its independence and had its new departments of government not only established and ready but also well prepared for what to do immediately after the independence declaration. Most important, the Slovenian authorities were ready to seize control of previously identified key facilities when the time came and in most cases did so within hours of the independence declaration. Control of the border posts was central to both the Slovenian and the Federal Yugoslav strategies for both practical and symbolic reasons. The border posts generated customs revenues—of which those along the Italian and Austrian borders were the most important—which went directly to the federal government and, indeed, represented some 40 percent

of the federal budget.⁸⁰ There was also the more important issue of whether Federal Yugoslav or Slovenian troops, flags, and signs would be seen at those border posts—a visible representation of the underlying sovereignty question. As Jansa explained it:

Since the plebiscite it had been clear to me that the national borders were that concrete point upon which national sovereignty was decided in the final sense. That is why the replacing of border signposts and flags after the declaration of independence was not only a symbolic act but a key step across the Rubicon. Thus a coordinated takeover of the customs, border, and other functions which would at a specific moment become alive as functions of the independent state of Slovenia had to be organized.⁸¹

Having seized the initiative, the Slovenians had at the same time maneuvered the JNA into a position where it had to move out of garrison and forcibly expel the now-established Slovenian defenders. Not only was it militarily more difficult for the JNA to attack prepared Slovenian defensive positions, but it accomplished the vital political objective of forcing the JNA to fire the first shots—thereby leaving the Slovenians as the plucky defenders against Yugoslav aggression in international eyes:

... due to our timely measures . . . they [the JNA] could not implement things in such a way that in the eyes of the public we . . . appeared the first to use force.⁸²

The last day of calm before the storm was 26 June 1991—a remarkably quiet day, under the circumstances. The first confrontation of the Slovenian war ended bloodlessly at the Lazaret border crossing near the Adriatic port of Koper. At about 0600 on 26 June, Slovenian construction workers assigned to erect the new signposts proclaiming independence were challenged by Yugoslav Army soldiers, who threatened to fire if they continued.⁸³ The Slovenians withdrew, and the situation did not escalate, but similar confrontations occurred at several other border crossings during the day. Meanwhile, the Yugoslav political leadership was laying the groundwork for more serious actions. In what may be the first declaration of war sent by fax,

the Federal Executive Council (SIV) in Belgrade transmitted a two-part ultimatum addressed to Milan Kucan at 1110 that morning.

Ominously, the JNA began showing signs that it was coming to life within Slovenia during the day on 26 June. Unusual activity was noted at the major JNA barracks in the republic, and the first armored columns departed from their garrisons to find roadblocks barring the routes to their assigned border crossings.⁸⁴ Also on 26 June the Federal Yugoslav authorities effectively isolated Slovenia from all air traffic by closing the two major civilian airports (Brnjik international airport near Ljubljana, and Maribor airport). Yugoslav aircraft, loaded with weapons, flew low over a few locations in Slovenia in apparent attempts at intimidation but took no other hostile actions at the time.⁸⁵

The following morning—Thursday, 27 June—armed action began in earnest between Slovenia's self-proclaimed military forces and the Federal Yugoslav troops sent to regain control over key border crossings and facilities. The Yugoslav People's Army's actions were publicly justified in a communiqué read by JNA Fifth Military District commander Kolsek. The brief statement was formally addressed to the Prime Minister of the Slovenian parliament, Lojze Peterle, and indicated the Army was acting to take control over all border crossings and defend the SFRY. It ended with a warning that “All resistance will be crushed, and the consequence will be borne by those who issued commands and executed them.” Federal aircraft dropped leaflets over Slovenia with the same threat of violence. (Sending a somewhat contradictory mix of signals, the JNA's leaflets concluded with statements that “We invite you to peace and cooperation!” and “All resistance will be crushed.”)⁸⁶

On 27 June the JNA began to move in earnest as three armored columns set out from three bases. One column (a battalion of 12 BOV-3 self-propelled antiaircraft guns from the 306th Light Air Defense Artillery Regiment and 11 support vehicles) left from Karlovac in Croatia heading for Ljubljana and the center of the

republic. Another column (the 1st Battalion of the 1st Armored Brigade, with possibly as many as 40 tanks and 20 armored vehicles) left from Vrhnika heading along two routes toward Brnik airport. A third column comprising a battle group from the 32nd Mechanized Brigade (30 APCs, possibly 10 tanks, and 300 soldiers) headed north from the JNA base at Varazdin in Croatia toward the border crossings with Austria. By the early morning these columns were already crushing automobiles and crashing through makeshift barricades, while the Slovenian TO frantically threw up more effective blockades throughout the republic.⁸⁷⁸⁸

The first armed clash of the long, bloody Yugoslav wars took place between one of the advancing JNA columns and elements of the Slovenian TO.⁸⁹ At 0115 hours on 27 June, the 12 antiaircraft guns of the JNA's 306th Light Air Defense Artillery Regiment crossed from Croatia into Slovenia near Metlika. At about 0400, they were blocked and challenged by elements of the 2nd (Doljenska) Regional Command of the Slovenian Territorial Defense. After a brief exchange of fire and protracted negotiations, a slightly injured JNA second lieutenant was evacuated to the hospital, and the column was allowed to advance. But not for long, as the Slovenians had by then established a second, stronger blocking position near Medvedjek. Here the JNA column was again attacked and stopped by the forces it had encountered earlier, now reinforced by elements of the 52nd TO Brigade, the 174th TO Antidiversionary Unit, and several squads of Slovenian Special Forces.⁹⁰⁹¹

The JNA's plans to capture the airport at Brnik (home of the customs administration) with elements of the 1st Armored Brigade might have succeeded but for the collaboration of some of its senior officers with the enemy. Slovenian attempts to prevent the tanks from leaving Vrhnika failed, and the news that armor from one of the most powerful JNA units in Slovenia was already on the road threw the Slovenian leadership into a panic. Defense Minister Jansa first called the JNA's 14th (Ljubljana) Corps commander, Major General Pavlov, who understandably refused to give any explanation for the vehicle movements.⁹² Jansa then tried calling the former 14th Corps commander, Maj. Gen. Marjan Vidmar—a Slovene—who apparently was also still at the headquarters. When asked

what was going on, Vidmar replied with the single word “Brnik.” Armed with this knowledge, the Slovenians were able to position troops and obstacles between the tanks and their intended destination. As a result, Brnik airport was never occupied by the JNA.⁹³

The third JNA column, from the 32nd Mechanized Brigade at Varazdin in Croatia, was blocked at a bridge near Ormoz on the Slovenian-Croatian border by a barricade of tractor trailers and a large earth-mover. The JNA armored column was unable to break through the Slovenian obstacles, even after the tanks tried using their main guns, although the bridge and the blocking vehicles were badly damaged.⁹⁴

In addition to the three armored columns, the federal government began bringing in elements of the elite JNA 63rd Airborne Brigade to the military airfield at Cerkle at about midday on 27 June as well as Federal Secretariat of Internal Affairs (SSUP) and Federal Customs Administration personnel. The JNA paratroopers appear to have been assigned to secure the airfield against capture, while the SSUP and customs personnel were to be positioned to ensure federal sovereignty over border crossings. The 461 SSUP and 270 customs personnel flew by transport aircraft into Cerkle military airport, then climbed directly into waiting helicopters and were ferried to their assigned locations along the Slovenian border.⁹⁵⁹⁶

Given the federal forces' complete air superiority, the JNA's ability and willingness to fly over Slovenia posed both a military and a political problem for the Slovenian leadership. If left unchallenged, the JNA could deploy forces almost at will, gaining the tactical advantage and undermining Slovenian morale. (Despite a planning failure that left an inadequate number of JNA helicopters available in Slovenia, control of the air allowed the Army to make up the shortage with multiple flights over the short distances involved.) Unfortunately for Ljubljana, the Slovenian defenders had at best very modest antiaircraft capabilities—some 20-mm antiaircraft guns and fewer than 30 SA-7 shoulder-launched SAM's. Defense Minister Jansa himself phoned unit commanders demanding

that they do something to stop or at least curtail JNA helicopter operations. Shortly thereafter, Jansa received word that Slovenian forces had shot down a JNA Gazelle helicopter over Ljubljana, and several other helicopters were damaged or downed.

These helicopter losses made hardly a dent in the JNA's total aircraft inventory, but the Slovenian successes in downing them had a psychological impact out of proportion to their military significance. They helped reduce the defenders' feeling of helplessness against air attack and discouraged the JNA's pilots from further flights. As Jansa describes it:

*... the helicopter assaults of any significance ended and were not resumed until the end of the war. In only an hour's time the situation changed drastically. This was the first reversal of the war [for the JNA] and was much more significant than it appeared at first. The psychological barrier was broken. From then on the aggressor had great trouble convincing its pilots to go on flying missions . . .*⁹⁷

The helicopter lift of the SSUP and customs personnel—originally intended as the second and occupational phase of the operation—was actually premature, as isolated and somewhat confused confrontations continued at many of the border crossings and at a variety of other locations in Slovenia throughout the day on 27 June. Some were resolved through negotiation, others degenerated into armed standoffs, and still others resulted in small but violent battles.

Casualties and confusion notwithstanding, the JNA had largely accomplished its mission of regaining control of the border crossings by nightfall on 27 June. All crossings along the Italian border had been captured by midnight, although the Slovenes retained control over at least three crossings along the Austrian border. The JNA also captured some of the newly established control points along the Slovenian-Croatian border. In part, the JNA's mixed success reflected the relative organization and readiness levels of the JNA and Slovenian TO in each area. JNA forces advancing to the Italian border had begun moving the previous day and succeeded, whereas Slovenian TO forces displayed better organization elsewhere and

were able to block some JNA units advancing toward the Austrian frontier.⁹⁸ JNA casualties for the day were probably higher than expected, but still modest: two officers and two enlisted soldiers killed, and four more officers and 16 soldiers wounded, according to the Fifth Military District's public statements.

Although Croatia and Slovenia had on 20 January agreed to an alliance in the event of the two republics' secession, in practical terms this was to amount to almost nothing once the shooting started. The Croat leaders knew that Slovenia's declaration of independence had irreversibly set them also on the path to secession—and potential catastrophe. Even when first Slovenia's and then Croatia's independence was proclaimed, the Croat leadership remained deeply riven about what exactly Croatia should do during the Slovenian war then unfolding. Leading one faction was activist Defense Minister Martin Spegelj, who on the opening day of the Slovenian war argued vigorously that the moment had come for Zagreb to make its strike for freedom by surrounding JNA garrisons within its territory and arresting key JNA commanders. Not only would Croatia gain the initiative in what Spegelj regarded as an inevitable conflict but it also would be moving without the interference of the JNA's embattled Fifth Military District in adjacent Slovenia. While most of President Franjo Tuđman's ministers seem to have sided with Spegelj on this crucial issue, Tuđman apparently was not yet ready for war. He not only rejected Spegelj's call for action but, much to the Slovenians' chagrin, also did nothing to hinder JNA units based in Croatia from deploying to attack Slovenia. Spegelj, having made his case as powerfully as he knew how, resigned the following day.⁹⁹

By the late morning of Friday, 28 June, the fighting had escalated to the level of full-scale clashes across Slovenia. While the JNA maneuvered to exploit its advantages in armor and airpower to break Slovenian morale, the Slovenians threw their forces into an all-out effort to regain the initiative by simultaneously surrounding and engaging the JNA's forces throughout the country. Control of the border crossings seesawed as Slovenian reinforcements arrived and

federal forces had to surrender several of the posts they had won the previous day.¹⁰⁰ The JNA attempted to push its own reinforcements across the borders into Slovenia and the republic to traverse the international border crossings in the opposite direction. Slovenian territorial defense and police forces obstructed and challenged all of these columns.

The JNA 32nd Mechanized Brigade's column of about 30 tanks and vehicles from Varazdin continued its advance from the previous day and eventually reached its objective, the Austrian border crossing at Gornja Radgona. Once there, the 32nd Mech found itself locked into one of the largest engagements of the Slovenian conflict. The armored column ended up fighting for most of the day against Molotov cocktail-wielding Slovenian local forces, and the border station was all but demolished during the battle.

During the day on 28 June, the JNA made its first attempt to use tactical airstrikes to unblock its stalled armored columns. One column—elements of the 140th Mechanized Brigade from outside Zagreb—was blocked near the town of Trebnje northwest of Novo Mesto.¹⁰¹ JNA aircraft were called in, and a pair of MiG-21's indiscriminately attacked military and civilian targets along the road with cluster bombs. JNA aircraft also bombed Slovenian positions at the Sentilj border crossing, where a blockaded tank column of the 195th Motorized Brigade had also called for airstrikes to clear its advance.

More widespread were the tactical airstrikes against key transport and communications facilities in Slovenia on the 28th. In the most notable air attack of the war, four JNA aircraft bombed Ljubljana airport in the morning, damaging four Adria Airways airliners and killing two people. Two more JNA aircraft bombed Maribor airport later that morning. JNA aircraft also attacked the Slovenian military headquarters at Kocevska Reka, thinking (incorrectly) that the Slovenian leadership had relocated there. On the same day the Yugoslav Government launched an air campaign targeted specifically against the Slovenian information infrastructure, flying multiple sorties against radio and television transmitters at Krim, Kum, Trdinov Vrh, and Nanos.¹⁰²

As the JNA's aerial campaign scoured the skies and dominated news bulletins, Slovenian Special Forces scored one of their first victories—and a major morale boost—with an attack on a JNA armored column from the 253rd Motorized Brigade at Nova Gorica, knocking out three T-55 tanks and capturing three more intact. Four JNA soldiers were killed in the fighting, and almost 100 surrendered.¹⁰³ A smaller JNA column came under fire as it moved to reinforce the JNA forces hotly contesting the Sentilj border crossing. In the same area a composite unit with two T-55 tanks (almost certainly from the 195th Motorized Brigade) accompanied by elements of the 31st Military Police Battalion and probably the 31st Reconnaissance Company was advancing north. TO forces from the 7th (Vzhodnostajerska) Regional Detachment disabled both tanks with rocket-propelled grenades, and the rest of the column surrendered.

In one of the more important but barely noticed successes of the war's beginning, Slovenian forces captured the small JNA garrison at Borovnica with its more than 100 tons of guns, ammunition, explosives, and vehicles. These vital supplies were distributed to TO units over the next few days.¹⁰⁴

When fighting died down on the 28th, the issue still hung in the balance—but Ljubljana's forces appeared to be gaining the advantage. The Slovenian TO held only seven of the border posts, but it had won some military victories and retained its high morale.¹⁰⁵ Although the Yugoslav Army controlled most of the identified objectives and its forces still had clear superiority in equipment, the JNA was already beginning to show signs of the internal weaknesses that would plague it throughout the Slovenian and Croatian conflicts. After its initial successes on the 27th, the JNA seemed to lack any plan to follow up or sustain operations beyond the first day. JNA units and personnel acted bewildered when military action continued after they had occupied the border crossings, and they appeared uncertain what to do next.

It was already evident that the JNA's most serious problems were not material or operational, but

psychological. Most of the JNA's soldiers were 18-year-old conscripts with only a few months' service. They had been told they were defending the country against an invasion from Italy, but it quickly became apparent this was not the case once they had occupied their objectives. Morale plummeted when the rank and file realized they were battling their own countrymen, and most of the conscripts had no idea why they should be doing it. The JNA's first desertions began at the border crossings on the 28th where isolated, confused, and demoralized soldiers gave up as soon as surrounded. Some JNA officers and soldiers—primarily ethnic Slovenians—went clear over to the Territorial Defense or simply abandoned their units.¹⁰⁶

An uneasy cease-fire was patched together near the end of the day on 28 June. First came an announcement by Yugoslav Prime Minister Ante Markovic at 1600 hours local time that the Federal Executive Council (that is, the Yugoslav cabinet) had called for a cease-fire to take effect no later than 1900 hours. Ljubljana ignored the proposal. Later on, Slovene President Kucan and Admiral Stane Brovet—Deputy Secretary of National Defense—made contact by telephone and eventually agreed to a cease-fire commencing at 9:00 pm local time, with a meeting scheduled for the following day to settle precise terms.¹⁰⁷

The Cease-Fire That Wasn't: Saturday, 29 June–Monday, 1 July

The fragile arrangement agreed to the night of 28 June was honored more in the breach than in practice—an unhappy precedent for the countless future cease-fires that were to follow in the former Yugoslavia. As early as 0800 hours on 29 June, Yugoslav People's Army soldiers and Slovenian police were exchanging fire at the Skofije crossing on the Italian border; the firefight ended with three JNA soldiers dead and the rest threatening to blow up the entire border post if the Slovenians did not surrender. JNA special forces troops were ferried to the Italian border crossing at Hrvatini along the Adriatic but were caught by Slovenian forces on landing, losing two killed and three wounded.¹⁰⁸ That same morning the Slovenian Ministry of Defense claimed that 20 JNA soldiers, eight Slovenian TO and police, and 12 civilians had been killed in the fighting up to that time. Some 50 JNA troops and 35 Slovenian combatants were numbered

as wounded, and the Slovenians claimed to have captured some 500 JNA soldiers and received 250 JNA defectors.

The JNA unit holding the border post at Vrtojba—probably from the 253rd Motorized Brigade—turned back and surrendered on the 29th, after negotiations and without a single shot being fired. They gave up not only the post but also several highly prized tanks to the Slovene forces. Late on 29 June, federal forces at the Kostanjeva crossing between Ljubljana and Venice also surrendered, and Slovene forces took charge of the crossing and two busloads of prisoners.¹⁰⁹

On the afternoon of the 29th, the last JNA troops at the Austrian border crossing of Sentilj surrendered after a running 32-hour battle. Despite repeated attacks on Slovene positions at the border post, including two unsuccessful sorties by MiG-21 jets, the JNA's T-55 tanks were unable to advance, and they were eventually abandoned to the Slovenes.^{110 111}

In one of the memorable small dramas of the Slovenian conflict, JNA Sergeant Dragomir Grujevic—under siege for two days with his unit at the Army fuel depot at Mokronog (east of Ljubljana)—threatened to blow up the facility unless his unit got food and water. The depot stored some 7,500 cubic meters—over a quarter million cubic feet—of fuel. The Slovenes complied; Defense Secretary Kadijevic later promoted Grujevic to Lieutenant.¹¹²

Amidst the sporadic fighting, negotiations for a permanent cease-fire sputtered along. On the morning of 29 June, Lieutenant Colonel General Andrija Raseta—representing the JNA Fifth Military District—arrived in Ljubljana for a meeting with Slovenian Defense Minister Jansa and Interior Minister Bavcar to finalize the terms of the cease-fire agreed to the previous evening. Raseta advanced a 12-point list of requirements, including one provision for the removal of barricades that the Slovenians refused to accept. The JNA also threatened on 29 June to mobilize troops as necessary and to take “decisive military action” if Slovenia did not accede to the stated terms. A public statement read by Assistant Federal Defense Secretary for Morale and Education Lt. Col. General Marko

Negovanovic that evening presented a deadline of 0900 hours the following morning for acceptance of the 12 conditions. The Slovenian parliament met through most of that night to consider its options, voting early in the morning to reject the JNA ultimatum.¹¹³

Scattered fighting continued on 30 June as the JNA's unilateral deadline for acceptance of its cease-fire terms came and went. Air raid warnings sent the population of Ljubljana underground in the morning, but the planes were evidently recalled by Federal Prime Minister Markovic shortly after takeoff, and the alarm ended soon after 1000 hours. While this was going on, Slovene forces mortared the runway at the JNA-held Cerklej airfield in an effort to knock out the landing radar.

Meanwhile, the surrounded JNA garrisons in their barracks and at the border crossings continued under blockade, lacking electricity, running short on food, and sometimes without guidance from above. Not surprisingly, there were more surrenders and desertions from the JNA forces over the weekend. The Slovenians scored a major success when the entire garrison of the Dravograd Border Guard Battalion surrendered, with 16 officers and over 400 troops.¹¹⁴ Slovenian forces also took control of the garrisons at Tolmin and Bovec (the 1st and 2nd Battalions of the JNA 345th Alpine Brigade, respectively) gaining more much-needed arms.

Scattered fighting resumed on 1 July despite the ostensible cease-fire. The day began spectacularly when a JNA ammunition depot caught fire and blew up, destroying the Crni Vrh arms depot and damaging most of the town of that name.¹¹⁵ Through fighting or negotiation, Slovenian forces regained control of the Ratece, Korensko Sedlo, Ljubelj, and Karavanke tunnel border crossings. The Slovenians also inherited some 70 truckloads of ammunition and explosives from captured JNA depots at Pecovnik, Bukovzlak, and Zaloska Gorica.¹¹⁶

That same day the column of 12 BOV-3 self-propelled antiaircraft guns from the 306th Light Air Defense Artillery Regiment—which had been the first JNA unit to cross the border from Croatia into Slovenia in the early hours of 27 June—now turned around and

headed back toward the Croatian border. Most of the JNA units' Slovene soldiers by this time had deserted, and the remaining troops—mostly Serbs—were intent only on getting out of Slovenia with their lives and preferably their equipment. The column advanced about 60 kilometers along the Ljubljana-Zagreb highway without incident, but then encountered a barricade of trucks near a woodline outside the town of Krsko. Surrounded in the Krakovski Gozd (Krakovski Forest) the unit refused to surrender, almost certainly hoping for help from a relief column.

Also on 1 July, Col. Gen. Konrad Kolsek (a Slovene) was removed from command of the JNA Fifth Military District. He was replaced by Col. Gen. Zivota Avramovic—a Serb who had previously commanded the Third Military District in southern Yugoslavia and enjoyed a reputation as an uncompromising hardliner.

The Debate Offstage—the JNA Considers Massive Intervention

As the cease-fire talks sputtered on, the JNA—represented by Defense Minister Kadijevic—was lobbying unsuccessfully for an all-out assault with the three-fold-objective of subduing Slovenia, preserving the territorial integrity of Yugoslavia, and restoring the JNA's prestige. In a cabinet meeting on 30 June, Kadijevic expressed the judgment that the JNA's first plan—a limited operation to secure Slovenia's border crossings—had failed. It was therefore time to implement the JNA's second plan: a full-scale invasion and occupation of Slovenia. To Kadijevic's amazement, the cabinet (then still headed by Serbia's Borisav Jovic) decided otherwise.¹¹⁷

General Adzic went public on 2 July to express his and the Army's frustration with the federal government and its policies—directly criticizing the Yugoslav political leadership:

The federal organs continually hampered us, demanding negotiations while they [the Slovenians] were attacking us with all means.¹¹⁸

Even the Slovenians expected a larger JNA counter-stroke than eventually materialized. During the lull that preceded it, analysts of the Slovenian military intelligence staff in Ljubljana produced an assessment that the JNA would deploy two main battle formations in two phases whose final objective would be nothing less than the occupation of the entire renegade republic. In the first phase, the Slovenians expected six JNA motorized or mountain brigades supported by two engineer regiments to advance to a line Maribor-Celje-Grosuplje-Vrhnika-Postojna-Sezana. Achievement of this phase would almost exactly bisect the country along a diagonal line running southwest to northeast. In the second phase, the Slovenians expected three more brigades and two parachute battalions to spearhead a further attack, with two more brigades and another engineer regiment held in reserve. This attack would most likely have commenced in the Ljubljana-Postojna area with the objective of occupying the remainder of the republic.¹¹⁹

What might have happened if the JNA had actually mounted a campaign like the one postulated by the Slovenian analysts? Drawing only from units in and adjacent to Slovenia, the JNA had almost five corps it could have employed in such an enterprise. Two stationed in Slovenia were already engaged (the 14th in Ljubljana and the 31st in Maribor). The JNA drew some elements from the three other corps in the Fifth Military District, but the total sent included only parts of four brigades and one air defense regiment.¹²⁰ Full mobilization of the 14th and 31st Corps, plus major elements of the adjacent 10th, 13th, and 32nd Corps, would have given the JNA at least 60,000 troops to put into the field. However, mobilization of the reservists to fill out these corps probably would have been impossible because of the unlikelihood that Slovenian and Croatian reservists would have responded to a callup, combined with the high level of desertions from conscripts already in units. In any event, if the JNA were able to provide the personnel, man for man, this would have given the JNA parity or only a slight numerical advantage against the fully mobilized Slovenian TO. But, in strictly military terms, the JNA's vastly greater number of tanks, artillery, fighting vehicles, and aircraft would have made such a contest completely unequal.

Even had the JNA thrown five full corps into Slovenia and occupied every key facility in the republic, it probably could not have "won" the conflict in the

longer term. By all accounts the Slovenian military and people were prepared to carry on a partisan-style, hit-and-run military campaign against a JNA occupation force almost indefinitely. Under such circumstances, probably the best that Belgrade could realistically have hoped for was a short-term military success that would have allowed the federal government to negotiate from a dominating position. Once the situation had reached the level of war, and without the political willingness to occupy Slovenia outright and indefinitely, the best the JNA might have won for its government would have been the possibility of dictating the terms of Slovenia's eventual secession, but no more than that.

The Battle Resumes: Tuesday, 2 July–Thursday, 4 July

After the uneasy three-day lull from 29 June through 1 July, open warfare resumed on 2 July. That morning, General Adzic formally opened the hostilities with a blunt statement delivered to and aimed at the rebel Slovenes:

*We will strike so that the war imposed on us is as short as possible . . . we will find even those who are now hiding in their holes . . . we will establish control and bring things to an end.*¹²¹

Several more JNA garrisons had surrendered to Slovenian TO forces during the intermittent fighting between the morning of 29 June and nightfall on 1 July. By the time serious fighting resumed on 2 July, the Slovenians had through negotiation or combat regained control over a bit more than half the border crossings.^{122 123} When Slovenian forces energetically resumed the offensive at all points on 2 July, it was too much for most of the exhausted, surrounded, blockaded, and demoralized JNA outposts. In less than a day, the Slovenians captured all but a few of the remaining border posts.¹²⁴ JNA garrisons in the surrounded barracks were giving up as well. On 2 July the JNA caserne at Skofja Loka (home of the 3rd Battalion of the 345th Alpine Brigade, two other battalions already having surrendered on 30 June) turned over the facility to forces of the 3rd (Gorenjska) Regional Detachment.

One particularly violent clash continued at Ajsevica near Nova Gorica (the site of a JNA ammo dump), ending late in the day with the surrender of the Yugoslav contingent. The long-contested Sentilj border crossing finally went to the Slovenian forces after they turned the guns of captured JNA T-55 tanks on the surrounded JNA contingent. The press reported continued fighting near the Fernetici border crossing.

JNA combat aircraft went back into action on 2 July, targeting the radio and television transmitters at Nanos, Krvavec, Boc, Domazle, Ljubljana castle, and Pohorje and damaging several of them. Ljubljana airfield was again bombed, despite verbal assurances from Federal Prime Minister Markovic to Slovenian President Kucan on 29 June that there would be no further air raids against Slovenia. Tactical airstrikes hit Slovenian-held barracks at Kocevska Reka and the barricades established at Catez, Krakovski Gozd, and Dravograd. Despite the JNA's fairly vigorous application of airpower, it was only moderately successful in silencing Slovenian broadcasts and breaking down blockades.

Adzic's threatening public statement was made hollow by the simple fact that by 2 July most mobile JNA forces within Slovenia were attempting to advance east and extricate themselves from the country, while JNA reinforcements from the 10th and 32nd Corps in Croatia were being mobilized and sent westward only to try to rescue them. The JNA's "second offensive" was really a half-measure whose purpose was hardly more than the rescue of JNA forces already committed and trapped in Slovenia. By now the JNA victory originally envisaged was almost beyond imagining.

In Croatia a large column of 80 tanks, infantry fighting vehicles (IFVs), and other vehicles¹²⁵ was seen leaving the Marshal Tito barracks in Zagreb (home of the 140th Mechanized Brigade) and heading west on 2 July. Toward the end of the day it crossed the border into Slovenia and camped for the night at Bregana. It fired on the town of Gornja Vas the following morning, but accomplished little else.

Also on 2 July, another column of vehicles (from the 4th Armored Brigade) departed from Jastrebarsko. The brigade's vehicles (M-84 and T-55 tanks, accompanied by M-80 IFVs and M-60 armored personnel carriers) attempted to advance past Slovenian

TO barricades approximately 2 km outside the town of Brezice. The JNA forces were driving westward to rescue the retreating elements of the 306th Light Air Defense Artillery Regiment, which were still trapped in the Krakovski Gozd. One of the M-84 tanks was blown apart by an antitank mine and two of the M-60 APCs were destroyed in minutes by Armbrust anti-tank rockets fired at close range. JNA air attacks were called in but failed to break up the barricades or to dislodge Slovenian TO positions. The JNA advance was stopped cold, with dead and wounded soldiers littered around the burning vehicles.

The object of the rescuers ambushed and routed near Brezice, the retreating column of the 306th Light Antiaircraft Regiment in the Krakovski Gozd, shortly afterward found itself surrounded and attacked by elements of the Slovenian TO's 2nd (Doljenska) Regional Detachment. The Slovenian forces opened fire on the blockaded vehicles with two 82-mm recoilless rifles, Armbrust rocket launchers, and rifle grenades. One JNA BOV-3 antiaircraft vehicle was blown up by an Armbrust rocket, a rifle grenade damaged another, and a third caught fire. The JNA lost four men—two killed and two wounded—in the three damaged vehicles. During the day, the JNA troops succeed in disarming a mine blocking the road but were unable to clear the barricade behind it. The convoy commander called for air support from two MiG-21's and two Jastreb aircraft, which attempted unsuccessfully to clear the road with rocket attacks. The convoy advanced some distance into open country late in the day but was forced to stop for the night.

Yet another reinforcement column of 20 to 25 tanks from the 32nd Mechanized Brigade departed Varazdin in Croatia on 2 July, arriving in Ljutomir en route to join brigade forces at the Gornja Radgona border post.¹²⁶¹²⁷ Even as they moved, however, 13 tanks of the 32nd Mech—blockaded at the Ormoz bridge and unable even to cross into Slovenia—gave up and turned around after blasting the area with their heavy guns.¹²⁸ The third deployed element of the brigade—the roughly 30 APCs that had set out on the first night of the war—must have received an order to withdraw, and it abandoned the hard-contested post at Gornja

Radgona.¹²⁹ With the mechanized unit already at the border pulling out, further reinforcement from Varazdin became pointless. The day's fighting had cost the JNA 10 killed and 13 wounded, according to the Federal Defense Ministry.

Probably the most serious obstacle to JNA withdrawal throughout the conflict was Slovenian insistence that JNA *personnel* leave the republic but that JNA *equipment* remain behind. In most cases, federal troops refused to surrender their weapons. Slovenian Defense Minister Jansa maintained the official position on 2 July that the troops must leave their weapons behind when vacating the republic and asserted that Ljubljana would claim the equipment as "war reparations" for damages inflicted by the Army during the fighting.

Slovenian TO commander Janez Slapar and newly appointed Fifth Military District commander Avramovic exchanged new cease-fire terms on the afternoon of 2 July but could not come to agreement. Slovenian Prime Minister Peterle nevertheless decided to announce a unilateral four-point cease-fire offer effective at 2100 hours local time by which the JNA could withdraw unchallenged into barracks with its weapons. Nothing came of the proposal, but the Slovenians scored a propaganda coup when the Army ignored the offer.

Sometime during the night of 2-3 July, Major Bosko Prodanovic, the commander of the wandering convoy of BOV-3's from the 306th Light Air Defense Artillery Regiment, heard by radio that the rescue column from 4th Armored Brigade, which they were attempting to link up with, had been driven back. Major Prodanovic reluctantly concluded that further road movement was impossible, and his troops abandoned the 12 antiaircraft vehicles during the night with all their weapons and ammunition. The crews escaped the immediate area on foot but were eventually captured by Slovenian special police near Krsko.

In the small hours of the morning on 3 July, a massive armored column—approximately 150 vehicles of all types—began rolling through the streets of Belgrade itself, amidst cheers of support from the city's residents. The column departed the city headed northwest on the main road from Belgrade to Zagreb

(ironically, the "Brotherhood and Unity" highway) and appeared destined for the fighting.¹³⁰ In the end, however, the JNA's giant armored fist—from the 1st Guards Mechanized Division—was actually part of the JNA preparations for the looming war in Croatia and ended up parked along the Serbian-Croatian border and did not participate in the Slovenian conflict at all.¹³¹

The *Sturm und Drang* of the huge JNA column departing Belgrade actually rang down the curtain on its Slovenian drama, for military operations had effectively ceased. The battles at the Brezice crossing and in the Krakovski Gozd—both conclusive defeats for the JNA—proved to be the largest and bloodiest clashes of the brief conflict. When the 32nd Mechanized Brigade's withdrew from the Gornja Radgona post, the JNA had already surrendered control of the last border crossing to the Slovenians. With the Slovenians in possession of all major objectives and the JNA withdrawing to its bases or over the border, the military contest was essentially decided. The war would go on for another week, but it was to be contested at the negotiating table and not on the battlefield.

A tentative cease-fire took effect on the evening of 3 July. The Yugoslav Collective Presidency called upon Slovenia to release all JNA units, prisoners, and equipment, to withdraw Slovenian militia by noon on the 4th, to lift all blockades by the 5th, and to relinquish control over the border posts by the 7th. The Slovenes agreed only to release JNA prisoners and to allow JNA garrison units to return to barracks with their arms. On 4 July the terms of yet another cease-fire were arranged, and the JNA began withdrawing to its barracks. Debate continued at the highest levels of government, but the military situation on the ground had reached its dénouement.

Negotiation, Internationalization, and Conclusion: Friday, 5 July–Wednesday, 10 July

Although tensions remained high in and around Slovenia, open hostilities actually did cease from 4 July onward. From 5 July through 7 July international diplomats began mediating a debate of terms of

reference toward an agreement. Formal negotiations began 7 July on the Adriatic island of Brioni. At the Brioni talks, representatives of the Yugoslav Federal government, the Slovenians, and the Croatians met under the auspices of a team of European Community foreign ministers making their third visit to Yugoslavia. After little more than three days of intense negotiations—a very brief time, by the later standards of Balkan peace talks—the Brioni Accord was signed on 10 July 1991. In it all of the Yugoslav parties agreed to start negotiations on the country's future by 1 August 1991, accept EC monitors, lift the blockades of Army facilities, restrict the Army to its barracks, and deactivate "militias." Within hours of the final cease-fire, federal troops in Slovenia began helping to clear landmines sown during the conflict. The Slovenians, however, never did make good their pledge to return equipment captured from the JNA.

When all the bodies were counted, casualties in Slovenia were remarkably light—in contrast to the rivers of blood that would later flow in Croatia and Bosnia. Forty-four JNA soldiers were killed during the conflict, and 187 were wounded. Almost incredibly, only eight Slovenian soldiers or policemen were killed in the fighting. Perhaps 15 civilians were killed as well.¹³²

In many ways the war in Slovenia was not about Slovenia at all. The real issue from the very start was not the independence of Yugoslavia's constituent republics *per se* but rather what would happen to the Serbs of the large ethnic enclaves in Croatia and Bosnia if those republics separated from the Serbian homeland. Once Belgrade granted independence to the Slovenian Republic with no alterations in its borders, the precedent would be set for Croatia and Bosnia, whose borders encompassed numerous Serb-majority regions. The failure to deal with the underlying question of minority self-determination within the boundaries of seceding republics was to have horrifying consequences only months later when Croatia and Bosnia—*their hands forced by Slovenia's declaration*—declared their own independence without any provision for resolving the status of their Serb minorities. Slovenia won its independence quickly and on the cheap, but its neighbors would pay a steep price in blood and treasure as a consequence of Slovenia's actions.

Chapter 5

Goliath Defeated: What Went Wrong in the JNA?

This intervention is the beginning of the end for the Yugoslav Army.

Janez Jansa, June 1991¹³³

Jansa was right. When the JNA took on Slovenia, it ended up tearing itself apart.

In what looked like a David and Goliath confrontation in Slovenia, David had clearly emerged victorious and Goliath had quit the field in disgrace. How and why did the JNA fail? The question is not as simple as it might seem, and there are a number of answers. The JNA went into the conflict because it was the only instrument available for the task of bringing Slovenia into line. But it was the wrong instrument: the JNA's fundamental problem was that it had been directed to impose a military solution on what had become an intractable political problem. If anything, the Slovenians arguably benefited by a limited JNA intervention, for Yugoslav military action instantly galvanized public support for Slovenia and internationalized what had previously been an internal Yugoslav political dispute. The conventional wisdom is that the federal government declared war on the Slovenians and was the first to apply force—which may be technically correct. But it is probably more accurate to say that the Slovenians had built and set a mousetrap for the JNA, then baited the Belgrade leadership until it sent the JNA walking into it.

Implicit in the conventional wisdom is the notion that the JNA set out with a superior force, intending or at least ready to wage an all-out war and to crush the Slovenian opposition if that should be necessary; but almost every aspect of this perception turns out to be incorrect in some way. The numbers do much to tell the story. The JNA eventually had to withdraw some 22,000 to 24,000 troops from Slovenia, a figure that gives some idea of how much force Belgrade could have employed if it had been absolutely determined. The JNA actually deployed, however, no more than

3,000 of these troops into combat during the 10-day conflict. The Slovenians, by contrast, mobilized and deployed more than 30,000 troops during the same period. In what appears at first glance to be a David and Goliath struggle, David actually had more than 10 times as many troops in the field as Goliath did.

Although the Yugoslav Army had an overwhelming advantage in heavy equipment—tanks, armored vehicles, artillery, and aircraft—this was not the force it needed for the mission it was assigned. The JNA found itself fighting a type of warfare it was not designed for against an opponent it had not expected to fight. The JNA was intended to be a conventional, armor-mechanized fighting force that would engage similar opponents in open battle. Instead, it confronted the Slovenian Territorial Defense—a semiconventional, partisan-type force that could fight where it chose and avoid battle when it could not win. The JNA had been devised, built, and trained to fight a mobile war involving holding actions against superior conventional forces but with the support of the local population. Instead, the JNA advanced against a small, elusive force, fighting ambushes at locations of the enemy's choosing and perforce acting as an occupying army surrounded by a hostile nation.

With the number of troops made available to it, the JNA in Slovenia had no hope of isolating and destroying the TO's formations, which in practical terms left the JNA always on the defensive. The JNA failed to anticipate that it would be surrounded and deprived of mobility. Its armored columns became little more than moving targets, usually with nothing for their heavy weapons to engage, since there were no comparable Slovenian forces to meet and destroy. When barricaded in along the roads, the JNA's armored vehicles frequently became not merely useless but in fact liabilities, vulnerable to hand-held antitank rockets. JNA armored forces had the firepower to destroy whole villages, but—as the US military eventually had discovered in Vietnam—such actions are ultimately counterproductive. The few times the JNA attempted to apply massive firepower, it only infuriated the local populace and made a political settlement even less achievable.

The JNA's airpower was also largely ineffective in the conflict. Had it chosen to, the Yugoslav military had enough aircraft and bombs to lay waste Slovenia's cities or military facilities. Widespread destruction of civil targets would again have served no purpose, elicited international outrage, and further rallied the population against the federal authorities. JNA aircraft had some success in striking critical infrastructure targets, primarily telecommunications towers. The JNA Air and Air Defense (RV i PVO) Force proved almost completely ineffective, however, when it attempted to support the JNA Ground Forces in tactical operations. It had neither the types of munitions nor the many hours of training it would have required to effectively support advancing JNA troops engaged at close distances against Slovenian light infantry forces fighting from covered positions. As often as not, the RV i PVO ended up striking nearby civilian targets or the JNA's own forces by accident.

Given the Yugoslav military's almost unsolvable dilemmas of available force versus assigned missions, the JNA further compounded its problems with a series of serious failures in both planning and execution. These mistakes began long before the conflict, with intelligence failures and fundamentally flawed working assumptions. Poorly thought-out operational planning led to units being surrounded and cut off without plans for escape or relief. Careless and haphazard logistic planning left these surrounded units in untenable positions when their equipment broke down and supplies ran out. When things began to go wrong for the Yugoslav military, the simple fact emerged that the JNA's heart was not in this war, whereas the Slovenian TO had both discipline and motivation.

In Slovenia—unlike Croatia later on—KOS failed disastrously in its mission of providing timely and accurate intelligence on opposition capabilities and plans. From mid-1990 onward, the Slovenians were one step ahead of KOS both strategically and tactically. Strategically, KOS assessed incorrectly that the

Slovenians would not fight and that a show of force would therefore be adequate to subdue them. Perhaps most important, KOS erred in its judgments about the capabilities of the Slovenian TO's reservists—the great majority of the troops and the foundation of the force. Conversely, the Slovenians appear to have had a good idea of what the JNA would and could do in response to the border post closures. Tactically, the JNA appears to have had poor knowledge of Slovenian force deployments, especially their capabilities. The Slovenes, by contrast, had the advantage of good intelligence on federal Army plans and movements.

Lacking good intelligence, the JNA went on to make poor assumptions that in turn contributed to seriously flawed operational planning. Having concluded that the Slovenians would not fight, the JNA deployed for a show of force and not a true combat mission. The JNA's implicit failure to anticipate actual combat led to a lack of adequate logistic and material preparations. Mobilization shortfalls further impaired JNA combat readiness. Despite efforts to improve readiness in the JNA Fifth Military District before the conflict, there were still serious failures that directly impacted combat operations. Tanks ran out of fuel, and many units went into the field without basic combat loads. Soldiers used up their food and water in as little as a day or two. When detachments were surrounded at border posts or vehicle columns were blockaded, there were no clear plans for how to resupply or rescue them.

What finally lost the war for the JNA was not a lack of troops or firepower, nor a lack of ammunition or supplies, but a lack of will. In the face of what must have seemed like massive incompetence or lack of support from above, it is no wonder that surrounded conscripts in the field rapidly became bewildered and demoralized. Because the rank and file within the JNA fundamentally did not have a clear sense of what they were fighting for (indeed, they had previously been told they were fighting an entirely different enemy), it was very hard for their officers to motivate them to soldier on at the risk of their lives.

In sum, the JNA, faced with a host of political dilemmas, made flawed planning assumptions that resulted in inadequate military preparations and logistic failures, ultimately producing a military debacle. Had the

JNA not made this cascade of mistakes, it would have been far more difficult for the Slovenian forces to challenge and defeat their opponents. As Jansa himself concedes:

We were more than a match for the first armored brigade at Vrhnika, most certainly when they did not have complete crews and were demoralized and while they were entirely dependent for their basic supplies on our goodwill. But the situation would have been completely different for us if they had dispatched their most modern tanks, for example to Banja Luka, fitted them up into perfect working order, filled them with complete, specially picked crews, provided them with the necessary infantry and air support, and sent them to our borders. In that case the superiority of armoured units would have been paramount, and we did not have enough supplies for an anti-armour battle over greater distances.¹³⁴

Even if all of these errors had been avoided, could a well-planned, well-executed JNA campaign have won the war for Belgrade? Probably not. Better preparation and execution could certainly have made Slovenia's war for independence much more costly for the break-away republic and could have prevented the operation from becoming the humiliating debacle it was for the JNA. Nevertheless, it would have been all but impossible for the JNA to force a recalcitrant Slovenia to remain within the SFRY once Ljubljana had made the decision to stand and fight. The evidence suggests that the Slovenians were prepared for—and indeed expected—another, larger JNA offensive along the lines of that advocated by General Adzic. The Slovenian leadership and military appear to have been prepared to conduct exactly the sort of protracted, partisan war the Territorial Defense was designed to fight and would have done so if events had required it. The JNA could not have operated indefinitely under such circumstances—especially with an even larger civil war brewing behind it in Croatia. With mounting international pressure, virtually no popular support in Slovenia, and threatened lines of communication through Croatia, the JNA would almost certainly have had to quit the field eventually, if only to regroup and

better defend the boundaries of "Greater Serbia" or "Little Yugoslavia" as the JNA appeared to eventually view it. Ironically—given the popular impression of an invincible, Yugoslav mechanized monster taking on a heroic band of lightly armed Slovenian minutemen—the truth is that from the start the JNA was almost set up to lose.

The JNA went into Slovenia intending to awe the population with a convincing display of military might, and, in fact, it was largely successful in accomplishing most of its initial military goals. The military objectives—strictly defined—were generally met within the first 48 hours (for instance, occupation of the border crossing points), although the Slovenian defenders managed to retain control over the Ljubljana and Maribor airports and to surround some isolated JNA garrisons. The trouble was that this short-term, purely military success did absolutely nothing to further Belgrade's primary political goals. Regardless of the military success enjoyed by the JNA during the short campaign, the Army failed completely to achieve the over-all objective of cowing the Slovenian political leadership into submission. Instead, JNA actions inflamed the population all the more, as the Slovenian leaders undoubtedly hoped they would.

Throughout the Slovenian conflict there was a widespread and mistaken impression, in the press and among many Western decisionmakers, that the Yugoslav Army had "run amok" and was operating unilaterally and outside of political control. In fact, the opposite was true. Consciously or unconsciously, Western leaders conjured up images of Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968. The reality, however, was that the JNA had been directed by its political masters into a domestic action for which it had little enthusiasm. Once engaged—and losing—the JNA found itself denied the ability to crush the opposition with a massive and decisive military intervention on the orders of the same political leadership that had sent the tanks into the morass in the first place. Thereafter, the best the JNA could hope for was to extract itself from an unwinnable situation with as little loss of life, time, equipment, and prestige as possible.

The Mouse That Roared: The Slovenian Victory Analyzed

We will offer resistance only when the balance of power is in our favor and the risk of human losses is low. But we will not give in.

Janez Jansa, June 1991¹³⁵

In striking contrast to the JNA, the Slovenians managed to combine careful planning, training, strategy, motivation, and luck into a successful bid for military and political independence. Planning and organization were the first Slovenian successes—a victory largely won before the first shots were even fired. The Slovenian intelligence services were already setting the stage for victory months in advance. Both military and police forces were well organized in the year before the conflict.

Ljubljana's successful establishment and organization of a fully fledged military was a remarkable achievement. Fully mobilized, the Slovenian Territorial Defense could theoretically have fielded (though not necessarily armed) as many as 60,000 troops across the republic. As events actually unfolded, Slovenia mobilized approximately 35,000 to 37,000 troops during the span of the conflict.¹³⁶ Territorial defense training was also surprisingly effective, given the circumstances the Slovenian TO had to operate under and the very compressed time frame in which the Slovenian military had to get ready. Not realizing how much progress the TO was able to make in only a few months, the JNA consistently underestimated the caliber of the Slovenian reservists and paid dearly for this error later.

Besides good organization and training, the Slovenian TO had a sound doctrine and tactics that matched the capabilities of the available force. The Slovenian TO's overarching strategy was to make maximum use of its own advantages—surprise and strong popular support—to prevent the JNA from effectively utilizing its

strengths in armor and artillery. Tactically, the Slovenes emphasized blockading, surrounding, and ambushing vulnerable columns, using shoulder-fired antiarmor weapons at close range to neutralize the JNA's armor advantage.

Ljubljana also made effective use of its Interior Ministry police forces for both combat and noncombat functions. The Slovene special police force served as an important combat element during the conflict, and special police troops served alongside the Territorial Defense forces assaulting the border posts and later manning the blockades. Regular police forces were also vital in performing less glamorous but equally important tasks, such as establishing blockades and roadblocks. As JNA units attempted to move out of their garrisons, Slovene police established barricades with vehicles, trees, and concrete cones. Some military convoys were trapped by double barricades, with a second roadblock set up behind an already blocked column. In addition, the regular police were to continue their routine law enforcement responsibilities during the brief conflict, handling the not inconsiderable task of maintaining order during a wartime setting as well as processing the thousands of surrendering and deserting federal troops.

As he helped to formulate Slovenia's overall strategy, Defense Minister Jansa attempted to study relevant historical examples of smaller military forces successfully resisting larger and more powerful opponents. In his memoirs, he makes special note of Finland's resistance against vastly superior Soviet forces during the invasion of 1939-1940. Relevantly, Jansa noted how the Finns used their territory to maximum advantage, allowing the columns of Soviet tanks into the interior and then blocking and destroying them. Jansa's TO was to successfully employ similar tactics against the JNA in the few major, conventional engagements of the Slovenian war. As he describes the TO's training and subsequent use of this technique:

The acting out by the headquarters of events if the units of the JNA really broke through to the border crossings and surrounded members of the border police proved to be particularly welcome. In this example previously determined

units of the TO would shut off the path of the attackers behind, cut off their supplies, prevent the arrival of reinforcements and surround it. They would find themselves in a vise . . . In many cases during the war precisely such a situation appeared and a number of detachments of the JNA surrendered after being surrounded.¹³⁷

From the start, the Slovenians combined their military operations with a well-thought-out and effective public relations campaign, directed at both domestic and Western public opinion. Within a week of the war's outbreak, the Slovenians had established a fully outfitted press center featuring a 200-seat auditorium, separate working and eating areas, and a continuous stream of multiple-language news bulletins. A measure of the Slovenians' success was the fact that there were some 800 Western and 350 domestic press personnel registered at the press center at this time. The professionalism of the Slovenians contrasted completely with the ham-fisted media efforts of the Belgrade government, which came across as a backward and unreformed Communist state. Bellicose statements like General Adzic's 2 July threats may have been intended to intimidate the Slovenian populace, but instead rallied the opposition and made the JNA look like heavyhanded oppressors. The JNA's use of tanks—partly a function of a shortage of infantry, partly also an effort at intimidation—similarly backfired, inevitably calling up images of Budapest in 1956, Prague in 1968, and Tienanmen Square just two years earlier.

It was the successful combination of both military and political strategy that really won the war for Ljubljana. While the Slovenians' military successes were undoubtedly significant, in many ways their crucial victories were won not on the battlefield but on the television news and in the minds of Western decision-makers. The Slovenians managed to maneuver the JNA such that it was outflanked, literally and figuratively, at every level of the conflict.

Slovenian Endgame: The JNA Quits the Field

The broken jug . . . cannot be put together again.

Milan Kucan, 2 July 1991¹³⁸

The JNA units remaining in Slovenia after the Brioni agreement was signed on 10 July 1991 were effectively besieged in a hostile foreign country and trapped inside their own garrisons. Seeking to ratchet up the pressure, the Slovenians cut off electricity to the five major JNA garrisons on 17 July.

The following day—18 July 1991—the Yugoslav Collective Presidency issued an order for the JNA to withdraw from Slovenia over a three-month period into other garrisons in Bosnia and Serbia. (According to the provisions of the Yugoslav Presidency's original 10-point decision, all elements of the JNA 31st Corps were to withdraw to Serbia, while the 14th Corps was to withdraw to Bosnia.¹³⁹) Officially, the JNA withdrawal was to be completed by 26 October 1991. Effectively, the withdrawal was completed much sooner—most troops and equipment left Slovenia by the end of July, hardly more than a week after the end of hostilities.

Even after the last shots were fired, Slovenia's intelligence capabilities continued to serve Ljubljana well. The Slovenians managed to retain and expand at the negotiating table the gains made by their victories on the battlefield. Successful intelligence work appears to have given the Slovenian negotiators an inside edge at the talks. Jansa claims, believably, that:

Our technicians and counterintelligence agents had cracked the JNA-coded communications system and listened to conversations between Zagreb and Belgrade or rather between Andrija Raseta,¹⁴⁰ Stane Brovet,¹⁴¹ Sljivic, and other generals and admirals. We knew precisely where we had to apply pressure to make them yield. Before each round of negotiations we worked out our

tactics, and then Miran Bogataj would normally secure everything we planned. We acquired more than 200 tanks and other armored vehicles and means of transport, which we so urgently needed . . . We were very well acquainted with the position of the supreme command, which due to the unfavorable development of events in the Croatian battlefields had decided that its bottom line in negotiation was the withdrawal of the remaining troops and officers, and then anything else it could get.¹⁴²

The Yugoslav Federal Presidency's order for the Yugoslav Army to withdraw from Slovenia marked Belgrade's de facto acknowledgment of Slovenian independence and an end to the military conflict within Slovenia. The JNA's withdrawal, however, represented not only Slovenian independence but also the final, undeniable death knell for Yugoslavia.

On 15 January 1992, Slovenia was formally recognized as an independent country by the European Community and its member nations. By this time, widespread fighting had begun in Croatia between the self-proclaimed Serb autonomous regions and the Zagreb government, the JNA had demolished the Croat-held city of Vukovar, and the first UN peacekeepers had arrived to implement the Vance Peace Plan in neighboring Croatia. The Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia had declared its own independence. The then Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina was preparing for its own referendum on independence, which would eventually plunge it over the precipice into armed conflict. For Slovenia, the war was over—but for most of the rest of Yugoslavia, it had only just begun.

Endnotes, Section I

¹ Deep-seated differences notwithstanding, the popular assertions that the Yugoslav conflict was the inevitable product of centuries of ethnic hatreds are at best only partially true. For instance, it is worth noting that, at the time of Yugoslavia's creation as a state in 1918, there had been no prior history of any Serb-Croat wars. (Indeed, one might also observe that France and Germany fought more major conflicts between 1870 and 1945 than did the Serbs and Croats.) There is no question that the Second World War was exceptionally brutal and divisive within Yugoslavia and that as many as a million Yugoslavs died at the hands of other Yugoslavs between 1941 and 1945. But, Yugoslavia is by no means unique in having had a divided state, a Nazi client government, or a civil war during this time frame.

² In this text the terms "Slovene," "Croat," "Serb," and "Muslim" will be used to denote ethnic/religious identities and not the republic they reside in or nationality. "Slovenian," "Croatian," "Bosnian," and "Serbian" will be used to denote persons hailing from each of the respective geographic areas. Thus, terms such as "Bosnian Croat" or "Croatian Serb" would designate, first, the geographic area the individuals hail from and, second, their ethnic background. The terms "Macedonian" and "Montenegrin" are generally used here for both the ethnic group and the republic/nationality. Conversely, the terms "Albanian" and "Hungarian" are used solely to indicate the ethnic affiliation unless otherwise indicated.

³ Technically, in addition to the eight republic and provincial representatives (who could serve as president of the SFRY) there were also two other members of the Federal Presidency: the President of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia and the Federal Minister of Defense. The collective presidency in turn selected the Federal Prime Minister.

⁴ Zametica, John *The Yugoslav Conflict*. IISS, Adelphi paper 270, p. 10.

⁵ This was partly, but not entirely, the result of the collapse of Soviet-Bloc Communism throughout Eastern Europe at the same time. To some extent, political change in Yugoslavia was spurred by the new political winds sweeping through Eastern Europe. Yugoslavia had not been part of the Soviet Bloc since 1948, however, and had charted its own political and economic course that left it substantially isolated from the political developments behind the Iron Curtain.

⁶ Laura Silber and Allan Little, *Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation*, Penguin, 1996, p. 72.

⁷ The legislative branch of the Yugoslav Government consisted of the Federal Assembly, a two-chamber legislature with representatives from the various republics and provinces. The Federal Assembly was responsible for passing the laws and the federal budget.

⁸ The Yugoslav People's Army included three services—the Ground Forces (KOV), the Air and Air Defense Force (RV i PVO), and the Navy (RM). Of these, the Ground Forces was the largest and most important.

⁹ In 1991—a year after multiparty elections had ousted the Communists in Slovenia and Croatia—over 95 percent of the JNA officer corps were still Communist Party members. (Anton A. Bebler, "The Yugoslav People's Army and the Fragmentation of a Nation," *Military Review*, August 1993, pp. 38-51.)

¹⁰ "As regards the composition of the officer corps and the promotion to senior commanding and directing posts in the Yugoslav People's Army, the principle of the most proportional representation of the Republics and Autonomous Provinces shall be applied." Article 242, Federal Constitution of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, 1974.

¹¹ Gow, James, "Deconstructing Yugoslavia," IISS *Survival*, July/August 1991, pp. 291-311.

¹² Anton A. Bebler, "The Yugoslav People's Army and the Fragmentation of a Nation," *Military Review*, August 1993, pp. 38-51.

¹³ Ibid., pp. 38-51.

¹⁴ This tally does not include the numerous cadre-strength reserve formations in the force, many of which were later activated by the various warring factions or which served as the nucleus of other fighting formations.

¹⁵ Ironically as it turned out, since to a greater or lesser degree the Territorial Defense in Slovenia, Croatia, and Bosnia ended up becoming the *opponent* of the JNA.

¹⁶ Bebler, pp. 38-51.

¹⁷ Belgrade *Narodna Armija* (supplement) 3 July 1986, "Report on Speech by Miodrag Ivanovic in the All-People's Defense and Social Self-Protection Commission of the 13th LCY Congress in Belgrade on 26 June," FBIS Vienna 221933Z July 1986.

¹⁸ Bebler, pp. 38-51. This appears consistent with the Yugoslav press figures that are cited from *Narodna Armija*.

¹⁹ Silber and Little, p. 118.

²⁰ Borisav Jovic, *The Last Days of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia*, entry for 16 May 1990.

²¹ Silber and Little, p. 118.

²² Silber and Little, p. 106.

²³ Janez Jansa, *The Making of the Slovenian State 1988-1992: The Collapse of Yugoslavia*, Ljubljana: Mladinska Knjiga Publishing House, 1994, p. 44.

²⁴ Jansa actually lists 16 municipalities that were able to retain their weapons, as follows: Brezice, Jesenice, Kranj (partly), Krsko, Litija, Mozirje, Murska Subota, Radlje ob Dravi, Radovljica, Slovenske Konjice, Smarje pre Jelsah, Skofja Loka, Trbovlje, Trzic, Velenje, and Zalec. Jansa, p. 48.

²⁵ Estimates of the percentage seized range between 40 and 60 percent. Jansa stated in his memoirs and is also cited in Silber and Little's *Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation* as claiming the Slovenian TO lost some 70 percent of its stockpile and started with only 10,000 weapons. This latter figure of 10,000 weapons seems somewhat low, even allowing for arms smuggling between spring 1990 and Jansa's later figure of 23,000 weapons available at the beginning of June. Most available estimates indicate that the Army captured about 60 percent of the weapons for a force of 60,000—presumably indicating that the JNA took something like 36,000 weapons and the TO retained up to 24,000 small arms. It is most likely that the percentage of heavy weapons—mortars, antitank weapons, and light artillery pieces—confiscated by the JNA was higher than it was for infantry arms.

- ²⁶ In Croatia, by contrast, the JNA was able to seize virtually all of the Territorial Defense arsenals—with obvious and far-reaching consequences when fighting did start there.
- ²⁷ *Jane's Intelligence Review*, "Slovenia—Territorial Defense a Year On," July 1992, pp. 305-308.
- ²⁸ The Slovenian press reported that the JNA again demanded TO weapons in late November 1990, but there does not appear to be any other evidence to substantiate this.
- ²⁹ Dragovich, Alex N. "Yugoslavia in Historical Perspective." *Mediterranean Quarterly, Summer 1992*. pp. 5-19.
- ³⁰ Thompson, Mark, *A Paper House: The Ending of Yugoslavia*. New York: Pantheon Books, p. 9.
- ³¹ Zametica, John *The Yugoslav Conflict*. IISS Adelphi Paper 270, p. 14.
- ³² Jansa, pp. 63-68.
- ³³ Ibid.
- ³⁴ A parliamentary resolution to this effect was passed on 8 March 1991, challenging whether the federal Constitution or republic laws held precedence. According to the Slovenian resolution, military service in the JNA was no longer mandatory for citizens of the Slovenian Republic from that date forward. Normally, about 3,000 Slovenian conscripts were called up for service in the JNA each March. Between the lifting of the obligation on 8 March 1991 and the outbreak of war that June, there was reportedly only a single Slovenian volunteer for service in the JNA.
- ³⁵ Jansa, pp. 63-68.
- ³⁶ Jansa did not attempt to use many active-duty JNA officers to build his military. Before the outbreak of the war, most active-duty Slovene officers remained in the JNA, although many deserted during or immediately after the conflict.
- ³⁷ Gow, pp. 291-311.
- ³⁸ One small illustration is the fact that unlike the JNA (which used Serbo-Croatian exclusively), each republic TO used the corresponding national language (for example, Slovenian).
- ³⁹ Jansa, p. 49.
- ⁴⁰ Jansa, p. 49-50.
- ⁴¹ Silber and Little, p. 106.
- ⁴² Gow, pp. 291-311.
- ⁴³ Ljubljana *Neodvisni Dnevnik*, "The Army's Intervention Did Not Surprise Us," 17 August 1991.
- ⁴⁴ Ibid.
- ⁴⁵ Jansa, p. 62.
- ⁴⁶ Silber and Little, pp. 106-107.
- ⁴⁷ Silber and Little, p. 107.
- ⁴⁸ Jansa cites the lack of secure communications in battle as one of the force's major deficiencies. To some extent, the Slovenian military appears to have overcome this shortcoming in combat by cooperating with police units and routing critical communications through the Interior Ministry's network.
- ⁴⁹ Jansa, pp. 140-141.
- ⁵⁰ The latter figure probably includes not only the more famous Armbrust rockets but also Yugoslav-manufactured 90-mm "Osa" antitank rockets and 82-mm recoilless rifles.
- ⁵¹ Jansa, pp. 140-141.
- ⁵² A Western press report from the same time cites a figure of 40,000 total light arms but lacks subsourcing and Jansa's level of detail. *The Economist*, "Slovenia's Self-Defense," 6 July 1991.
- ⁵³ At least, not without capturing substantial stocks of weapons from its JNA opponents. As it happened, captured JNA weapons stocks appear to have played an important role in even the brief conflict that occurred. Among other things, the Slovenian forces appear to have used up a large fraction of their antitank weapons in the opening days of the fight, and thereafter relied on captured stocks.

- ⁵⁴ Vasiljevic later rose to the rank of major general in the JNA and headed KOS for a time before being forced out of his position.
- ⁵⁵ Jansa, pp. 13-15
- ⁵⁶ Jansa, *The Making of the Slovenian State 1988-1992: The Collapse of Yugoslavia*, Ljubljana: Mladinska Knjiga Publishing House, 1994. p. 130.
- ⁵⁷ After the breakup of Yugoslavia, the Serbian Republic State Security Department (RDB) emasculated the federal SDB, taking over its building and archives in 1992.
- ⁵⁸ Jansa, p. 16.
- ⁵⁹ A firm believer in the Yugoslav ideal, Aksentijevic remained with the JNA after Slovenia's secession and was eventually promoted to Major General (one star) and served as Assistant Commander for Moral Education and Legal Affairs in the Fifth Military District. Dogged by misfortune wherever he went, he left his home in Slovenia after the 10-day war to serve in Croatia during the outbreak of war there, and after enduring the JNA's ordeal in that republic he was reassigned yet again to serve in Bosnia when the Fifth Military District Headquarters was moved to Sarajevo and redesignated the Second. In Bosnia at the beginning of 1992, he witnessed a third republic of his beloved Yugoslavia go up in flames.
- ⁶⁰ Jansa, pp. 79-80, 111.
- ⁶¹ Jansa, pp. 46-47.
- ⁶² Jansa, pp. 78-79.
- ⁶³ Ibid.
- ⁶⁴ During the conflict itself, VIS appears to have cooperated with MUP police forces to rapidly shut down Belgrade's intelligence effort. Even if the networks of informants were unknown, the Slovenians were able to effectively blind the federal authorities by simply rounding up and arresting all identified KOS Federal SDB operatives and detaining them for the duration of the war.
- ⁶⁵ Janez p. 112.
- ⁶⁶ At least one item suggests the Slovenians also collected intelligence on US decisionmaking as well. In his memoirs, Jansa mentions that ". . . we received a report from the intelligence department, according to which [US Secretary of State] Baker, after being presented with the ratio of forces between the defense capabilities of Slovenia and the units of the JNA, which was preparing itself for intervention, convinced himself of the possibility that the federal bodies could put Slovenia in order in a little over two hours." Jansa, p. 93.
- ⁶⁷ Ljubljana *Neodvisni Dnevnik*, op cit.
- ⁶⁸ Jansa, pp. 60-61.
- ⁶⁹ Jansa, p. 111.
- ⁷⁰ Jansa, p. 139.
- ⁷¹ Jansa, p. 140.
- ⁷² Jansa, p. 61.
- ⁷³ Jansa, p. 114.
- ⁷⁴ Jansa, pp. 116-124.
- ⁷⁵ Ibid.
- ⁷⁶ Gow, pp. 291-311.
- ⁷⁷ For instance, the first class of Slovenian soldiers trained at the centers at Pekre and Ig did not graduate until 2 June 1991—scarcely three weeks before the onset of hostilities. Janez Jansa, *The Making of the Slovenian State 1988-1992: The Collapse of Yugoslavia*, Ljubljana: Mladinska Knjiga Publishing House, 1994. p. 131.
- ⁷⁸ Jansa, p. 143.
- ⁷⁹ Jansa, pp. 146-147.

- ⁸⁰ Thompson, Mark, *A Paper House: The Ending of Yugoslavia*. New York: Pantheon Books. p. 8.
- ⁸¹ Jansa, p. 134.
- ⁸² Jansa, p. 147.
- ⁸³ English translation by Dejan Susnik and Mark Valentine, *The Battle for Slovenia*. Ljubljana: Cankarjeva Zalozba, p. 9.
- ⁸⁴ Ibid.
- ⁸⁵ Ibid.
- ⁸⁶ Susnik and Valentine, pp. 17-18.
- ⁸⁷ Susnik and Valentine, p. 14.
- ⁸⁸ Jansa, *The Making of the Slovenian State 1988-1992: The Collapse of Yugoslavia*, Ljubljana: Mladinska Knjiga Publishing House, 1994. p. 152.
- ⁸⁹ More properly, the clash between the JNA and the Slovenian TO near Metlika was the first official battle, between regular armed forces, of the Yugoslav conflict. The first true armed clash was almost three months earlier on 31 March when Tudjman's Croatian special police units battled Martic's rebel militia over Easter weekend in the Plitvice National Park.
- ⁹⁰ Jansa, pp. 152-153.
- ⁹¹ Susnik and Valentine, p. 16.
- ⁹² General Pavlov is one of the many ill-fated figures in the JNA senior leadership. He had arrived in Ljubljana to take over his new command only weeks before the war broke out and proved manifestly unequal to the task when it did. As one joke put it after the JNA was defeated and forced to pull out of Slovenia, General Pavlov was the most successful general in the Yugoslav Army, since he arrived in Ljubljana with only a briefcase but left after only one month with the entire Army.
- ⁹³ Jansa, pp. 154-155.
- ⁹⁴ Jansa, p. 160.
- ⁹⁵ L. K. "Osa Has Fallen," Belgrade *Nin* 13 August 1998, p. 16. FBIS Vienna AU0109085698 010856Z September 1998. This article claims that the detachment from the 63rd Airborne Brigade at Cerkle comprised 18 personnel under the command of then apparently Captain Goran Ostojic. Ostojic, as a Major, was killed in action in Kosovo during 1998 while serving as chief of staff of the 63rd. Susnik and Valentine, pp. 17-18; Belgrade Tanjug, 27 June 1991, FBIS London 2800252 June 1991.
- ⁹⁶ One source claims that 252 Special Police troops—probably a reference to the SSUP—eventually surrendered, and 33 more changed to civilian clothing and surrendered to Italian police near Fernetice.
- ⁹⁷ Jansa, p. 164.
- ⁹⁸ Susnik and Valentine, pp. 22-23.
- ⁹⁹ Belgrade Tanjug, 13 February 1991, FBIS London LD1302120891; Silber and Little, pp. 165-166, 169.
- ¹⁰⁰ Susnik and Valentine, p. 34.
- ¹⁰¹ Susnik and Valentine, p. 28.
- ¹⁰² Susnik and Valentine, pp. 28-34.
- ¹⁰³ Multiple sources.
- ¹⁰⁴ Jansa, p. 178.
- ¹⁰⁵ Jansa, p. 174.
- ¹⁰⁶ Multiple sources.
- ¹⁰⁷ Susnik and Valentine, p. 41.
- ¹⁰⁸ Ibid.
- ¹⁰⁹ Reuters, 30 June 1991.
- ¹¹⁰ Susnik and Valentine, p. 41.
- ¹¹¹ Micheletti, Eric, *The Balkans At War: Yugoslavia Divided 1991*, Hong Kong: Concord Publications Company, 1992.
- ¹¹² Reuters, 30 June 1991.
- ¹¹³ Jansa, p. 181.
- ¹¹⁴ Susnik and Valentine, p. 57.
- ¹¹⁵ The explosion left a crater 18 meters long and 6 meters deep.
- ¹¹⁶ Susnik and Valentine, p. 72.
- ¹¹⁷ Silber and Little, pp. 106-107.
- ¹¹⁸ Reuters, "Yugoslav Army Says It Will Crush Slovenia in Short, Sharp Blitz," 2 Jul 1991.
- ¹¹⁹ Jansa, pp. 191-193.
- ¹²⁰ Approximately one battalion each from the 13th Motorized Brigade (13th Corps), 4th Armored Brigade (10th Corps), 140th Mechanized Brigade (10th Corps), and the 32nd Mechanized Brigade (32nd Corps), as well as the battalion (12 BOV-3 antiaircraft guns) from the 306th Light Air Defense Artillery Regiment.
- ¹²¹ Reuters, op cit.
- ¹²² Sources differ on who controlled how many posts during the period 29 June–2 July. The cited figures (16 held by the Slovenians, 14 by the JNA) are taken from Janez Jansa's memoirs, as the most detailed listing from the most credible source. The Dejan Susnik and Mark Valentine book, *The Battle for Slovenia*, states that the Slovenian police had control over all the international border crossings on 29 June (p. 41), which appears plainly incorrect. The Same Susnik/Valentine book states that the Slovenians had only captured 13 of the 15 Austrian crossings by the 30th (p. 58), and even this latter figure seems high.
- ¹²³ On 1 July, in a partial restoration of normalcy, six border crossings between Slovenia and Austria reopened, although with huge lines and delays.
- ¹²⁴ Jansa, p. 194.
- ¹²⁵ As counted by a Western news cameraman.
- ¹²⁶ Reuters, "Fresh Columns of Yugoslav Tanks Head for Slovenia," 2 July 1991.
- ¹²⁷ Susnik and Valentine, p. 84.
- ¹²⁸ Susnik and Valentine, p. 101.
- ¹²⁹ Ibid.
- ¹³⁰ Reuters, "Huge Yugoslav Armored Column Heads for Troubled North," 2 July 1991.
- ¹³¹ Susnik and Valentine, p. 92.
- ¹³² Most of these were foreign drivers whose trucks had been used in the Slovenian barricades. Since they were financially responsible for their vehicles and produce, they had refused to leave them even during the fighting.
- ¹³³ Reuters, 30 June 1991.
- ¹³⁴ Jansa, pp. 239-240.
- ¹³⁵ Reuters, 30 June 1991.
- ¹³⁶ Jane's Intelligence Review, "Slovenia—Territorial Defense a Year On," July 1992, pp. 305-308.
- ¹³⁷ Jansa, p. 113.
- ¹³⁸ Reuters, "Kucan calls for Military and Civil Observers for Yugoslavia," 2 July 1991.
- ¹³⁹ Presidency decision as cited in a State Department cable.
- ¹⁴⁰ Lt. Col. General, Fifth Military District Deputy Commander and head of the JNA's negotiating team.
- ¹⁴¹ Admiral, Federal Deputy Minister of Defense.
- ¹⁴² Jansa, p. 242.

Guards Brigades of the Croatian Army: 1991-95



Section II

Croatia 1990-1991

Chapter 6

1990: The Origins of the Croatian War*

Croatia's road to warfare and ultimate independence ran alongside Slovenia's path for part of the way, but the two secessionist republics' routes were to diverge early and proceed in quite different directions. Indeed, violence came earlier to Croatia than to Slovenia and would not end until years after the Slovenes had made their successful exit from Yugoslavia.

The roots of Croatian nationalism—and the Serb fears of a resurgence of that nationalism—lie in the distant past. Unlike its neighboring republics of Slovenia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia could claim a long history of either independent statehood (beginning with the reign of King Tomislav in the early 900s) or constitutional semi-autonomy under the Hungarian, Habsburg, and Austro-Hungarian monarchies. For this reason, the Croatian national consciousness was well developed, and the republic's perceived subsumption to Serb interests rankled for generations.

Under the Austro-Hungarians, Croatia was a self-governing province on the empire's embattled southeastern border with the Ottoman Turks. To defend the border, the Austrians, Hungarians, and the Croats sought to recruit Serbs who had fled the Turkish occupations of Serbia and Bosnia in the late 1300s and early 1400s. These displaced Serbs were a tough, hardy warrior people with a vicious hatred of the Turks, and they proved ideal buffers between the Austro-Hungarian and Turkish empires when they were encouraged to settle along the border zone between Croatia and Turkish-occupied Bosnia. The result was the creation in the 15th century of the Serb-majority Krajina region within what is now Croatia. The Serb settlements eventually became known as the *Vojna Krajina*, or "military frontier," with the Krajina Serbs serving as a human barrier against further

Turkish expansion. Granted political autonomy from Croatia, for 500 years these Serbs and their descendants paid allegiance to and received direct support from the imperial capital in Vienna or, latterly, the Yugoslav federal capital in Belgrade.

Although Croat narrations of their history will extend back to the Middle Ages, most Serbs date their awareness of Croatia from the Second World War. When Hitler's Wehrmacht rolled into Yugoslavia in April 1941, most Croats saw not an invasion force but an opportunity for independence from Serb-dominated Belgrade. Croat resistance was marginal, and most Croats welcomed the Germans as the enemy of their enemy. Within days of the German invasion (even before their military campaign had ended), the Germans announced the establishment of an "Independent State of Croatia" (*Nezavisna Drzava Hrvatska*—NDH), headed by the puppet leader Ante Pavelic.¹ Within days, "Poglavnik" (Fuhrer) Pavelic's political-military movement, the *Ustashe* (Croatian Fascists) had taken over the government and had begun implementing anti-Jewish laws. Mass internments of the Jewish population in Nazi-style concentration camps followed over the next few months. In addition to the persecution of the relatively small (perhaps 14,000) Jewish minority in Croatia, the NDH began attempting to "solve" the problem of the far larger (some 1.9 million) population of ethnic Serbs within the new state's borders.

Accurate figures will probably never be known, but it is clear that Pavelic's *Ustashe* massacred huge numbers of Serbs wherever they could be found. Country-wide, various estimates suggest that at least 200,000 and as many as 600,000 "undesirables" died at the hands of the *Ustashe*. At the Jasenovac camp alone, Croatian Fascists executed at least 120,000 Serbs, Gypsies, Jews, and political prisoners. Many years later, however, Croatian President Franjo Tudjman

* Many of the issues discussed in this history of the Croatian war in 1991 are dealt with in more detail in a series of supporting annexes in Volume II, which also contain the full source material for the sections in this study.

would make an early name for himself by publishing a revisionist book claiming that Serbs had vastly inflated the numbers and that probably no more than 60,000 people had been executed at Jasenovac.²

Reluctantly liberated from Hitler's hegemony and reincorporated into Yugoslavia as part of Marshal Tito's Socialist Federation, Croatians found themselves once more under Belgrade's yoke, but still strove at least to loosen the bridle. As early as 1971 a Croatian nationalist movement called Maspok³ developed within Croatia's ruling Communist party. Tito crushed the movement without hesitation or delay and purged or jailed anyone in any way associated with it. After the Maspok crackdown, federal authorities worked ruthlessly to quash any hint of Croatian nationalism, and Croatian political agitators were either driven abroad or forced to operate deep underground. Federal internal security agents infiltrated nationalist movements and monitored anyone suspected of contacts with Croatian groups abroad.

Thanks to their highly effective efforts, the first serious expressions of overt Croatian nationalism did not appear until late 1989, well after Slobodan Milosevic had begun waving the banner of Serbdom and convening mass nationalist rallies in Serbia.

The HDZ and Croatian Nationalism: Croat Actions ...

Twenty years of suppressed nationalist activity notwithstanding, Croatia's road to independence effectively began with the formation of the Croatian Democratic Union (*Hrvatska Demokratska Zajednica*—HDZ), led by Franjo Tudjman. The HDZ was the first openly Croat political movement to appear since the crushing of Maspok two decades earlier. The movement held its first public meeting on 28 February 1989 but was not constituted as a legal political party until that December. As 1990 began, the HDZ was well positioned to take advantage of both the legalization of non-Communist political parties and the power vacuum created by the declining fortunes of the former Communist party.

Franjo Tudjman was a retired JNA general who had fought with the Partisans and had risen through the Army ranks in postwar Yugoslavia. He had been jailed twice—once in the 1970s and once in the 1980s—for Croatian nationalist activities. After being released the second time, Tudjman began cultivating emigre Croatians (many of whom had fled after Tito's 1971 crackdown on the Maspok nationalist movement) and tapping them for the funds so crucial to a nascent political movement.

Like Milosevic, Tudjman knew that ethnic nationalism would be the political engine of the coming decade, and he too had the rhetorical skills to rally his people in the necessary manner. Milosevic had already reached into Krajina to raise the specter of Serbian nationalism in Croatia. Tudjman only needed to tap into the fears the Serb demonstrations had created in Croat minds to create an equal and opposite reaction. As one Croatian political leader noted,

Milosevic's aggressive policy was the strongest propaganda for Tudjman. Milosevic was sending his gangs to Croatia, where they were dancing and singing: 'This is Serbia,' which provoked and liberated the national pride and the nationalist reaction of Croats and was effectively used by Tudjman.⁴

But the ardently nationalist Tudjman advocated more than the full independence denied the then-Croatian Republic. Repeatedly he emphasized his desire (and implicit right) to annex parts of adjacent Bosnia-Herzegovina peopled by Croats.

Accepted as a legitimate political party in December 1989, Tudjman's HDZ quickly established itself as the preeminent political organization in post-Communist Croatia. By the end of February 1990, the first HDZ congress in Zagreb drew 2,500 delegates, including many of the all-important emigres, and the party claimed 200,000 members. Unlike the reformed Communists, who hedged on the key issue of the hour, the HDZ came out openly in favor of Croatian independence and campaigned strongly on this issue.

In the Croatian Republic's first multiparty elections in April-May 1990, the HDZ demonstrated its dominance of the post-Communist political landscape. In two rounds of voting, the HDZ captured 205 of the 356 seats in the new Croatian Assembly. The main opposition party, the reformed Communists, won 73, and the remaining 78 seats went to eight smaller parties. Because the electoral system favored large, well-organized political parties, the HDZ won almost 60 percent of the Assembly seats although it had actually received less than half the total votes cast. When the new cabinet was formed, Franjo Tuđman was named State President and another HDZ member, Lojze Peterle, became Prime Minister.

The new government of the Croat Republic wasted little time in taking the first legislative steps to pave the way for Zagreb's secession from the SFRY and the formation of an independent Croatian state. But a complete lack of sensitivity to non-Croat concerns amplified well-founded fears of looming discrimination within Croatia's sizeable ethnic Serb minority of some 600,000 citizens—roughly 13 percent of the republic's population of 4.7 million. These legislative moves—discriminatory in their wording, ill-considered in their timing, and occasionally evocative of the Fascist NDH state—were eventually to spark a countersecessionist backlash among the Serbs and move both sides far along the path to civil war in Croatia.

The first misstep by Tuđman's new government was in the wording of the republic's Constitution. In a nation obsessed with the question of ethnic nationality, the Constitution nowhere mentioned the Croatian Serbs. The document produced

defined the state of Croatia as the sovereign state of the Croatian nation. It made no reference to the Serbs. Under Communism they had been a constituent nation of the Republic of Croatia. Now they were dropped from the Constitution. Ethnic exclusivity was to be written into the basic law of the state.⁵

Moves by the new government that seemed merely forward-looking were taken by Croatia's Serbs as portents of bigger and more serious things to come. On 25 July 1990, for instance, the Croatian Assembly

removed the prefix "Socialist" from the republic's designation. At the same time, it "derecognized" the Cyrillic alphabet within Croatia. In practical terms, the legislation may have meant little: probably more than half of Croatia's Serbs used the same Latin alphabet as their Croat compatriots, and the words themselves (in whatever type font) were identical but for minor differences of dialect. In symbolic terms, however, the new law had enormous significance: it was regarded not only as a huge affront by Croatia's ethnic Serbs but also as a deliberate attempt to erase their 500-year cultural heritage in the border regions and to delegitimize their standing in the new Croatian society.⁶

A more serious issue than the alphabet was the makeup of the republic's new police force—which was bound to be a contentious issue under the best of circumstances. In a republic with no military of its own—the JNA and to a lesser degree the Territorial Defense forces (TO) still functioned as federal institutions—the Croatian police were the closest thing to a republic-wide armed force. Obviously, control of this force by either ethnic group would be crucial to one side and threatening to the other.

The crux of the dispute centered on Croatian efforts to alter the size and character of the republic's police force by building additional Croat-majority police stations and reducing the number of ethnic Serbs in the existing force. By bringing additional ethnic Croats into the regular force, the Croatian Government clearly hoped to decrease the number of Serbs in the force in both absolute and percentage terms, as well as to move Croatian personnel into police stations in Serb territory.⁷ But the Croats' heavyhanded efforts to dominate the police force poured salt on an open wound and enraged ethnic Serbs everywhere. There was worse to come: the Croats adopted the *sahovnica*—the Croatian shield—as the emblem of the new, post-Communist police uniform. The *sahovnica* had indeed been (as Croats were quick to point out) the traditional coat of arms of the Croatian nation for hundreds of years. But it was also the symbol adopted by Ante Pavelić's Fascist-collaborator

state, which had systematically executed thousands upon thousands of Serbs in World War II. Most Serb policemen refused outright to wear the new uniforms.

Serbian Nationalism: Serb Reactions

Ethnic nationalism had stirred Serbs in Croatia long before the HDZ took power, so it would not be entirely accurate to say that Tudjman's political moves were what sparked the rise of Serbian nationalism there. Nevertheless, the HDZ's legislation—and, perhaps more important, the overtly Croat nationalist trappings it clothed itself in—served as a powerful catalyst and propelled much of the Croatian Serb population into the arms of the radical nationalists by fanning the Serbs' worst fears of a resurgent *Ustashe* state. Milosevic personally and the Serbian Republic Government generally had already cultivated supporters in the Serb communities of the Krajina region and elsewhere and stood ready to exploit the Serb minority's opposition to Zagreb's growing nationalism.

The heart of the Croatian Serbs' own movement for autonomy lay in the extremely modest mountain town of Knin, a railway junction in the southern arm of the republic roughly 200 km south of Zagreb. With guidance from Belgrade, the Krajina Serb political leadership—led by a provincial dentist named Milan Babic and the Serbian Democratic Party (SDS)—marched step by step through a series of declarations, referendums, and “legislative” moves to withdraw the bulk of the Croatian Serb population from Croatian Government control. The Krajina Serbs first established an association of Serbian municipalities in May 1990.⁸ When Serb citizens in and around Knin began organizing themselves into “self-defense militias,” with Serbian Government weapons and leadership, the evaporation of Zagreb's political and military control over the region began.

On 25 July, within hours of the Croatian Assembly's derecognition of the Cyrillic alphabet, representatives from a cluster of Serb-majority municipalities met in the town of Srb, just north of Knin, and pronounced a declaration on the sovereignty and cultural autonomy of the Serbian people in Croatia. This same group then held the first session of the self-proclaimed “Serbian National Council” on 1 August in Knin. After the

election of Milan Babic as president, the council announced that it was scheduling “a referendum on the historic territories of the Serbs within the borders of the Republic of Croatia which will take place from 19 August to 2 September”⁹ in the “11 districts of Croatia” where Serbs were in the majority. On 3 August the Croatian Ministry of Justice declared the referendum illegal, and on 17 August the Croatian Special Police attempted to take over Knin, moving on the town from Benkovac and Obrovac.¹⁰ Belgrade's chosen Serb military leader, local police inspector Milan Martic, deployed his new Special Police unit, however, and mobilized the Knin police reserves to fell trees across the routes into town; he appeared ready to use force. The Croatians backed down—especially after the Yugoslav Air Force and Air Defense intercepted helicopter-borne Croatian reinforcements.¹¹ Martic's “Log Revolution” enabled the referendum to proceed as scheduled on 19 August, and the results unsurprisingly and overwhelmingly endorsed an “independent status” for Croatia's Serbs.¹² Following this victory, Babic moved rapidly to consolidate his political control over all the Serb-majority municipalities of southern Krajina.¹³

Yearend 1990: Croatia Fractures Into Rival Substates

By the closing days of 1990, the Croatian republic government in Zagreb and the self-proclaimed Serb government in Knin were marching in cadence in opposite directions. While Tudjman was arguing self-determination for Croatia as he sought to dislodge his republic from the SFRY, he simultaneously maintained the indivisibility of his republic-to-be and the inviolability of its borders while refusing to grant the Croatian Serbs political or cultural autonomy. As the SFRY was slowly fracturing into its constituent republics, the Krajina Serb portion of Croatia was attempting to affirm its political connections to the Federal Republic even as the rest of Croatia spurned theirs. In December 1990, after some preliminary half-steps, the Krajina Serb leaders formally established the self-proclaimed Serbian Autonomous Region of Krajina

(*Srpska Autonomna Oblast Krajina*—SAOK) as a political entity within the Republic of Croatia but independent of its government. Milan Babic was elected chairman of the SAOK executive council.¹⁴ The new SAOK comprised the municipalities of Knin, Benkovac, Gracac, Donji Lapac, Obrovac, Korenica, Vojnic, Glina, Dvor na Uni, Kostajnica, and later Vrginmost.

Moving on a parallel timetable, on 21 December the Croatian Assembly proclaimed its “sovereignty” and unilaterally claimed authority over its own defense forces, diplomatic relations, and foreign policy. The declaration passed overwhelmingly, since the Serb members (who could not have outvoted the measure in any case) had earlier boycotted the Assembly.¹⁵ Not yet independent, the nascent Croatian state already comprised two near-warring entities. As 1991 began, few in Croatia could think the portents for the new year were anything but ominous.

Chapter 7 1991: Extending Politics by Other Means

Secession Within Secession—Arming the Croatian Serbs*

The Croatian Serbs’ political preparations to withdraw from the Croatian Republic would not have been possible without an armed deterrent to keep Zagreb from crushing the rebellion by force. Slobodan Milosevic’s Serbian Government, which was orchestrating the Croatian Serbs’ political machinations, simultaneously organized a police force and local village guards in order to defend the new autonomous regions. Bypassing federal institutions, Milosevic used the State Security Service (SDB) of his own Ministry of Internal Affairs to implement these measures.

The SDB appears to have had a well-thought-out plan to develop these forces. The first step involved creating a reliable local leadership. Milan Martic, a

* For a more detailed discussion of Serbia’s covert operation to arm the Serbs, see Volume II, Annex 1: The Organization and Arming of the Croatian Serbs, 1988-91.

midlevel Knin police inspector, was the chosen instrument to command the breakaway Serb police, and the SDB appears to have spent some time preparing him to lead the uprising that became known as the “Log Revolution” of August 1990. By January 1991, Martic and the SDB were operating a separate Krajina Secretariat for Internal Affairs covering the SAO Krajina.

The SDB also created an elite combat unit to give Martic a reliable mobile force that could be moved quickly from sector to sector. This would complement the existing Serb police and the new police reserve units. The local militia, which had also received arms from the SDB, would be rechristened the SAO Krajina Territorial Defense (TO) and recruit the bulk of the manpower needed for the protection of the new autonomous region. Similar TO militia forces were then organized for the SAOs of Western Slavonia and Eastern Slavonia-Baranja-Western Srem. Eastern Slavonia also received its own elite force—the later infamous Arkan’s Tigers or Serbian Volunteer Guard. All of the TO units were to play a major role in the war that broke out in the summer of 1991.

Organizing and Arming the Croatian Government Forces, May 1990 to August 1991**

The new Croatian Government under President Tudjman inaugurated on 30 May 1990 was also faced with the need to build up a military force, and without the support of a patron state or sufficient weapons of its own. With more success than it had in Slovenia, the JNA on 16-17 May moved in advance of Tudjman’s inauguration to seize the weapons stocks of the entire Republic Territorial Defense (TO).¹⁶ The Croatians had to turn to the only government institution in Croatia that still had any arms—the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MUP)—as its first step in organizing a national army. A year spent enlarging and training the

** For a more detailed discussion of the organization of Croatia’s armed forces, see Annex 2 : The Organization of the Croatian Government Forces, May 1990–April 1991; Annex 3: Croatia Creates An Army—The National Guard Corps, May–September 1991; and Annex 4: The Arming of the Croatian Government Forces, May 1990–August 1991.

MUP while seeking foreign dealers willing to sell it arms would give Croatia in the spring of 1991 a nascent army, the National Guard Corps (ZNG), that would eventually grow into a true national army, the *Hrvatska Vojska* (HV).

Expanding the Police

Impervious to ethnic Serb reactions, when the Croatian Republic Government first moved to expand the MUP's regular police force, it dismissed many of the Serb policemen while increasing the number of police stations throughout the country as a demonstration of Croatian sovereignty and to enforce Croatian rule, particularly in Serb-populated areas. By January 1991 the original force of 10,000 or so police had been expanded to close to 20,000 personnel. The centerpiece of the MUP's efforts to develop a military force, however, was the expansion of its single antiterrorist unit into a number of "special police" battalions organized along military lines. By January 1991 the program had produced 3,000 regular soldiers formed into a dozen battalion-sized units. To back up these regular forces, the MUP also began an expansion of its regional reserve elements the fall of 1990. By June 1991 these reserve formations numbered an estimated 9,000 to 10,000 personnel organized in 16 battalion-sized units and 10 company-sized units, although many personnel probably did not have weapons.

Creating the National Guard Corps

In May 1991 the MUP's Special Police and reserve formations were transformed into the Croatian National Guard Corps (*Zbora narodne garde*) and subordinated to the burgeoning Ministry of Defense under General Martin Spegelj, a former JNA officer. The Special Police battalions combined to form four all-professional brigades, later dubbed "Guards Brigades," which were to stiffen and spearhead Croatian military operations throughout the coming war. By July 1991 these formations probably included some 8,000 soldiers and were the only units in the ZNG that could be described as fully armed, at least with small arms. At about the same time, the MUP reserve units had grown to some 19 regional ZNG reserve brigades and perhaps 14 independent battalions totaling about 40,000 personnel. Most of these reserve formations

were more impressive on paper than in reality, lacking sufficient small arms to equip their members and being even more deficient in heavy weapons. The MUP, following the loss of practically all its "military" units to the Ministry of Defense, set about creating new regional Special Police units that may have numbered 10,000 active and reserve personnel by August 1991.

Although it might claim to have fielded within the space of a year a respectable small army, Croatia's Ministry of Defense was going to have to go to war without the robust command and control structure necessary to direct combat operations in the field. In particular, the lack of strong regional commands to control Zagreb's often ill-disciplined and inadequately trained troops, combined with poor coordination between the MUP and the ZNG, would dauntingly hinder Croatia's defense during the desperate days of summer 1991.

Acquiring Arms

Croatia's success in organizing its defense forces was offset also by a lack of weapons to equip them. Defense Minister Spegelj's urgent efforts to buy small arms and antitank systems abroad were only moderately successful. His biggest deal was a contract for 30,000 AK-47 rifles from Hungary, but most of the promised shipment never made it to Croatia. By August 1991, Zagreb had managed to procure fewer than 30,000 small arms from foreign sources to augment the 15,000 weapons in its MUP stocks, which was clearly insufficient to equip the growing army.

Chapter 8

The JNA Fails To Halt Secession*

Croatia's efforts to create its own armed forces, along with its political moves to separate from Yugoslavia, were closely watched by the JNA, which saw itself as the only federal institution still able and willing to thwart Croatia's secessionist intentions. Led by Federal Defense Secretary General Veljko Kadijevic, the Army diligently tracked Croatian political and,

* For a more detailed discussion of JNA efforts to prevent Yugoslavia's disintegration, see Annex 5: Kadijevic Indecisive: The JNA Fails To Halt Secession.

especially, military developments through its Security Directorate (UB), better known as the KOS. Kadijevic was an avowed Tito-style federalist who made no secret of his opposition to nationalism of any kind nor his determination to stamp out any rebellion against Belgrade's rule. Alarmed by KOS-derived intelligence assessments of the accession of the HDZ to power in spring 1990, Kadijevic laid plans to confiscate not only Croatia's republican Territorial Defense weapons but Slovenia's and Bosnia's as well. The JNA believed—rightfully, as events proved—that these weapons could be used by the new governments to form their own armies to oppose the JNA. Kadijevic coordinated his plans for the seizures with Serbia's member of the Federal Presidency, Borisav Jovic, who used his federal position to provide legal cover for the move in the face of Croatian and Slovenian opposition. When the JNA struck on 16-17 May, completely disarming the Croatian TO, it would be Kadijevic's last decisive act in the Army's solo attempt to halt Yugoslavia's disintegration.

Preparing To Act—October to December 1990

Having dealt with the potential military threat of the Croatian TO, the JNA turned its attention to the political threat, drafting plans to remove the Croatian (and Slovenian) Governments by late summer or early fall. The JNA leaders intended to allow Croatia and Slovenia to proceed with their announced steps toward independence so that the JNA's planned military actions could be amply justified. By fall 1990, however, the JNA appears to have shifted its focus from the political process back to Croatia's efforts to develop its own military forces, especially General Spegelj's arms acquisition program. As described in *Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation*, KOS efforts to crack Croatian security received a major boost when Spegelj asked a junior JNA officer—whom Spegelj had raised almost as his own son—to act as a Croatian agent against the JNA. The officer, Captain Vladimir Jager, turned and became a double agent, informing on Spegelj for KOS. Based on Jager's information and other KOS intelligence reporting, the JNA developed a plan called Operation "Shield" to disarm the Croatian military organization and put its leaders on trial. A variety of procedural snags—and possibly Kadijevic's

indecisiveness—slowed planning for the operation. By early December, however, everything was ready. All that Kadijevic needed was the approval of the Federal Presidency. He never attempted to get it and ordered KOS to postpone the operation on the morning it was to have been sprung. Kadijevic had gotten cold feet.

Meanwhile, the Croatian Government knew something was up. Kadijevic's adversary, General Spegelj, was arguing for President Tudjman to order the Croatian MUP and the few MoD volunteer units to carry out a preemptive strike and blockade the JNA's barracks throughout Croatia, cutting off water, electricity, gas, and food. Spegelj believed that the predominantly conscript JNA forces would disintegrate in such circumstances and deliver an entire JNA military district and its equipment into Croatian hands. Tudjman vetoed Spegelj's plan. He did not believe that Croatia had the force necessary to take on the JNA, and he feared that Croatia would lose what support it had in the West if it attacked the duly constituted government of the federation.

The Presidency Blocks the JNA—January 1991

The Federal Presidency finally met to consider Kadijevic's plan against Croatia and Slovenia on 9 January. Despite detailed presentations from Kadijevic on Croatian and Slovenian efforts to acquire weapons and build "armies," Borisav Jovic was unable to persuade a majority to back the operation. Instead the Presidency settled for a watered-down "grace period" during which Croatia would hand over its weapons to the JNA. The Croatians, asserting their right to maintain separate armed forces, refused to turn over the weapons. The Croatian forces and the JNA went on heightened alert while charge and countercharge reverberated between Belgrade and Zagreb and both prepared for war. On 25 January the Presidency met again, and again it voted down Kadijevic's proposal. The Yugoslav general refused to act without the collective Presidency's legal blessing. Again the Belgrade government had to compromise.

What Is Yugoslavia?—The JNA and Serbia Disagree

Serbian President Milosevic and his key ally, Federal President Jovic, had already begun to back away from the goals that Kadijevic and the Army still believed in—a Yugoslav federation firmly embracing Slovenia and Croatia. Milosevic and Jovic had no faith that the Army would ever be able to dislodge the governments of the breakaway republics, given the popular support their policies enjoyed. They were prepared to let the two republics go their own way but without the Serb regions of Croatia, which the two believed should be allowed to stay in a rump Yugoslav federation if they so chose. (Milosevic and the SDB of course were prepared to ensure they chose correctly.) This crucial difference between the Serbian political leaders and the Army high command kept them divided even as they worked together and shared their separate plans.

When war did come, their divergent vision would bring near catastrophe to the Yugoslav cause.

The JNA Fails To Strike

Jovic and Milosevic gave Kadijevic one last chance to keep Yugoslavia together by force. Rebounding doggedly from the January compromise, the JNA readied a proposal for a state of national emergency in preparation for removing the Croatian and Slovenian Governments. Milosevic's sly suggestion to Jovic that the military act on its own, without trying to get the Federal Presidency's concurrence, however, fell on deaf ears; the JNA would not act without that legal cover. In mid-March, the JNA again presented its plan to the Presidency and asked for a declaration of emergency. Four days of intense debate and negotiations produced neither approval nor a workable compromise, and the Presidency again rejected the Army's proposals.

This time Kadijevic and the JNA General Staff chief, General Adzic, let their anger with the civilian leadership boil over. As they saw it, Janez Drnovsek and Stjepan (Stipe) Mesic, the Slovane and Croatian members of the Presidency, were helping their governments tie the hands of the federal government so they could present it with a fait accompli; the other

politicians were abdicating their federal responsibilities while Yugoslavia disintegrated around them. The disgusted Army leaders bluntly told Milosevic and Jovic that they would now stage a coup and dissolve the Presidency and any republican government that opposed them. The Army would then give all sides six months to decide Yugoslavia's fate while it kept the state together until a political settlement was reached. Eager to oblige, Jovic and the other Milosevic-controlled members of the Presidency (from Vojvodina, Montenegro, and Kosovo) resigned their posts and waited for the JNA to act, reasoning that the Army legalists could argue that, without a functioning presidency, the JNA would not be acting insubordinately when it took over the government.

Even with this accommodation, however, Kadijevic and the JNA could not bring themselves to follow through. When they had analyzed the likely domestic and international reactions to their plans, they concluded that a military putsch would be a disaster both internally and diplomatically. Confounded that the Army could march into the valley of decision and out again in the space of a week, Jovic and Milosevic turned their backs on the Army leaders and refused to trust them again. The JNA's last chance to halt Yugoslavia's disintegration—whether it would have succeeded or not—was gone.

Could a Strike Have Succeeded?

JNA intervention to remove the Slovenian and Croatian Governments or disarm their illegal "paramilitaries" would have been a difficult operation even if the Federal Presidency had approved it by March 1991. A JNA operation then probably would have failed less ingloriously than did its assault on Slovenia in June 1991, but its success would have been partial at best. The outcome would have depended heavily on the interaction among the elements of time and surprise, the unit discipline achieved by the JNA, and the degree of military opposition mustered by the unprepared republics. An even earlier move within the December 1990–March 1991 time frame would have

had a host of benefits: the Croatians and Slovenes would have had even less warning and time to prepare themselves politically, Yugoslav national cohesion probably would have been somewhat higher and the soldiers' discipline and will to fight less eroded, and the Croatians and Slovenes would have had less time to field their military forces. In Croatia, in particular, most of the Special Police forces and the nascent MUP reserve units were only minimally combat ready in December 1990. A quick decision in Belgrade might have permitted the JNA to mount a lightning strike against these forces.

Generally speaking, the JNA's assessments and operational planning in December were probably more realistic and effective than they proved to be in the eventual operation against the Slovenes. Army leaders at that time appear to have realized that the removal of the governments or the disarming of the paramilitaries would require force, and JNA units probably would have been better prepared both mentally and materially. In addition, KOS and military police antiterrorist units had done thorough planning for their parts in the operation and probably would have been able to seize most government facilities—other than the readily distributed weapons in the armories—and many key political personalities. As the decisionmaking crisis stretched on past December, the Croatian and Slovenian governments became better able to anticipate and resist a JNA move, making even a well-planned, well-founded strike far more problematic.

Probably the key factor inhibiting the success of any JNA operation against the secessionist republics was the lack of cohesion and will to fight among JNA personnel; these would plague the JNA throughout the 1991 fighting against the ethnically homogeneous Slovene and Croatian troops, who were primed to defend their homelands against what by 1991 had become in their minds an occupying Army. Colonel Vasiljevic,¹⁷ the senior KOS officer responsible for Croatian operations, would claim in 1992 that the multiethnic Army high command—including Slovenes, Croats, and Muslims—firmly believed in the state of emergency declaration urged by the Army in 1990. Vasiljevic's judgment seems plausible, and there is every indication from Jovic and other sources that the Army leaders were devoted to preserving a

Federal Yugoslavia. Vasiljevic also claimed that most Army officers during the Slovene war—junior officers included—believed in a “radical solution” to the nationalist problems besetting the country, even though he acknowledged that some officers took the position that “I cannot be against my own people.” Certainly by late 1991 a large percentage of non-Serb or Montenegrin officers had deserted the JNA or no longer supported its leaders. If Vasiljevic was speaking of 1990 and early 1991, however, his assessment may have been correct.

The officer corps, however, was not the main problem. During the Slovene operations and the war in Croatia, the young conscripts and reservists who made up the bulk of the JNA manpower—and especially the non-Serbs—were clearly unwilling to fight against their own countrymen or for a cause they did not believe in. Spegelj's arguments from December 1990 that the JNA conscripts would not fight to prevent Croatia's secession probably would have proved substantially correct.

Chapter 9 The Croatian Pot Boils Over *

The inability of the senior politicians to achieve a solution to the crisis and the unwillingness of the JNA to act ensured that the rising tensions within Croatia would lead to fighting between armed Croatian Serbs and Croatian Government forces. The brief clashes that erupted at the town of Pakrac, the resort at Plitvice Lakes, and the village of Borovo Selo during February, March, and May were the first shots in the war that was to consume Croatia for the rest of 1991. After these actions, both Serbs and Croatians realized that all-out war was likely, and emotions reached the boiling point. Their fights and threats drew the JNA's Croatian garrisons into the role of peacekeepers, a role that did not fully satisfy the Croatian Serbs—who wanted the JNA to defend them—or the Croatians—who believed that the JNA was explicitly or tacitly backing the rebellious Serbs.

* For a more detailed discussion of the clashes at Pakrac, Plitvice, and Borovo Selo, see Annex 6: Scene Setters for War—Pakrac, Plitvice Lakes, and Borovo Selo.

Pakrac and Plitvice: Zagreb Blocks Serb Moves

Two incidents signaled the start of the Croatian Serb leadership's efforts—backed by the Serbian Government—to consolidate its control over designated Serb-populated regions throughout Croatia. Croatian MUP Special Police thwarted the Serbs' February attempt to take over the town of Pakrac in Western Slavonia, although no one was injured in the exchange of gunfire when the MUP force retook the local police station. The Federal Presidency ordered JNA forces to occupy the area and halt the clashes. At Plitvice, the removal of Croatian managers from a resort by SAO Krajina Special Police and armed civilians sparked another Croatian counterattack. After some initial miscues, the MUP Special Police succeeded in retaking the park, after which JNA troops again quickly moved in to separate the two sides. Both, however, had suffered their first casualties, each losing one dead and six wounded. It would get worse.

Borovo Selo: Wake-Up Call for Croatia

The death of at least 12 Croatian Special Policemen and the wounding of 21 others in a Croatian Serb ambush on 1 May at the village of Borovo Selo, in Eastern Slavonia near the town of Vukovar, had a profound psychological effect on the Croatian Government and people. The Special Police had been attacked as they tried to enter the village to free two comrades who had been wounded and captured the previous day while sneaking into town on a lark to pull down a Yugoslav flag. The incident brought secessionist Croatians face to face with the costs of their ambitions; their outraged reaction pushed Croatia irrevocably toward an all-out war of independence. The JNA's by now routine intervention to separate local combatants could not halt the slide toward regional war.

Skirmishing—Serb Versus Croat, Summer 1991

After Borovo Selo, internecine clashes spread like a plague. Many of the outbreaks appeared to be

unplanned, undirected, and incoherent, with Serbs in one village firing at the neighboring one simply because it was Croat and vice versa. This inchoate violence would serve to mask strategic military actions by the Croatian Serb leadership that, supported by Serbia, intended to expand its control over Serb areas in Croatia. The Zagreb government was forced on the strategic defensive, but President Tudjman resisted pressure from hardliners who wanted him to retaliate for Croatian Serb victories by attacking the JNA, which they viewed as pro-Serb. Tudjman continued to look to the international community for action to halt the fighting. Meanwhile, the JNA, acting in the name of Yugoslavia but irresistibly biased toward Serb interests, tried and failed to keep the peace.

Serbian and Croatian Serb Planning

Throughout 1991, Milosevic, Jovic, and the Serbian Government proclaimed their vision of a rump Yugoslavia that included the Serb regions of Croatia, but without the rest of Croatia or Slovenia. This clear vision of Serbian national objectives and the Croatian Serb military operations designed to implement part of them would drive events throughout Croatia during the summer of 1991. The Croatian Serb political and military leadership—backed by Serbia—would move from the occasional use of armed force, as at Pakrac and Plitvice, to full-scale military operations designed to bring Krajina and other Serb enclaves into a political and territorial union. The leaders of the Krajina Serbian Autonomous Region, or SAO Krajina, planned to dispatch military units to eject any official Croatian Government presence from the localities they claimed as their own, and Serb leaders in the newly formed Eastern and Western Slavonia Autonomous Regions prepared for similar actions to consolidate their own holdings.¹⁸ Personnel from the Serbian State Security Department and its Special Operations Unit almost certainly helped plan many of these military operations.¹⁹

Croatian Strategy

Although Slovenia's headlong rush toward independence impelled Croatia to make a conditional declaration of independence simultaneously on 25 June 1991, Zagreb's declared political objective was to achieve a peaceful separation of a territorially intact Croatia from Federal Yugoslavia, and from June through August President Tudjman clung tenaciously to this policy. The Croatian Serbs, however, had long before decided that they would exit Croatia whether it declared its independence or not, and it was their overt resort to military action during this period that would determine the nature and timing of Croatia's separation. Serb military "victories," effectively consolidated by JNA interventions to prevent further fighting, forced a divisive debate in Zagreb over the use of force and would eventually push President Tudjman into a war that he did not want but had no choice but to join.

President Tudjman's initial aim was to internationalize the conflict in Croatia, rather than fight back with military force, hoping that the European Community and the United States would recognize Croatian independence and put pressure on Belgrade to halt its "aggression" against Croatia. He rejected the advice of hardliners in his party, the HDZ, that Croatia should directly attack the JNA units that seemed to be working hand-in-glove with the Croatian Serb military operations. Croatian troops would remain on the defensive, he insisted, reacting only to defend Croatian territory. As Croatia descended into real war during July and the Croatian Serbs began racking up successive victories, the divisions in the Croatian leadership grew. Inspired by ZNG Commander General Spegelj and Defense Minister Djodan, the hardliners decried Tudjman's reliance on the international community and called for a strategic offensive against the JNA barracks, the plan that Spegelj had advocated in late 1990, early 1991, and during the Slovenian Ten-Day War.²⁰ The debate came to a head during a contentious Croatian national assembly meeting in early August when HDZ rightists demanded more vociferously than ever that Tudjman authorize attacks on the JNA.²¹ Tudjman again stood firm and reorganized his government to replace Djodan; Spegelj resigned on 3 August. Two days later Tudjman called

a press conference to explain and justify his decision not to go to war with the JNA:

Our defense forces . . . because they do not have heavy weapons . . . are inferior . . . to the Yugoslav Army . . . this is one of the reasons why I personally . . . declined to wage an open war against the Yugoslav Army and Serbia.²²

Unremitting and increased Serb violence, however—particularly in Eastern Slavonia—and Croatian convictions that the JNA was siding with the Croatian Serbs soon forced Tudjman to confront the issue head-on. On 22 August he issued an ultimatum to the Federal Presidency and Defense Secretariat, demanding that JNA units in Croatia return to their barracks by 31 August.* If the JNA did not comply, the Croatian Government would

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 . . .²³

It was mounting losses to Serbian attacks and deepening convictions that the JNA was involved in these attacks that pushed Tudjman to the brink of adopting Spegelj's recommended strategy of attacking and isolating the JNA. Even after he had authorized military actions and warned publicly that he would do so, Tudjman would continue to cling to the hope that outside intervention would save Croatia from a military contest with the JNA that, in his opinion, it could not win.

The Yugoslav People's Army: Biased Peacekeepers

During much of the summer fighting in Croatia, the JNA was stuck in the middle, ordered to act as a buffer force (as it had at Pakrac, Plitvice, and Borovo Selo) yet distrusted by the Croatians and criticized by the local Serbs for not helping them more. Firmly devoted to its ideal of a Federal Yugoslavia, the JNA by and

* For the full text of the ultimatum, see Annex 7: Croatian Ultimatum to the Federal Presidency of Yugoslavia.

large did try to act as a neutral peacekeeping force during this period, but the fog of war and biases on all three sides led to repeated misunderstandings among the contenders. The Croatians were unable to appreciate the fine distinctions between the JNA's duty-bound actions to keep peace within a united Federal Yugoslavia, the Serbian leaders' willingness to let Croatia secede minus its Serbian enclaves, and the Croatian Serbs' determination to separate themselves by force. Feeding the Croatians' suspicions of the JNA was the fact that, although most JNA commanders appear to have rigorously followed orders to act solely as peacekeepers, their sympathies tended to be with the Serbs, and some unit commanders very likely did favor the Serbs in their peacekeeping operations. Some commanders even went so far as to provide weapons to Croatian Serb forces, although the vast majority of Serb weaponry was drawn directly from Serbian TO and MUP stocks. Finally, even when the JNA was clearly hewing to its mandate of restoring peace and acting as a buffer, after Serb forces had captured an area from the Croatians, the JNA's intervention to halt the fighting usually left the Serb forces occupying their objectives. The cumulative effect of such actions from July to September was to heighten Croatian perceptions of JNA support for Serb military actions. This was exacerbated when, after the war in Slovenia began, the JNA dispatched large numbers of troops to the border with Eastern Slavonia and elsewhere in Croatia to intimidate Zagreb into backing away from secession. This essentially political action by the JNA leadership, though viewed by them as independent of their impartial peacekeeping actions within Croatia, could hardly enhance Croatian confidence in the JNA's neutrality.

Whatever the appearances, it is clear from discussions between Serbian Federal Presidency member Jovic and JNA senior officers during the summer of 1991 that the JNA conscientiously tried to remain an unbiased federal force in Croatia. Its leaders consistently refused to accede to demands from Jovic and Milosevic that the JNA become in effect a Serbian army and pull back to defend only the Serb regions in Croatia. Jovic noted on 24 June 1991 that General Adzic, JNA General Staff chief, "characterized . . . my position on defending Serbs in Croatia as unreasonable, because the JNA must defend all the nations of

Yugoslavia."²⁴ Three days later he complained that "the military . . . is intoxicated with the unity of a Yugoslavia that no longer exists."²⁵ Despite the Croatian perception that the JNA was siding with Croatian Serb forces during July and August, the evidence available shows that the JNA was attempting—not always successfully—to act impartially. Typically, the JNA would move its armor-mechanized units to separate Serb and Croat units and actively try to mediate a settlement between them. Anecdotal accounts from local press reporting suggest that the JNA intervened in nearly every clash or action that occurred from June until mid-September (when the JNA would begin acting consciously against the Croatians).

While they staunchly guarded the JNA's impartially federal mission, whether Kadijevic and Adzic wanted it or not, the Army became increasingly Serbianized after the eruption of the Slovenian Ten-Day War as conscripts began deserting and the other republics refused to send their biannual intakes of conscripts to the JNA. The effect on JNA morale was profound. Jovic asserted during a meeting with Kadijevic on 5 July that

*Army morale has hit rock bottom. The Serb nation is losing faith in the JNA. The opposition is seeking the formation of a Serbian army. . . . The Serbian Renewal Movement is directly encouraging reservists to ignore their callup orders, to desert . . . The mothers of soldiers are demonstrating—asking that their "children return from the military."*²⁶

As Silber and Little note, "The Slovene experience tore the heart out of the JNA."²⁷ Admiral Branko Mamula, General Kadijevic's predecessor as Federal Defense Secretary and one of Kadijevic's closest informal advisers, told British reporter Misha Glenny in 1991 that Kadijevic's one big mistake was letting Slovenia go. "After that . . . we had lost Yugoslavia." The loss of part of Yugoslavia made it very difficult for the multiethnic JNA officer corps to undertake any operations in Croatia, especially the combat operations that would be ordered against the Croatian

Government in the fall of 1991. The JNA leadership could no longer realistically justify attacking Croatia to save Yugoslavia. The unity of the officer corps began to crumble, even though the senior leadership still assured themselves that they were fighting for Yugoslavia.²⁸

Combat Operations, June-September 1991*

The primary element of Croatian Serb military strategy in the SAO Krajina was a summer-long campaign to seize control of the Krajina “borders” in the Banija region, south of Zagreb, by seizing all the Croatian police stations in the region. In June armed Serbs tried and failed to take the initial objective in the campaign, the key road junction town of Glina and its police station. A second attack on 26 July, spearheaded by Martic’s Special Police from Knin, overcame strong resistance from Croatian ZNG and MUP forces, and two Croatian MUP substations southwest of the Una River town of Hrvatska Kostajnica were eliminated at the same time. Kostajnica was now isolated deep within Serb-held territory, and Serb forces moved to take control of it. Local ZNG and MUP troops, bolstered by reinforcements, managed to hold out against besieging Krajina TO units until mid-September, when Serb troops, again spearheaded by Special Police, crushed Croatian resistance. The JNA failed in its efforts to act as a buffer force during the fighting, and the Croatians charged the Army with helping the Serbs, who in their turn upbraided the JNA for not doing enough to help them.

The largest Serb operation in Eastern Slavonia-Baranja was the successful campaign to seize control of Baranja in late August. There were also clashes around the suburbs of Vukovar, Vinkovci, and Osijek in which each side attempted to expand its control. Much of the fighting in the region during July and August, however, consisted of intense exchanges of fire between Croatian and Serb villages without any attempts by either side to capture territory. There were daily clashes, random mortar fire against towns and villages, and outright battles that produced a flood of refugees into Osijek and other towns. To the Croatians it seemed as if the whole region was being consumed

* For a more detailed discussion of the summer 1991 fighting, see Annex 8: Fighting Escalates, June-September 1991. For a description of the military geography of Croatia, see Annex 9: Military Geography and Weather in Croatia.

by Serbian fire, and, because the JNA was everywhere in evidence, Croatian accusations of JNA complicity and direct involvement mounted. JNA units, officially neutral but inevitably afflicted with Serb sympathies and resentment of Croatian nationalist sentiments, faced increasing Croatian hostility and even direct fire as perceptions of JNA-Serbian collusion hardened. This hostility would culminate in Croatian blockades of the JNA barracks in Osijek, Vinkovci, and Vukovar followed by direct fighting with JNA defenders in late August. With Tudjman’s ultimatum to Belgrade coming in the midst of this fighting, the stage was set for the all-out attack on JNA barracks throughout Croatia, which in September would put the JNA directly and openly at war with the Zagreb government.

No major fighting occurred in neighboring Western Slavonia until mid-August, when TO troops from the Serbian Autonomous Region of Western Slavonia attempted to push Croatian MUP personnel out of their newly proclaimed Serb region. Croatian ZNG and MUP forces, however, vigorously responded and contained TO troops around Okucani and Pakrac, while repelling efforts to seize the town of Daruvar. Nevertheless, the fighting shut down the strategic Belgrade-Zagreb highway that linked the Zagreb area to Eastern Slavonia. In the midst of the fighting, the JNA attempted to intervene and establish a buffer zone, but with the same lack of success it had suffered elsewhere.

Further south, in contrast to other regions, the driving factor in the Knin-Northern Dalmatia area during July-September was the JNA.²⁹ Led by General Spiro Nikovic and Colonel Ratko Mladic, the JNA 9th (Knin) Corps, although at first acting in a peacekeeping role as directed by the JNA high command, during August became more and more prone to initiating clashes with Croatian forces or defending Serb-held territory. This culminated in the capture—in cooperation with SAO Krajina troops—of the key Croatian-held village of Kijevo on 26 August and, on 11 September, the seizure from Croatian forces of the strategic Maslenica bridge linking the Dalmatian coast to northern Croatia. To some extent these operations around Kijevo may have stemmed from JNA perceptions that it was being attacked, blockaded, or threatened by Croatian troops. It nevertheless appears that

the JNA General Staff did not authorize most of the Knin Corps' actions, but rather ordered them halted when they occurred.

Evaluation of Forces, June-September 1991

During the summer fighting, the Serbs appear to have performed more effectively overall than the Croatians, even though most regular Croatian ZNG or MUP units were better organized and trained than the average TO unit. The political and military leadership of the three SAOs, almost certainly with strong support from the Serbian SDB and its Special Operations Unit, had a clearer understanding of their war aims and the strategy they intended to use to achieve their objectives. In addition, the SDB had thoroughly armed the TO forces of all three autonomous regions, ensuring that, in general, Serb forces outmanned and outgunned their Croatian opponents. The Croatians suffered particularly from poor leadership and command and control structures at the regional level and were unable to coordinate their operations effectively. Shortages of trained men in the Serb areas made it very difficult for the Croatians to hold an area once the Serbs decided to seize it. That said, the regular ZNG and MUP units that made up the bulk of the Croatian forces engaged proved to be well-trained and highly motivated formations that, one-on-one, could usually defeat any comparable TO unit. Most of the TO forces had little training, and some had none; they were little more than collections of well-armed civilians. The deployment of the elite SDB-raised Special Police from Knin (most likely aided by the SDB's Special Operations Unit) in key situations was critical to bolstering the quantitative superiority of the TO forces against regular Croatian troops. The Serb use in mid-1991 of elite mobile troops to back up low-quality territorially raised forces proved to be a model that the Croatians, and later all three armies in Bosnia, quickly adopted.

Chapter 10 War: Croatia Attacks the JNA, September 1991

Despite Tudjman's 31 August deadline for the JNA to return to its barracks, he still believed that Croatia's best hopes lay in international political (and hopefully

military) intervention. Therefore, when the Yugoslav Federal Presidency—including Mesic and Drnovsek—voted on 1 September to accept European Community proposals for a cease-fire, increased international monitoring, and a new peace conference, Tudjman was willing to postpone his deadline and give the new conference a chance.³⁰ He noted on 6 September, a day before the start of the conference, that even he saw this as the last chance for a negotiated settlement.³¹

The EC Peace Conference and the Croatian Decision for War^{*}

Opening to what looked like general Balkan approval on 7 September, the conference almost immediately began drawing ominous signals from the Croatians.³² Croatian federal representative Stipe Mesic, serving his turn as President of the Federal Presidency, served up the first of several warnings that very day with the statement that he would soon order the JNA to return to its barracks. At a meeting the next day, the Croatian Supreme State Council concluded that Croatia would have to "maintain and enhance" the combat actions it was engaged in.³³ The Croatians were rushing to the conclusion that Belgrade wanted to drag the conference out to allow Serb forces in Croatia to consolidate their gains. On 11 September, Mesic provocatively decreed, in his capacity as President of the Federal Presidency, that the JNA must return to its barracks within the next 48 hours. Although he pretended that his order was intended to implement the EC cease-fire proposal which the Presidency had adopted on 1 September,³⁴ Mesic's action clearly was designed to give Zagreb a pretext for initiating its long-planned strategic offensive against the JNA barracks.³⁵ The majority of the Federal Presidency—the JNA representative, the Serbian and Serbian-controlled

* The EC conference represented only one phase of international efforts to establish a lasting cease-fire in Croatia, as well as an overall peace settlement. Most of these international attempts had little impact on the actual combat operations; cease-fires were regularly violated by one side or both sides almost as soon as they went into effect. The EC's efforts to construct a peace settlement are briefly covered in the section dealing with the Vance Plan and the end of the war.

members of the Federal Presidency, as well as at least one other member—rejected Mesic's order, claiming that the entire Presidency had to vote on the decree. This rejection apparently provided the Croatians with the justification they desired. According to then Croatian Defense Minister Luka Bebic, on 13 September,

The Croatian Ministry of Defense issued an order to all ZNG units and to all Crisis Headquarters according to which, on the basis of a decree from the President of the Republic and the Supreme Command, the implementation of appropriate measures was initiated. These included turning off all municipal services and the supply of fuel to the Yugoslav Army, and the passive blocking of barracks, storage depots, and all routes used for movements of the enemy; commanders in the field were also to undertake appropriate actions if this became necessary. That is the basic order that was issued and forwarded on 13 September.³⁶

Thus, Croatia—convinced that it was already at war with the Federal Army and the Croatian Serbs—chose to go on the offensive and attack the JNA.³⁷

Croatian Strategy—September to December 1991

Croatia's primary war aim was to preserve its territorial integrity. To do this, it needed at minimum a bigger, better equipped army to oppose the JNA. The offensive against the JNA barracks had the twin aims of capturing enough infantry and heavy weapons to furnish an army capable of defending the border while reducing the JNA's striking power by neutralizing its Croatia-based units. Zagreb tailored its military strategy to its Army's limited capabilities in a campaign that can be divided into two phases. During the first, that ran from September through October, the Croatians assumed the strategic defensive on the battlefield, while going on the offensive against the JNA's barracks.³⁸ The second phase, in November and December, saw the Croatians shifting to more attacks against the JNA in the field while holding defensively elsewhere and continuing their barracks blockades.³⁹ Maintaining the strategic defensive and launching only counteroffensives obviously worked toward the goal of ensuring that Croatia retained all of its

territory. The Croatian strategy was appropriate for the situation in which Zagreb found itself, and the barracks blockade in particular was one of the key turning points in the war.⁴⁰ Nevertheless, Croatian military power alone was insufficient to achieve all of Zagreb's goals, although it did succeed in containing the federal forces. President Tudjman continued throughout the conflict to put his faith in international diplomatic, economic, and even military intervention for the fulfillment of Croatia's war aims.

The Battle of the Barracks*

On 14 September, Croatian ZNG and MUP forces surrounded and blockaded every JNA barracks or depot in Croatian-held territory and shut off all utilities serving them. Croatian troops also quickly overran many of the smaller, more isolated JNA posts, particularly depots and border guard positions. By these rapid actions they were able to seize large amounts of heavy weapons, including the armament of the entire 32nd (Varazdin) Corps, while recovering most of the Croatian TO weapons that the JNA had confiscated in 1990. Many of the cutoff garrisons responded with direct fire against the Croatian attackers or with artillery and mortar fire, which the Croatians claimed was usually directed against civilian targets. Surrendering JNA units often sabotaged their equipment or called in air-strikes on the barracks after giving them up to deny their equipment to the Croatians. After an initial flurry of successful seizures, the Croatians settled into a prolonged siege of the remaining barracks, interspersed with occasional assaults on key facilities. The Croatians eventually eased the restrictions around most of the barracks, and, as part of the internationally negotiated Vance Plan, by late December they would approve withdrawal agreements for the remaining garrisons.

The blockade of the JNA facilities was one of the decisive actions of the Croatian war. Without the weapons that ZNG/HV and MUP forces were able to seize or negotiate for, the nascent Croatian Army would never have armed enough troops to hold off the

* For a more detailed discussion of the "Battle of the Barracks," see Annex 10: The Battles of the Barracks—Croatian Offensive Operations—September-October 1991.

JNA. The acquisition of JNA heavy weapons—especially the Varazdin Corps equipment—provided a quantum leap in the HV's capabilities, while the capture of thousands of small arms, including the former TO stocks, allowed the HV to equip all its existing brigades, mobilize and arm enough personnel to field a large number of additional brigades, and expand most if its independent battalions into brigades.

The barracks siege had a correspondingly disastrous effect on the JNA. The surprise success of the Croatian offensive sapped already low JNA morale and eliminated, by capture or immobilization, most of the Fifth Military District's combat forces, plus part of the Military-Maritime District's formations. The JNA effectively lost the use of eight maneuver brigades, including one armored and two mechanized brigades, as well as three artillery regiments. Since much of what was lost to the JNA was added to ZNG/HV, the effects were doubled. In addition, the blockade forced the JNA to add the barracks' relief to the objectives of an already too ambitious strategic offensive that had been planned without provision for that contingency.

The Croatian Army Rises: September-December 1991*

As battles between the JNA and Croatian forces erupted in the aftermath of the actions against the barracks, the ZNG deficiencies described earlier became even more glaring. Zagreb acted to correct these in late September, ordering the formation of a true general staff to plan and control its combat operations under the command of former Yugoslav Air and Air Defense Forces commander General Anton Tus. One of Tus's first priorities was the creation of the regional military headquarters whose lack had been so harmful to the Croatians during the summer fighting. Equally pressing was the general staff's exertions to assimilate the weapons and equipment gained from the barracks so that the ZNG could be expanded to more than twice its size. By the end of October, Tus and his staff had formed an additional 25 brigades, another 10 in November, and five to seven in December, while

working to create support formations to round out and complete the Army. By January 1992, Tus claimed that the ZNG numbered some 200,000 troops, while the MUP had over 40,000 personnel (including regular police). This expansion—made possible only by the success of the barracks operations and the organization of true military staffs—gave Croatia the forces it needed to defend itself. Still, while it had benefited from the high motivation of a successful defensive war, the Army created and regularized in the heat of battle was no more than a loosely organized, hastily trained light infantry force, supported by limited numbers of tanks and artillery, and so it remained throughout the 1991 fighting.

Chapter 11

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

Croatia's attack on the JNA barracks brought to a head the differences between the Serbian and JNA leaders over Belgrade's objectives but failed to resolve them. Although the JNA consulted closely at this critical moment with Milosevic and Jovic—who by midsummer 1991 were the Army's de facto political overseers in rump Yugoslavia—the JNA refused to accept their definition of Yugoslavia's war aims.^{**} The JNA senior leadership, in particular General Kadijevic, still balked at Milosevic's pragmatically limited political objective—the creation of a Serbian-controlled Yugoslavia of the willing, including the Serb Autonomous Regions in Croatia. The JNA generals still believed that the defeat of the Croatian Government would enable the preservation of some form of confederal Yugoslavia. Kadijevic wavered through a series of meetings with Milosevic and Jovic during July and August, their frequency increasing as the JNA hemorrhaged all but its Serbian and Montenegrin personnel. Every time he seemed to have agreed with Jovic and Milosevic on giving up the Federation, Kadijevic would come to the next meeting to argue for its

^{**} See Annex 12: National Command Authority in Yugoslavia, for an explanation of the formal and informal chain of command in Belgrade during fall 1991.

* For a more detailed discussion of the development of the Croatian Army during the fall, see Annex 11: The Croatian Army Rises—September-December 1991.

preservation.⁴¹ At mid-September, the JNA leaders' position remained basically the same, even as the state disintegrated around them. Jovic's comments on 12 September 1991 illustrate what Kadijevic and the senior JNA were thinking just before the start of the Croatian barracks blockade:

I once again raised the key question, for the umpteenth time, the question that constantly pre-occupies me: Is our goal to defend, with the military, the new borders of the nations that want to remain in Yugoslavia, or is it to overthrow the Croatian Government? . . . Unfortunately there is not much understanding. The military is still intoxicated with Yugoslavia, even though we have discussed the fact that it is no longer realistic a hundred times.⁴²

Instead of merely defending the Serb regions of Croatia, as Milosevic and Jovic wanted, Kadijevic and the JNA high command were set to embark on a full-scale strategic offensive to defeat Croatia militarily and force its capitulation. Kadijevic would persevere with his objective and the offensive until, in October, when failure of the JNA's strategic offensive became indisputable, he halfheartedly acquiesced in a Serbian-dominated rump Yugoslavia. Even after making this decision, however, Kadijevic would continue to raise the question of a restorative military offensive and the general mobilization required to sustain it, much to the dismay and displeasure of Milosevic and Jovic.

JNA War Planning*

Kadijevic and the JNA General Staff's strategic offensive plan—probably planned in the spring of 1991 and actually launched in September—called for slicing up Croatia and defeating it militarily to compel the surrender of the Croatian political leadership and the renegotiation of a Yugoslav confederation.⁴³ A key objective added in September was to relieve all the JNA barracks blockaded by the Croatians. As noted earlier, the aims of the strategic plan exceeded and conflicted with Milosevic's war aim of a rump Serbian-led Yugoslavia. Milosevic wanted the JNA to

implement a simpler strategy that included an immediate withdrawal from its exposed positions throughout the Croatian Republic to defend only the Serb regions, rather than launching a strategic offensive to achieve a political objective he did not want and believed infeasible.

The JNA's offensive plan consisted of five corps-level campaigns, for which mobilization and preparation would occur in two phases: a preliminary mobilization and deployment (which occurred in July), and a follow-on mobilization (ordered in September).⁴⁴ The preliminary mobilization was meant to put increased pressure on the Croatians without actually launching any offensive actions. It also permitted the JNA to pre-position key formations in their staging areas in case war actually followed. The follow-on mobilization was designed to complete the consolidation of forces identified as necessary to carry out the full plan. General Kadijevic states in his memoirs that the JNA plan was designed to

—impose a full air and sea blockade on Croatia;
—link the attack routes of the main JNA forces as directly as possible in order to liberate the Serb regions in Croatia and the JNA garrisons deep inside Croatian territory. To that end, intersect Croatia along the lines Gradiska-Virovitica, Bihać-Karlovac-Zagreb, Knin-Zadar, and Mostar-Split. Liberate Eastern Slavonia using the strongest grouping of armored-mechanized forces, and then quickly continue operations westward, hook up with forces in Western Slavonia and continue on toward Zagreb and Varazdin, that is toward the Slovene border. At the same time, impose a land blockade on Dubrovnik with strong forces from the Herceg Novi-Trebinje region and penetrate the Neretva valley, thus working together with the forces moving along the Mostar-Split line;

—after achieving specific objectives, secure and hold the border of Serb Krajina in Croatia, withdraw the remaining parts of the JNA from Slovenia, and then withdraw the JNA from Croatia.⁴⁵

* For a detailed breakdown of the individual campaign plans that comprised the strategic offensive, plus JNA orders of battle, see Annex 13: JNA Campaign Plans and Organization, July-September 1991.

—mobilizing, preparing the mobilized or additional units, and deploying them would take 10 to 15 days, depending on the units' level of combat readiness and their distance from the deployment positions.

In the JNA's view, Croatia carved up in this way "would be on the brink of capitulation."⁴⁶ But Kadijevic provided no timetable for the JNA's achievement of these objectives nor any contingency plans for a less-than-total offensive. In the event, the plan would founder on the twin rocks of civilian opposition at the top and, at the bottom, a lack of enthusiasm for combat among Serbian conscripts and reservists.

Mobilization and the Failure of the Strategic Offensive*

Failing to intimidate the Croatians with their preliminary callup in July, the JNA ordered the second phase of mobilization for the strategic offensive on 15 September in response to the Croatian attacks against its barracks. But the wholesale refusal of many reservists to respond, the desertion of many others, and a distinct lack of enthusiasm among the Serbs who did respond would leave many of the formations earmarked for the offensive without enough men to field them. The JNA had carefully prepared campaign plans for each of five operations areas predicated on a specific number of combat brigades arriving. The mobilization disaster severely undercut these plans, which would have to be launched without the required number of formations, and some operations would have to be abandoned.

Even in the vital sector of Eastern Slavonia, where the JNA had planned its major effort, not nearly enough infantry would arrive, crippling the entire offensive. The lack of sufficient infantry formations was more than a blow to the JNA's offensive plan; their absence represented a shattering of the JNA's will to fight, which cascaded throughout the Army. The chaos caused by the country's breakup, combined with the colossal failure of their well-laid plans, ultimately melted the confidence even of Kadijevic and the JNA high command.

* For a detailed discussion of the mobilization problems and their impact on the Army, see Annex 14: Mobilization and the Failure of the Strategic Offensive, September-December 1991.

Mobilization and the Political-Military Conflict, September-December 1991"

The failure of the mobilization process to support their offensive plan against Croatia impelled the JNA leaders to demand that the combined federal/Serbian political leadership authorize a "general mobilization," which would have allowed them to call up whomever they needed to fill the empty spaces in their campaign plans. The military leaders' demand for general mobilization became the issue on which the continuing differences between Kadijevic and the Serbian leadership over war aims would be played out for the rest of the war. Again and again Milosevic and Jovic would emphatically reject Kadijevic's demands to call up the men needed for the JNA war plans, refusing to give the JNA the means to escalate a war in pursuit of goals that they did not believe in or consider achievable. Only after the JNA offensive against Croatia had failed did Kadijevic, on 9 October, formally bow to the demands of Milosevic and Jovic, accepting as the JNA's sole strategic objective the defense of the Serb regions. He and the JNA would continue to agitate for broader mobilization, plainly showing their continued desire to coerce Croatia back into the Federation. Milosevic would finally quash the JNA's agitation for the complete defeat of the Croatian forces after the capture of Vukovar, vetoing the JNA's plan to continue its offensive drive toward Zagreb. It was the JNA's unwillingness to accept Milosevic's design from the start that embroiled the Army in a far more bitter, fruitless, and damaging war than would otherwise have been the case.

The JNA Offensive Against Croatia, September-December 1991

When the Croatian Government launched its September 14-15 offensive against the JNA's barracks in Croatia, the JNA General Staff activated the follow-on mobilization for its strategic offensive and began

** For a more detailed discussion of the impact of the mobilization failures and the political-military conflict, as well as the internal army debate over what its goals should have been, see Annex 15: Mobilization and the JNA-Serbian Political-Military Conflict, and Annex 16: What is the Goal?—JNA vs. JNA: The Army Debates its Role and Future.

preparations for its execution, with the five main campaigns kicking off as follows:

- The Eastern Slavonia operation began on 20 September, under the command of the First Military District, about a week after mobilization. Simultaneously with the start of the Croatian offensive, however, the JNA had initiated a small-scale operation on 14 September to relieve the Vukovar barracks. Unplanned and presumably unintended by the JNA, this “small-scale” attack became its main effort and would consume it for the next two months.
- The 5th (Banja Luka) Corps’ Western Slavonia operation appears to have begun between 23 September and 5 October, as reserve formations arrived from Bosnia.
- The Kordun operation toward Karlovac never really got under way, and operations by the JNA Fifth Military District and the Croatian Serb TO were limited essentially to local actions to consolidate their control around Karlovac and the JNA barracks there. This included a campaign in October-November to eliminate the large Croatian-held pocket near the town of Slunj. In addition, JNA forces undertook local operations in Banija and Lika.
- JNA 9th (Knin) Corps forces earmarked for the Knin-Zadar operation were already fully mobilized and ready to move when the Croatians attacked the JNA barracks, and so the JNA operation here began on 16 September.
- JNA mobilization problems and difficulties in Bosnia-Herzegovina paralyzed the Mostar-Split portion of the Mostar-Split/Dubrovnik operation, and it never materialized. The Dubrovnik suboperation began on 1 October, following the mobilization of Montenegrin-based JNA forces and the Montenegrin TO.

The Battle of Vukovar: Croatia Stymies the JNA*

Initially, the JNA First Military District’s objective in Eastern Slavonia-Baranja was to break through Croatian forces on the Osijek-Vinkovci line and drive for Western Slavonia, where it would link up to the 5th (Banja Luka) Corps. In pursuit of this goal, the plan appears to have called for the 12th (Novi Sad) Corps to move between Osijek and Vinkovci, probably toward Nasice, while the 1st Guards Mechanized Division pushed south of Vinkovci. The 17th (Tuzla) Corps probably was to cross the Sava River in the Croatian rear between Bosanski Samac and Bosanski/Slavonski Brod, link up to the Guards, and then push west along the Belgrade-Zagreb highway.

The campaign fell apart almost immediately as JNA forces bogged down in their attempt to reduce the Croatian-held town of Vukovar. The JNA initially attacked Vukovar to relieve the barracks there and dispose of the threat the town’s defenders would pose to the rear of the main JNA operation. As Vukovar sucked in more and more JNA forces—including all of the ill-suited armor-mechanized units previously earmarked for the main operation—the battle became a political symbol to both Belgrade and Zagreb of their determination to achieve military victory. The JNA’s failure to seize the town despite its overwhelming force would be a dispiriting embarrassment to the federal cause, while the Croatian forces’ prolonged resistance became an inspiration and rallying point for the troops and people of Croatia. When the JNA finally captured Vukovar in mid-November after two months of intense fighting, theirs was a Pyrrhic victory. The siege had completely disrupted the timetable for the JNA’s strategic offensive and dissipated the last of the JNA’s prewar spirit, which had already

* For a detailed account of the Battle of Vukovar, see Annex 17: Eastern Slavonia-Baranja Operations—The Road to Vukovar. This annex also discusses the JNA’s use of volunteer troops, including the infamous Serbian Volunteer Guard, Arkan’s Tigers.

suffered catastrophic damage in Slovenia and in the battles for the Croatian barracks.

In Vukovar, the Croatian ZNG and MUP, under the leadership of Mile Dedakovic and his chief of staff, Branko Borkovic, constructed an urban defense maze that was able to confound the JNA for over two months. The arrival of these two commanders in late August brought structure to a previously disorganized force, as they formed a single brigade from the local village guard forces. Even with reinforcements, Dedakovic and Borkovic (who took command in mid-October) had only 2,000 to 2,300 ZNG and MUP troops with which to hold the city. They were able to do this against the JNA's armor-heavy, infantry-poor force through the creation of an integrated defense system that featured large-scale mining of approach routes, roving antitank teams, ubiquitous snipers, and heavily fortified defensive strongholds. Strong counterattacks were usually able to throw back the JNA's often isolated spearheads after the Croatian defenses had worn them down.

There had already been clashes around the JNA's Vukovar barracks in late August, but the battle proper began on 14 September when the JNA sent a small force into the town to raise the blockade of the barracks. Troops from the 1st Guards Mechanized Division quickly broke through to the barracks, but efforts over the next two weeks to cut the Croatians' narrow resupply corridor from Vinkovci and clear the city failed to gain much ground.

While this fighting was going on, newly mobilized troops of the Guards Division began an attack to relieve the besieged barracks at Vinkovci, clearing many of the villages south of Vukovar in the process. These units would then be able to reinforce JNA troops engaged at Vukovar while providing a secure area from which one part of the main JNA effort to the west could be launched. The Guards units quickly reached Vinkovci, forcing the Croatians to permit the evacuation of its barracks on 25 September. Other forces eventually seized the areas south of Vukovar, although with more difficulty.

The arrival of additional reinforcements allowed the JNA forces around Vukovar to prepare a new operation to seize the town. They had a new leader—Lieutenant Colonel General Zivota Panic—who had taken command of the First Military District. Panic tried to

sort out the chaos that had paralyzed JNA operations in the battle, establishing new headquarters and clarifying responsibilities in an attempt to bring order and discipline to the chain of command. With the reinforcements, the JNA, including volunteer and local TO formations, now had more than 36,000 combat troops around Vukovar. This otherwise impressive force, however, was ill suited for the operation at hand. The JNA's armor-mechanized units, designed for high-speed open combat, could barely enter the town's narrow streets, and the ill-trained and poorly motivated TO troops were no substitute for regular infantry.

The new attack, directed by the newly formed Operational Group South, went in on 30 September and slowly gained ground against the Croatian defenders. A Croatian counterattack hit the overextended JNA units on 3 October, driving them back almost to their start line. Notwithstanding this reverse, the supporting attack had all but severed the Croatians' resupply route. Operational Group North's follow-on attack two weeks later against the key suburb of Borovo Naselje on the northern side of Vukovar also penetrated the Croatian defenses but bogged down against stiffening resistance.

It was during this second battle that the JNA introduced a new force into the war—volunteer units. These were recruited to fill the gaps in the Army's ranks that should have been occupied by trained reservists who had failed to appear for mobilization. The men for these company- and battalion-sized detachments, recruited with the assistance of the Serbian MUP, came primarily from Serbian nationalist political parties and clubs. It was an action that the JNA, imbued as it was with Communist and federalist ideals, would have considered unthinkable only weeks before. The untrained volunteers were often motivated by xenophobic zeal against the Croatians, but the same qualities that made them savage fighters turned them into undisciplined looters of captured areas and the scourge of Croatian civilians, who suffered numerous atrocities at their hands. Their use would become an ugly, ineradicable stain on the JNA's escutcheon.

In addition to taking on the volunteers, the JNA had to face up to and deal with its own operational and tactical failings at Vukovar. The campaign to seize Vukovar was haphazardly coordinated at the operational level during the first two phases of the battle and was

effectively orchestrated only during the last round. For most of the campaign, federal forces were tactically inept at the vicious street fighting that typified every attempted advance. Their lack of urban warfare training and the reservists' general lack of any training at all compounded the difficulties caused by the JNA's inappropriate force mixture and by its poor coordination of the several arms. The size of the federal force, particularly the large number of armored vehicles, had in fact inhibited JNA operations against the town. The confines of the city prevented the Army from deploying its combat power effectively, while its lack of infantry was a basic flaw. As fighting continued, the JNA's tactical doctrine evolved, and it brought in more infantry, including elite units, and gradually shifted away from an armor-led advance to an infantry-led one. All its attacks, however, employed intense fire-power that wreaked massive destruction throughout Vukovar. For its successful final phase in November, the JNA at last integrated all its arms effectively, including the engineer support crucial to an advance through a heavily damaged town littered with mines. The Air Force hardly figured in the fighting, lacking pilots trained and drilled in close-support tactics. Well-trained infantry and engineers, supported rather than led by armor and backed by strong mortar and artillery fire, finally overcame the defenders and took the battered town.

It was General Panic and the First Military District staff who finally devised a plan, using the lessons the JNA had learned over the past month, that won the elusive victory of Vukovar. In the earlier attempts, attacks had been disjointed, single-sector affairs that had allowed Dedakovic, (and after mid-October, Borkovic) to focus Croatian resources on each narrow advance. This time, the JNA and the TO conducted coordinated attacks in several key areas at once, while severing the link between Vukovar town and the stronghold at Borovo Naselje. Operational Group South's main drive, on the south side of town, kicked off on 30-31 October, grinding its way through the streets. Fighting raged for possession of a key hilltop until 9 November, when JNA troops finally seized it. Meanwhile, elite JNA troops on 3 November carried out a surprise river crossing, linking up to "Arkan's Tigers"—the elite Serbian Volunteer Guard—and cutting off Borovo Naselje. Even so, Operational Group North did not completely reduce the suburb until 16 November. To the south, JNA, volunteer, and TO troops systematically cleared the center of Vukovar

proper. By 15 November, Borkovic's brigade had been chopped into disjointed bands. The remnants of the force surrendered on 18 November; a very few, including Borkovic and some other officers and men, managed to burrow out of the town after it fell.

The Croatians' ZNG 204th Vukovar Brigade, together with the MUP Special Police, lost over 60 percent of their strength in the vicious fighting. Almost 1,500 of the 2,000 to 2,300 defenders became casualties, and some 300 of the wounded were executed after the battle by units and individuals from the JNA, volunteer, and TO forces. Total deaths, including civilians, may have numbered as many as 4,000 to 5,000 persons.

The loss of the town, and the apparently minimal efforts by Croatian political and military authorities to relieve the siege, raised bitter recriminations between the town's commanders and President Tudjman's government. Only two relief operations had been attempted, one in mid-October and the other just before the town's fall, and they appear to have been halfhearted affairs that gained little ground. Neither attack appears to have had much effect on the JNA forces constricting Vukovar. Dedakovic, Borkovic, and the town's civilian leader complained publicly before and after the loss of the town, railing at Zagreb's failures and refusals to provide more relief. The protests brought Dedakovic and Borkovic arrest by the military police as Tudjman and his government moved to contain the political fallout from the commanders' charges. The charges were perfectly valid but, in the larger context of Croatia's overall defense, irrelevant. Vukovar's defenders wonderfully disrupted the JNA's main offensive, derailing its strategic plan to rapidly seize Eastern Slavonia and drive toward the capital at Zagreb. Ironically, their own success in diverting and holding back the JNA's main offensive ensured that Dedakovic and Borkovic would get only minimal reinforcement: the town was strategically expendable, and its unexpectedly stout defense by its own people spared General Tus the necessity of diverting his scarce regular units to slow down the JNA.

After Vukovar fell, General Panic moved his powerful forces into position to continue the strategic offensive, which Vukovar had delayed for two months. JNA 12th Corps troops, spearheaded by Arkan's Tigers, began their effort to break through the key Osijek-Vinkovci defense line defended by the Croatian 1st Osijek

Operational Zone on 20 November, seizing several key villages and spreading dismay in Osijek. Although fighting would continue along the line until January, the JNA drive soon slowed to a halt. Milosevic had come to the end of his patience with the JNA, and now he forced the high command to call off General Panic. The Yugoslavia of the JNA was dead, and the Serbian President was not going to let the army escalate the war for stakes he considered unwinnable.⁴⁷

Western Slavonia: Croatia Strikes Back^{*}

About a week after the initial JNA assault to relieve the Vukovar barracks, the JNA injected itself fully into the Serb-Croat fighting in Western Slavonia, which had been sputtering since early August. The JNA 5th (Banja Luka) Corps's mission was to abandon its nominal peacekeeping role and launch a drive north from the Sava River, through the towns of Daruvar and Pakrac, toward Virovitica on the Croatian-Hungarian border to cut off Eastern Slavonia from the rest of Croatia.⁴⁸ The corps would then await the arrival of First Military District forces driving west from Osijek-Vinkovci. After some modest initial gains in the operation, Croatian ZNG and MUP units were able to contain combined JNA and TO forces in the triangle Novska-Pakrac-Nova Gradiska. Fighting degenerated into a succession of inconclusive clashes around the three towns, with the struggle for Pakrac and the villages around its approaches becoming particularly intense. Then, in late October, the Croatians struck back. The 2nd Bjelovar Operational Zone launched an offensive against TO positions, which were unsupported by regular JNA troops, near the town of Podravska Slatina and the Bilogora mountains, well north of Pakrac near Virovitica. The attack drove some TO troops and a large number of Serb civilians back toward federal forces around Pakrac. After a period of back-and-forth fighting, a final Croatian offensive in mid-December completely eliminated the TO-held salient north of Pakrac and even took some ground held by the JNA near the town. The Croatian forces, however, were too few to try to expel JNA troops entirely from the region.

* For a detailed account of the fighting in Western Slavonia, see Annex 18: Western Slavonia Operations—Croatia Strikes Back.

The JNA's failures to achieve its campaign objectives and the Croatian defensive successes and offensive victories were a huge boost for Zagreb, militarily, politically, and strategically.⁴⁹ First, the victories demonstrated Zagreb's growing military prowess, particularly in the aftermath of Vukovar; strengthened President Tudjman's hand in his political battles with hardliners; and helped Croatia internationally in the ongoing peace talks. Most important, the destruction of the Serb-held salient, which had threatened the lines of communication to Eastern Slavonia, greatly improved Croatia's strategic position. Without its removal and with federal forces holding some 30 percent of the country, Eastern Slavonia—one of the country's most populous and important regions—would have remained in peril.

Looking past 1991, Croatia's recapture of most of the Serbian Autonomous Region of Western Slavonia took much of the steam out of the Serb separatist movement in the area, though the Serbs retained a toehold between Pakrac and the Sava River. Western Slavonia was to prove the weakest portion, both politically and militarily, of the emerging Republic of Serb Krajina (RSK). Over the next four years, it would cause Zagreb less embarrassment than the other parts of the RSK. The region would be ripe for the taking when Zagreb moved militarily in 1995 to complete what it had started against the JNA in 1991.

Battles Elsewhere: Consolidating Greater Serbia^{}**

In the Banija, Kordun, and Lika regions of Croatia, only Karlovac had any importance for the JNA. The fighting touched off by the JNA offensive allowed the Serbian Autonomous Region of Krajina to consolidate the gains it had made in the region during the spring and summer of 1991, paving the way for the creation of the Republic of Serb Krajina. There were no major battles like Vukovar, but TO formations backed by a few JNA units managed to squeeze the remaining Croatian forces out of an arc stretching from Petrinja

** For detailed accounts of the fighting in Banija-Lika-Kordun and the Zadar—Northern Dalmatia regions, see Annex 19: Banija-Kordun-Lika—Consolidating Greater Serbia and Annex 20: Zadar—Northern Dalmatia Operations—The Knin Corps Attacks.

to Gracac. The most significant event in these operations was the capture of the town of Slunj in November. This created a link between what was to be the northern half of the RSK centered around Petrinja-Karlovac and the southern portion near Knin. Despite this Serb success, Croatian forces from the 3rd Zagreb and 4th Karlovac Operational Zones managed to establish and maintain a solid defensive line, but their counteroffensives from October through December achieved only minor successes. The only JNA campaign originally planned in the area (at Karlovac) as part of the Army's strategic offensive was stillborn when mobilization failed to produce the combat brigades earmarked for the operation.

Further south, in Northern Dalmatia, JNA forces fulfilled their role in the strategic offensive, while expanding the SAO Krajina and consolidating its defenses. Already in an offensive mode, the JNA 9th (Knin) Corps, with General Vladimir Vukovic now in command but Mladic still as his chief of staff, went over to the attack immediately after the start of the Croatian barracks blockade. Their main role in the JNA strategic offensive was to finish cutting off Dalmatia from northern Croatia while relieving besieged JNA barracks in Zadar and Sibenik. The 9th Corps' unauthorized capture of the Maslenica bridge, preempting the start of the barracks war, had already achieved most of the corps's primary goal. The initial corps operations therefore focused on relief of the barracks, the accomplishment of which would also cut the Dalmatian coastal road. Toward this end, in mid-September JNA troops, supported by TO units, quickly breached Croatian defenses around Zadar, and by early October the Croatian authorities in Zadar had to let the JNA garrison leave the city with all of its equipment. An operation to relieve Sibenik, however, was halted by a last-ditch Croatian defense just short of the city. After the opening round of JNA attacks ended in early-to-middle October, the fighting subsided into infrequent and indecisive firefights, punctuated by occasional JNA/TO operations to gain key local positions. Overall, the 9th Corps commanders had demonstrated exceptional leadership, and Croatian forces had proved unable to stop the combination of well-led units backed by strong armor and artillery.⁵⁰

The Siege of Dubrovnik: History Under Fire*

In the West, the JNA's siege of Dubrovnik, the farthest distant city in Croatia, was one of the war's most visible and inexplicable events. Why the JNA undertook the operation in the first place was difficult to discern, and the destruction of architecture and art of the historic city was impossible to justify. Of the two questions, why did the JNA attack and why was the Dubrovnik area subjected to looting and destruction, the answer to the first is the easier. The JNA's strategic plan to carve up Croatia called for one operation to sever Southern Dalmatia from the rest of Croatia and blockade the port of Dubrovnik at its tip. Objections that the area had no Serb population miss the point that the military purpose of the JNA offensive was the defeat of Croatia; succoring the Croatian Serbs was a secondary and largely political objective. There is no satisfactory answer to the second question: Why did TO and volunteer troops and the JNA itself indulge in such gross looting and shelling on the nonmilitary portions of the region? As in earlier ages of warfare, when such acts were more common, blame can be put on the recruiting of volunteers from the dregs of society and on the greed and envy of the conquerors left unchecked by proper discipline. Whatever the reasons, international reaction to the military operation and its associated looting and destruction degraded the reputation of the Serb nation and deepened the political isolation of the Belgrade government.

From a purely military viewpoint, it was a fairly straightforward campaign. General Pavle Strugar's Operational Group 2, composed almost exclusively of Montenegrin troops, had launched its offensive on 1 October. One arm, led by the 2nd (Titograd) Corps, swung through a corner of Bosnia and descended to positions north of the city to cut it off from the rest of Croatia. This attack faced strong resistance from relatively well-organized ZNG troops whose strength increased over the next two months. The other axis,

* For a detailed account of the Dubrovnik operation, see Annex 21: Dubrovnik—Southern Dalmatia Operations.

commanded by the 9th (Boka Kotorska) Military-Maritime Sector (9th VPS), advanced directly toward the city from bases near Kotor Bay, some 35 kilometers to the south. By 27 October, Dubrovnik was at the mercy of the JNA, whose troops had encircled the ill-defended city and controlled most of the heights commanding it. Local Croatian ZNG and MUP units had neither the numbers nor the firepower to halt the JNA's advance, and JNA artillery could shell the city at will; nevertheless the Croatian Government rejected a JNA proposal that it demilitarize the city in exchange for a guarantee that JNA troops would not enter it. Willy-nilly, round after round of firefights and artillery barrages ensued as the JNA methodically advanced on the city and grabbed additional hills, until a cease-fire was agreed to on 7 December.

No matter the military results, the JNA's campaign in the Dubrovnik area will be remembered for the wholesale looting perpetrated by JNA reservists and the shelling of Dubrovnik and its old town by JNA artillery. The outrage evoked in world public opinion by television coverage, photography, and journalist reports reinforced the view, already prominent after Vukovar, that federal forces, and later the Serbs as a nation, were barbarians aggressively bent on subjugating Croatia, destroying priceless treasures in the process. This certainly played a major role in the international diplomatic and economic isolation imposed on Belgrade.

The looting was exceptionally thorough. The Montenegrin reservists of the 9th VPS stripped the Konavli plateau and the resort hotels southeast of Dubrovnik bare. Misha Glenny writes:

From the minute we crossed into Croatia, the work of the Montenegrins became all too visible. They had plundered and burned every single house. Each was pock-marked with bullets or left with gaping holes from mortars or grenades . . . There were no contents left in any of the houses, everything had been taken by the marauding reservists. This is what had motivated the Montenegrins . . . Each village was a shrine to the animal instincts of these young men.⁵¹

The JNA had to acknowledge publicly that the looting and destruction were beyond military justification. The 9th VPS commander, Admiral Miodrag Jokic, attributed the excesses to volunteer units that had been hastily organized and inadequately led. This acknowledgment dodges the fact that the scale and scope of the excesses were such that JNA regular and reserve troops and some of their senior commanders had to have been involved as well.⁵²

So why did the looting occur on such a scale? Clearly, the operational-level commanders in 9th VPS and likely the 2nd Corps were unable or unwilling to enforce proper discipline on their subordinates, although Admiral Jokic mentioned one instance in which the JNA attempted to purge a formation of problem personnel.⁵³ The high percentage of reservist and volunteer formations undoubtedly posed a corps-wide discipline problem, and the peasant Montenegrin soldiers could hardly avoid envying their wealthier urban neighbors of the Dubrovnik beaches when they encountered them or their property. Faced with unfamiliar wealth, poor soldiers of any army will be tempted first to pilfer, then to steal, and finally to loot and destroy unless checked by their immediate superiors. In Dubrovnik, junior officers took part in, encouraged, and led the looting. Finally, centuries of warfare and banditry would have imbued many of the peasant soldiers with the conviction that they were entitled to the possessions of their vanquished enemies.

The JNA's shelling of Dubrovnik's clearly civilian areas, and in particular its historic buildings, along with seemingly excessive destruction visited upon various nonstrategic targets, require somewhat more complex explanations. Incidents like the systematic destruction of pleasure boats in the Dubrovnik marina by wire-guided antitank missiles were beyond any justifiable level of violence.⁵⁴ Fire directed against buildings and facilities not being used for military purposes falls in the same malicious category, for the same reasons as looting. Blame for the much-condemned shelling of Dubrovnik's old town, however, is not as easy

to fix. General Kadijevic has claimed that Croatian units misused the old town to shell JNA positions,⁵⁵ and Misha Glenny, observing Croatian artillery and gun positions on Dubrovnik's city walls, concluded that the Croatians were "cunningly exploiting international outrage for military purposes."⁵⁶ Kadijevic still absurdly claims the old town was not hit, but he and Admiral Miodrag Jokic have also cited some local commanders of artillery and heavy weapons commanders for exceeding their authority. Kadijevic in fact claims that he had issued an "explicit order" establishing a stop line around Dubrovnik outside of mortar and medium-range artillery beyond which JNA units were not to pass. Kadijevic states he did this because, if JNA units closed up toward the city, they would either respond to fire from Croatian troops in Dubrovnik and be blamed, or not return fire and suffer unnecessary losses. Nevertheless, Kadijevic notes that, "despite multiple warnings," some units crossed the line. The heavy 6 December shelling of Dubrovnik, apparently in retaliation for a Croatian firing incident, illustrates Kadijevic's point.

Chapter 12 Ending the War: The Vance Plan⁵⁷

The end to the Croatian war came in January 1992. The Serbian Government's recognition that it had achieved its essential war aims, combined with a realization on both sides that any gains from continued fighting would come at an increasing price, allowed UN mediator Cyrus Vance to orchestrate an armistice backed by a United Nations peacekeeping force. It was only the recognition that the agreement did not represent a final political settlement, however, that overcame irreconcilable differences and allowed the UN troops to be deployed. Broad interpretations of the UN mission permitted both sides to claim victory, in the belief that the terms of the agreement fulfilled their own objectives while prohibiting those of their enemy. The Serbs claimed that the agreement allowed for local governments—including their new statelet, the Republic of Serbian Krajina—to continue as they were until a final settlement. This would lock in Serb gains while providing little incentive for the Serbs to compromise in political negotiations. The Croatians believed that the UN would restore Croatian sovereignty in the Serb-held areas, but the UN proved

unable to fulfill the Croatian objective and unwilling to try. It would take three and a half years and another war before a resurgent Croatian Army would make good Zagreb's claim to a reintegrated Croatia.

The EC/Carrington Negotiations Fail

Throughout the fighting, the EC-sponsored peace conference at The Hague, which began on 7 September, continued its efforts to compose a general political settlement to end the fighting and restore peace.⁵⁸ The chairman of the conference, Lord Carrington, put together a peace plan focusing on the six republics as the constituent elements of the former Yugoslavia—not on the different nationalities, as the Serbian leadership wanted. Carrington's plan would have allowed each republic to choose different levels of cooperation in new, confederal institutions.⁵⁹ The Serbian leadership formally rejected this plan in mid-October, probably because it did not allow for all Serbs to live in one state, which Milosevic and Jovic had set as their primary objective.⁶⁰ In addition, it essentially dissolved the existing Federal Republic, preventing Serbia and Montenegro from claiming that their federation was the legitimate successor to the old one.⁶¹ Although the conference sputtered on, the Serbian objections blocked all paths to a solution.

Balked by Serbian substantive disagreements with the plan, Carrington had the rug pulled out from under the conference altogether with the EC's decision in December to recognize Croatia and Slovenia in January. What had principally kept Croatia and Slovenia engaged in the negotiations was the prospect that they would gain international recognition once a comprehensive settlement was agreed to. The unilateral EC decision to recognize the two states removed any incentive for them to continue serious talks and put the final nail in The Hague Conference's coffin.

⁵⁷ See Chapter 10 for a discussion of the start of the conference.

Serbia Moves To End the War

Real progress toward ending the fighting came only after the Serbian political leaders concluded that their war aims of achieving military control over Serb areas in Croatia had been fulfilled. Uninterested in the JNA's aim of a defeated and subdued Croatia, they were more willing than the JNA commanders to consider moving to a negotiated solution once their own objectives had been attained.⁶¹ By early November, Milosevic and Jovic had concluded the time was ripe to lock in the federal and Serb gains by requesting deployment of UN peacekeeping troops to halt and prevent further fighting pending the achievement of a general political settlement.⁶²

The UN Moves Toward a Cease-Fire

The UN's special envoy for Yugoslavia, Cyrus Vance, began shuttling the Yugoslav proposal between Belgrade and Zagreb during November and December, trying to gain agreement on an interim peace plan and the deployment of UN troops to oversee it.⁶³ Vance made gradual headway in his negotiations, and by 1 January both sides had accepted what came to be known as the "Vance Plan."⁶⁴ On 2 January, Croatian Defense Minister Gojko Susak and the JNA Fifth Military District deputy commander, General Andrija Raseta, signed a cease-fire in Sarajevo—the 15th so far—to go into effect the next day.⁶⁵ Unlike any of the previous 14, this one held.

The Vance Plan was crafted to stop the fighting in Croatia and allow negotiations for a comprehensive peace agreement without the pressures of battlefield events influencing the talks. The agreement did not presuppose any specific outcome to the negotiations. The plan called initially for the deployment of some 10,000 UN peacekeeping troops, designated the UN Protection Force (UNPROFOR) to establish three (later four) UN Protected Areas (UNPA) in the major conflict areas, providing a buffer zone between the Serb-controlled zones and Croatian-held territory, while disarming local Serb Territorial Defense units. The Serb weapons would either be stored under joint UN-Serb control or withdrawn with the JNA. All JNA units were to leave Croatia. The UN was to ensure that

neither Croatian nor JNA regular forces entered the protected areas. In addition, all displaced persons were to be allowed to return to their homes.⁶⁶

The Deal Almost Comes Unstuck

Both Zagreb and the Croatian Serbs still had objections to the deal, however, and they nearly caused the Vance Plan to come apart early in 1992 before UN troops arrived. The Serbs, led by Krajina Serb President Babic, had objected, as soon as the potential UN deployment plan became public in December, to the provision of UN peacekeepers in place of the JNA troops in Croatia. From Babic's perspective, the removal of the JNA meant de facto acceptance of Croatian sovereignty over the newly formed Republic of Serbian Krajina (RSK) and was unacceptable.⁶⁷ Until the Serb objections were overcome, the UN refused to deploy its troops. Milosevic and the Federal/Serbian leadership used every means they could devise to pressure their erstwhile clients, the RSK Government, into acceptance. Their maneuvers culminated in an all-Serb conference in Belgrade at the end of January at which the Krajina leaders were made to feel the weight of the entire Serb nation, while Milosevic and Jovic attempted to isolate the adamant Babic.⁶⁸ After the conference, Belgrade tried to follow up its "victory" with votes in the RSK Assembly to ratify the plan and sideline Babic. The parliamentary maneuvers descended into farce as Milosevic and Babic supporters paraded comically from one building to another to stage counterassembly meetings at which one side and then the other proclaimed its legitimacy. Babic was "officially" replaced on 27 February by Goran Hadzic, the Serb leader in Eastern Slavonia. Even while the rumblings continued, Milosevic somehow managed to muzzle the Babic opposition and guarantee that the RSK would accept the UN troops and comply with the peace plan.

The Croatian Government meanwhile objected to the role the RSK Government and its local officials would have under the plan. It took the position that the UN Protected Areas were sovereign Croatian territory in which leaders of a secessionist movement should have

no authority. The Zagreb government rightly worried that the UN zones would allow the RSK to consolidate its power in occupied Croatia, leaving little or no incentive for Belgrade and the Krajina Serbs to agree to a more comprehensive peace. The Croatians, although they continued to proclaim their rejection of any local role for Serb leaders, eventually, as a temporary measure, made a de facto acknowledgment of the RSK Government situation, while refusing to negotiate on equal terms with any Croatian Serb representatives. In their view, the only parties to the plan were Zagreb, Belgrade, and the UN.

One final area of contention was never settled but would delay and hinder the implementation of the plan seemingly in perpetuity. This was the status of several key frontline areas that remained outside the defined UNPA lines, and thus would nominally have fallen under Croatian Government rule. The Krajina Serb Army (former TO, now *Srpska vojske krajine*—SVK) and the JNA controlled these areas, later dubbed “pink zones,” and the RSK refused to remove its forces from them out of concern for their Serb residents.⁶⁹ The Croatians, however, refused to modify the “borders” of any of the sectors. Despite persistent worry that the issue would upset RSK compliance with its demilitarization requirements, in the event there was no hindrance to the turnover of RSK weaponry. The status of the “pink zones” remained unresolved, however, and would bedevil the UN’s mission over the next year.

UNPROFOR Arrives

With the most serious differences papered over and the truce holding, bar a few skirmishes, UN troops began to arrive in country and assume their duties. The commander of UNPROFOR, Indian General Satish Nambiar, arrived to take command on 8 March.⁷⁰ Over the next two months, UN troops arrived, deployed, and began assuming control over the UNPAs. Once its forces were in place, the UN by fits and starts began to disarm the Krajina Serb Army (SVK).⁷¹ By January 1993, most, if not all, heavy weapons and many of the small arms had been placed in the dual-controlled UN/SVK weapon cantonments.

Mortgaging Croatia’s Future*

Despite the UN deployment, and even because of it, broader peace talks to settle the issues broached and left unresolved by the war would become a three-year exercise in futility. As the Croatians feared, the UN troops effectively secured the existence of the RSK—just as JNA peacekeeping troops had allowed Croatian Serb separatists in the summer of 1991 to consolidate their Serbian Autonomous Regions. Concerned that the situation would continue indefinitely, Zagreb in 1993 mounted a number of military probes to focus international attention and seize important local objectives. In reaction, the UNPAs’ demilitarized condition evaporated as SVK troops retrieved their stored weapons and manned the old confrontation line. Negotiations in the aftermath of these clashes partially restored the ground seized by Croatia, but no arrangement could be found that satisfied both sides’ requirements for security and sovereignty. Over time, Zagreb lost patience with the international negotiators and with the Serbs and resolved to settle the matter by force. As Babic had feared and argued, the departure of the JNA “peacekeepers” left the Croatian Serbs defenseless against a revitalized Croatian Army, and in the summer of 1995 the RSK would pass out of existence.

Chapter 13

Outcomes and Evaluation of the Forces

Results and Implications

The Croatian war finally brought down the tottering Yugoslav Federal Republic, finishing the job begun by the microwar in Slovenia. The military stalemate into which the Croatian war congealed was shaped by the balance between the strengths and weaknesses of the

* The military situation in Croatia from 1993 to 1995 and the growth in the capabilities of the Croatian Army, including its subsequent defeat of the Krajina Serb Army, is discussed in Section VI, Croatia 1993-1994: Biding Its Time, Building Its Army; parts of Section V; and Sections VII and III, which cover both Operations “Bljesak” (Flash) and “Oluja” (Storm) in 1995 and the HV’s operations in Bosnia in 1992.

two armies. A series of critical events—the “Battle of the Barracks,” the JNA-Serbian political-military conflict, the Battle of Vukovar, and the Siege of Dubrovnik—were the turning points that decided the outcome of the war.

Once full-scale fighting broke out between the Yugoslav People’s Army and Croatian forces in September 1991, there was no real possibility of putting Tito’s Yugoslavia back together again. Without Croatia, the remaining republics would soon fall away because none of them were large enough to counterbalance Serbia in a rump federation. This dilemma was to have a fatal impact on Croatia’s neighboring republic, Bosnia and Herzegovina, held together in the old federal republic only because of the Serbian-Croatian balance.

Out of the ashes of the war came two new states: the internationally recognized Republic of Croatia and the minute Republic of Serbian Krajina in the “occupied territory” of the UN Protected Areas. Croatia, with a large UN peacekeeping force stuck in the middle, would remain one of the hotter spots in former Yugoslavia over the next three and a half years because of the Croatian Republic’s demand, sounded over and over again by President Tudjman, that it regain sovereignty over the RSK.

In the war’s aftermath, Serbian President Milosevic became the unchallenged leader in what was left of Yugoslavia. The formerly strong federal government became a thin facade behind which Milosevic wielded true power. No republics other than tiny Montenegro remained even to debate him, and the JNA, once a politically as well as a militarily potent force, stood humbled by its disgraceful performance in the war.

As Yugoslavia descended deeper into authoritarianism, so too did the standing of the Serbian nation decline on the world stage. Outrageous conduct by Serbian and Serbian-dominated JNA troops, amplified by Croatian propaganda, created a lasting image of Serbia as an aggressor nation. Serb atrocities in Bosnia would need no magnification to darken the deep-dyed image.

The West, startled by the outbreak of military clashes in Slovenia, was aghast when a full-scale Croatian war, complete with large-scale atrocities, erupted in Europe. Western horror led to the EC’s attempts at

mediation and a major military commitment of European troops to the UN peacekeeping force. Thus began a level of Western engagement in halting the fighting in the former Yugoslavia that would continue to deepen through UN deployments to Bosnia, culminating in the Dayton peace agreement and the creation of a NATO-led peacekeeping force.

Militarily, the Croatian war had ended in a stalemate within months of its eruption, which was a key reason both sides were willing at the end of 1991 to accept a UN-brokered truce and an international peacekeeping force. At that point, although gaining in strength, the Croatian forces still lacked the capability to eject the JNA from their territory. Conversely, the JNA could not muster the knockout blow against Zagreb envisioned in its initial strategy without paying a price the Belgrade leadership was completely unwilling to accept. The withdrawal of the JNA and the growth and improvements in the Croatian Army were to shift this balance decisively in Zagreb’s favor by 1995.

Evaluation of Federal Forces

The JNA’s overall performance in the Croatian war was mediocre. The upheavals wracking the federation detracted from any motivation JNA conscripts and reservists might have summoned to fight a war that had no obvious stakes for them, and their dispirited responses had a domino effect on the Army’s capabilities. In particular, the refusal of many Serbian reservists to fight in Croatia undercut the JNA’s mobilization effort so badly that the implementation of the Army’s strategic offensive was critically affected. Most of the men who did respond to the callup received little training and less incentive to fight hard and die for the Yugoslav/Serbian cause, and this further dulled the JNA’s fighting edge. The JNA’s mobilization and motivational problems impelled it to rely more heavily on the poorly trained, ill-disciplined local Serb Territorial Defense forces and to form hordes of volunteer units too often populated by social misfits, criminals, and other dregs of society. The upper levels of the JNA splintered along with the country, leaving an officer corps in chaos that, strained by political-military differences over war aims, led to uneven leadership at all levels of command. With their country

breaking up around them, JNA officers had to conduct a large and complex strategic offensive with thousands of ill-trained and poorly motivated conscripts and reservists while coping with an evolving political situation that often bore heavily on themselves and their families. In these circumstances, it is not surprising that the JNA did not perform as well as had been expected of the fourth-largest army in Europe.

Nevertheless, the JNA was able to conduct the multi-corps combat operations of its strategic offensive plan with some measure of success. Sufficient numbers of the JNA's commanders and staff officers were present and available to use their professional skills to organize and move JNA forces to their areas of responsibility and attack, although often only sluggishly. At middle and upper levels, the JNA was able to function almost as expected, though raggedly, because most of the Serbian and Montenegrin professional officers, along with some loyal officers from other ethnic groups, retained enough of the JNA officer corps' ethos and group cohesion. To compensate for its weaknesses in training and personnel at the tactical level, the JNA made maximum use of its abundant firepower, bludgeoning its way through Croatian positions. It was able to support these resource-intensive tactics thanks to a logistic system operating in familiar territory from nearby armories so that there was always enough ammunition and other supplies coming forward.

Evaluation of Croatian Forces

The key factor in the Croatian forces' ability to hold off the JNA during the war was their high morale and clarity of purpose, believing as they did that they were defending their homes against the Serbian "aggressor." In their own minds, at least, they knew exactly why they were fighting. This factor, capitalized on by the newly formed Croatian Main Staff in its rapid mobilization and organization of combat brigades, allowed Zagreb's troops to contain, delay, and eventually halt many of the JNA's individual offensives.

The ZNG and MUP, however, had many limitations, and the more professional and heavily armed JNA took advantage of them. Despite their seizure of JNA

facilities and arms, including heavy weapons, the Croatians were unable to match their manpower with enough heavy firepower to push the JNA out of Croatia. The Croatian soldiers were hastily trained, and, lacking any significant standing military organizations or cadre, it was difficult to weld them quickly into cohesive combat units. The individual soldier's high motivation, however, helped make up for this deficiency. Croatian staff work also was poor. This shortcoming in particular kept the ZNG from attempting many large-scale offensive actions that required a high degree of skill in planning and execution. In contrast with the JNA, Croatia had little in the way of a military logistic structure to start with and little time to develop one. Even after they had bought, found, or seized additional arms and ammunition, distributing the materiel was often haphazard.

Critical Events of the Croatian War

A succession of key military actions and political-military debates decisively shaped the course of the war and its final denouement. The first of these events, the Croatians' strategic offensive against the JNA's military facilities, began a new phase in the armed Serbo-Croatian conflict and to a great extent created a military balance between the forces. It was not until the Croatians launched their barracks offensive that the JNA came fully into the conflict against Croatia, even if Zagreb believed at the time that the JNA had already sided with the Croatian Serb separatists. The offensive's key significance, however, lay in the quantum leap in Croatian military capabilities resulting from the barracks' seizure. Before the offensive, the ZNG lacked even the small arms necessary to equip all its organized combat units, let alone any significant quantity of heavy weapons. But as the ZNG and MUP troops seized JNA depots and barracks in rapid succession, the ZNG acquired enough small arms not only to equip its existing formations but also to form and field large numbers of new units. Most important, it had obtained its first sizable stocks of armor, artillery, and mortars. Without these weapons, the ZNG and MUP would have been helpless to withstand the JNA offensive.

The federal/Serbian efforts to combat the expanding Croatian forces were complicated by a longstanding difference between key members of the JNA high command and the Serbian political leadership. The Serbian leadership—Milosevic and Jovic—believed in a far simpler set of political objectives or war aims that would have allowed Croatia to secede from Yugoslavia without its Serb-populated regions, requiring the JNA to defend only those areas. The JNA, however, dedicated to preventing Croatia from breaking up the federation, ignored Milosevic's and Jovic's demands to withdraw from most of Croatia and to hold only the Serb territories. The strategy deemed necessary to achieve this, necessitating the total defeat of Croatia's forces and the capitulation of its government, was far more complex than the essentially defensive approach Milosevic and Jovic wanted. It required the JNA to implement a full-blown strategic offensive with multicorps combat operations

crisscrossing Croatia to defeat its troops and threaten its capital. Despite the political opposition, and in the face of unlooked-for deficiencies in the troops needed to flesh out the operation, the JNA leaders put this ponderously difficult offensive in motion as soon as the Croatians attacked their barracks. Although some individual operations succeeded, the offensive as a whole was a military, political, and public relations disaster for the JNA. Their failure forced the JNA leaders ultimately to accept the Serbian political war aims even while they dealt with the military consequences of their failed offensive until the end of the conflict.

The Battle for Vukovar was the decisive factor in the disruption of the JNA's strategic offensive. The JNA's plan had called for a massive armored drive from northern Serbia, past Osijek, and across Slavonia toward Zagreb and northeastern Croatia. Instead, the JNA's undertaking to free its barracks in the small

Danube River town turned into a three-month, life-or-death struggle that sucked in nearly all of the combat forces earmarked for the main operation, leaving the offensive beached and gasping. The JNA's unseemly inability to take the town quickly from a scratch force of defenders damaged the Army's already sinking morale and prestige. Then the destruction of the town by the application of massed fire-power, the only way the JNA was able to seize it, made its belated capture a public relations disaster in the West, further isolating Belgrade and making it more difficult for Milosevic to achieve the objectives he cared about. Finally, the battle came to symbolize the war itself, highlighting the Croatians' valiant efforts to break away from Yugoslavia and the federation's determination to stop them by whatever means necessary. With neither side willing to yield, the fighting took on a life of its own.

The Siege of Dubrovnik completed the destruction of Belgrade's public image in the West, ensuring that Serbia/Yugoslavia would be demonized diplomatically and economically for years to come. While conducting what was otherwise a legitimate military campaign to cut off the Dubrovnik area and its port from the rest of Croatia, troops of the JNA, the Montenegrin Territorial Defense, and volunteer units wantonly looted and burned their way up to the walls of the ancient city. Then the professional artillerists of the federal Army shelled it. The television footage and newspaper photography of JNA shells hitting historic buildings in cosmopolitan Dubrovnik, while JNA troops looted the luxury hotels and homes along the coast, seared the consciousness of Western journalists, diplomats, politicians, and their constituencies, burning into their minds the image of an ignoble aggressor state. The Serbs never recovered from this self-inflicted wound.

Endnotes, Section II

¹ German-occupied Serbia was also placed under a puppet government led by another Quisling figure, Gen. Milan Nedic, a former Yugoslav Army officer who had been dismissed in 1940 for urging that Yugoslavia join the Axis. Serbia did not, however, adopt Hitler's principles in the manner that Croatia did during its occupation.

² The lower figure of 200,000 is from Glenny, Misha, *The Fall of Yugoslavia*, p. 81. The higher figure of 600,000 was the "official" Yugoslav number, cited as such in Silber and Little, p. 85. A variety of other estimates fall in between.

³ From *masovni pokret*, or "mass movement."

⁴ Laura Silber and Allan Little, *Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation*. Penguin USA, p. 84.

⁵ Silber and Little p. 97.

⁶ Silber and Little p. 95.

⁷ Belgrade Tanjug 14 August 1990; See also Silber and Little, p. 146, footnote 4.

⁸ Silber and Little, p. 97.

⁹ Belgrade Borba 2 August 1990 p. 8.

¹⁰ Belgrade Domestic Service 3 August 1990; Belgrade Tanjug 17 August 1990.

¹¹ Belgrade Tanjug 17 August 1990. Silber and Little, p. 101.

¹² Although there is no question that autonomy enjoyed strong Serb support, it is worth noting that the referendum was organized by the SDS, that only Serbs were allowed to vote, and that there was no residency requirement (that is, former Krajina Serbs residing in Serbia or Bosnia could vote as well).

¹³ By August, Babic controlled at least the municipalities of Knin, Benkovac, Gracac, Donji Lapac, Obrovac, and Korenica, all in southern Krajina. Belgrade Domestic Service 3 August 1990.

¹⁴ Belgrade Tanjug 13 December 1990; Belgrade Tanjug 19 December 1990; Belgrade Tanjug 5 January 1991.

¹⁵ Croatia's ethnic Serbs, with some 12.5 percent of the population, were able to win only five Serbian Democratic Party seats of the 356 in the parliament. Effectively, Croatia's Serbs had no representation. Rather than participate to no end, the five Serb deputies boycotted the National Assembly.

¹⁶ Belgrade Tanjug 17 May 1990.

¹⁷ Vasiljevic was promoted to Major General (one star) in December 1990.

¹⁸ The Serb leadership in Eastern Slavonia-Baranja took longer to form an autonomous region than Krajina, although it had established a Serb National Council for Eastern Slavonia, Baranja, and Western Srem by March 1991. D. Dragicevic, "The Time to Leave Croatia Has Come," *Politika* 19 March 1991, p. 9. The council declared itself the government of an autonomous region in July 1991. Belgrade Tanjug 11 July 1991. Pakrac and areas in Western Slavonia attempted to join the SAO Krajina in February 1991, but the intervention of Croatian Special Police partially thwarted this move until August 1991, by which point the Western Slavonia Serb leadership created its own autonomous region.

¹⁹ The SDB, the State Security Service (*Sluzba Drzavne Bezbednosti*), was redesignated RDB, Department for State Security (*Resor Drzavne Bezbednosti*), in 1991.

²⁰ The Croatians had signed a joint defense agreement with the Slovenes in April, which Zagreb refused to honor during the Ten-Day War, despite Spegelj's entreaties to Tudjman. See Silber and Little, pp. 149-150, 169. Spegelj alluded to many of his differences

with Tudjman in an October 1991 interview although he did not explicitly outline the July-August chain of events. Mladen Maloca and Darko Pavicic, "Croatia Must Go on the Offensive," *Danas* 15 October 1991, pp. 21-23.

²¹ Tudjman was forced to rely on the opposition parties in forming a new government to help him hold off the right wing of his own party. See interviews with Dr. Zdravko Tomac, Vice President of the Democratic Reform Party and the then new deputy Prime Minister in Marinko Culic, "Why I Joined the Government," *Danas* 6 August 1991, pp. 13-14 and the then new Prime Minister Dr. Franjo Greguric, Darko Pavicic, "Success on the Third Try," *Danas* 6 August 1991 pp. 16-17 for a discussion of the contentious assembly meeting.

²² News Conference, President Tudjman, Zagreb Radio 5 August 1991.

²³ President Tudjman interview, Zagreb Radio 22 August 1991.

²⁴ Borisav Jovic, *The Last Days of the SFRY: Daily Notes from the Period 15 May 1989 to 8 July 1992*. Belgrade: Politika, 1995, entry for 24 June 1991.

²⁵ Jovic entry for 27 June 1991.

²⁶ Jovic entry for 5 July 1991.

²⁷ Silber and Little, p. 167.

²⁸ Misha Glenny, *The Fall of Yugoslavia: The Third Balkan War*, London: Penguin Books, 1992, p. 97.

²⁹ Relatively little fighting occurred between Croatian and Serb forces in the Knin-Northern Dalmatia areas during June and July 1991; most of it was "border" skirmishes around villages north of the port city of Sibenik.

³⁰ The EC peace conference came about as a result of an EC decision on 27 August to send an "ultimatum"—as Serbian Federal Presidency member Jovic called it—to Serbia threatening unspecified action unless it halted JNA and Croatian Serb military action in Croatia. The EC announcement stated that a peace conference would be held with all those in support of the EC arbitration and cease-fire plans. Reuters 27-28 August 1991. The EC cease-fire proposal stated that,

- *all paramilitary forces (except police forces) and irregular units shall be disarmed and disbanded;*
- *the reserve structure of the Croatian National Guard shall be demobilized, and the JNA shall return to its barracks; . . .*

Jovic entry for 28 August 1991.

Because the Netherlands was head of the EC Presidency at the time, Dutch Foreign Minister Hans van den Broek went to Belgrade to present the EC declaration and proposal to the Serbs, the Federal Presidency, and government. Despite distaste for what they both viewed as anti-Serb rhetoric, Serbian President Milosevic was able to convince Jovic that it was in the Serbs' best interest to accept the EC decision. Otherwise, the Serbs would be excluded from the peace conference and have no influence and would most likely be subjected to EC sanctions. After rancorous debate in the Federal Presidency, the EC measure was accepted. Jovic noted that he believed that Mesic and Drnovsek probably had hoped that the Serbs and their supporters on the Federal Presidency would have voted against the proposal, allowing the Croatians and Slovenes to attend the conference by themselves and gain an even larger measure of international support. Jovic entries for 28 August, 29 August, 1 September 1991.

³¹ Belgrade Tanjug 6 September 1991.

³² Tudjman stated on 7 September that, "We were satisfied with the general atmosphere during the conference." Belgrade Tanjug 7 September 1991.

³³ Belgrade Tanjug 7-8 September 1991.

³⁴ Zagreb Radio 11 September 1991. This provides a detailed explanation of Mesic's public justification for the decision.

³⁵ Jovic clearly saw Mesic's order in this light as well, stating,

We regard this as an attempt to create reasons for an attack against the military in Croatia. If the military does not 'obey,' it will be declared outlaw and an occupying force in Croatia. The purpose is to provide an easier explanation and justification for Croatian aggression against the military. In fact, it is preparing to declare war against the military.

Jovic entry for 12 September 1991.

³⁶ Darko Pavicic, "Why I Resigned," *Zagreb Danas* 8 October 1991, pp. 14-15. An interview with former Croatian Defense Minister Luka Babic. The order implementing the already signed decision went into effect late on 13 September for implementation on 14 September.

³⁷ Despite the shift to the offensive against the barracks, the ZNG and MUP remained on the strategic defensive along the frontline with the Serb autonomous regions. Croatian forces would not move to conduct any offensives on the battlefield until late October and November.

³⁸ As described earlier, Tudjman made the decision to go to war with the JNA in mid-September, launching a strategic offensive to neutralize and capture the JNA's facilities throughout Croatia beginning on 14 September. This simply added a dimension to the defensive military strategy Croatia had pursued throughout the fighting with local Serb forces during the summer. Zagreb intended to continue on the defensive at the front while attacking the JNA in the rear, although the certain introduction of large-scale JNA forces into battle after the Croatian attack on the barracks would obviously increase Croatian military difficulties. The barracks assault was the key element in the Croatian efforts to expand the National Guard Corps and create a real army to defend its borders, which it would have been unable to do without the weapons stored in the JNA and Croatian TO barracks.

³⁹ The newly formed Main Staff organized the expansion of the ZNG during October with the captured weapons, while orchestrating the defense against the JNA's campaigns. As ZNG and MUP forces were able to contain federal troops, field units began to urge the Main Staff to authorize counteroffensives, while the Croatian Assembly, particularly hardline HDZ members, continued to press the government to be more aggressive. The new offensives, however, were to have only mixed success. Beginning in late October, Croatian forces in Western Slavonia went on the attack; the relatively successful operations continued until the end of the conflict in January. The Croatians also attempted two unsuccessful operations to relieve the siege of Vukovar in October and November. Attacks in the Banija area, near Sisak and Petrinja, were only partially successful. These limited attacks were the only Croatian offensive actions; elsewhere they remained on the defensive, while maintaining their blockades of the barracks. The barracks remained surrounded until agreements were reached with the JNA for the withdrawal of their garrisons in December 1991 as part of the negotiations that led to the "Vance Plan."

⁴⁰ The Croatian dual-track strategy of defending on the battlefield while hitting the barracks was the best available. They did not initially have sufficient forces to go on the offensive directly against JNA and TO forces, but attacking the barracks allowed them to acquire the means to build and arm formations that could eventually challenge the federal units. Even with the acquisition of weapons from the barracks and the creation of many new units, the ZNG

and MUP did not have the forces, training, or firepower to force the JNA from Croatia militarily, as became evident during the ZNG's limited offensives. This almost certainly is why President Tudjman continued to try to internationalize the war, hoping to get the Western nations to intervene against the JNA and force it to withdraw from his republic.

⁴¹ Jovic noted on 8 August 1991 that, "It is amazing that Veljko (Kadijevic) is one minute for a general attack to overthrow the Croatian authorities, and the next minute against that." Jovic entry for 8 August 1991.

⁴² Jovic entry for 12 September 1991.

⁴³ Army General Veljko Kadijevic, *Moje Vidjenje Raspada*, Belgrade: 1993, p. 134.

⁴⁴ The General Staff was to coordinate the offensive through the First, Fifth, and Military-Maritime Districts. The First Military District, under the command of Colonel-General Aleksandar Spirovski, was to control the Eastern Slavonia-Baranja Operation; the Fifth Military District, under the command of Colonel-General Zivota Avramovic, was to control the Western Slavonia and Karlovac Operations; and the Military-Maritime District, under Vice Admiral Mile Kandic, was to command the Knin-Zadar and Dubrovnik Operations. (For a detailed breakdown of the JNA order of battle, see Appendix C and Annex 13.)

⁴⁵ Kadijevic, pp. 134-135. Kadijevic's statements in his memoirs that he intended to withdraw from Croatia, or at least from all of Croatia except the Krajina, clearly do not track with Borisav Jovic's understanding of Kadijevic's thinking in 1991. There are two possibilities. Either Kadijevic modified his memoirs in order to reflect a more pro-Serbian line rather than the pro-Yugoslav line in which he believed in 1991, or the 1991 planning did include options to pull out of Croatia but Kadijevic's presentation or beliefs were so muddled at the time that it was not clear to Jovic or anyone else. Jovic's description of the above planning based on a 20 September JNA presentation tracks exactly with Kadijevic's description, except for Kadijevic's discussion of a withdrawal from Croatia. Another possibility is that the plan did not initially call for a withdrawal from Croatia but, that after the agreement to withdraw from Slovenia, a withdrawal from Croatia was added to the plan without modifying any of the planned campaigns. Either way, the JNA high command clearly appears to have been suffering from political-strategic schizophrenia in 1991. They often were not sure what they were trying to achieve at any particular time. Jovic entry for 20 September 1991.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ The forces available to the First Military District probably could have broken the ZNG defense line, albeit at considerable cost. It is unlikely, however, that the JNA could have driven to Zagreb. Nevertheless, the Croatian Government almost certainly would have been forced to accept worse terms than the Vance Plan if Osijek had been placed at the JNA's mercy. For a more detailed analysis, see Annex 17.

⁴⁸ General Kadijevic stated that the campaign in Western Slavonia was designed to, ". . . along the Gradiska-Pakrac-Virovitica line . . . cut off the Croatia forces' retreat from eastern and central Slavonia and permit a faster penetration toward Zagreb and Varazdin." Army General Veljko Kadijevic, *Moje Vidjenje Raspada*, Belgrade: 1993, p. 138.

⁴⁹ *Zagreb Velebit* 7 February 1997, pp. 16-17.

⁵⁰ Mladic and a number of his brigade commanders were rewarded with promotions for their efforts.

⁵¹ Glenny, p. 133.

⁵² An August 1997 *Nasa Borba* article lists charges that senior JNA officers and Montenegrin officials had profited greatly from the plunder around Dubrovnik. Vladimir Jovanovic, "The Most Successful Mobilization With the Gusle," *Belgrade Nasa Borba* 12, 13 August 1997 (Internet version).

⁵³ Jokic also claimed that he established special commands to collect looted property for distribution to Serbian refugee groups, although he notes that the Federal Secretariat for National Defense did not set up the formal administration to carry this out until 15 December. By then, much of the booty from Konavli probably had already disappeared into the Montenegrin black market or peoples' homes. 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.

⁵⁴ Silber and Little, p. 184.

⁵⁵ Army General Veljko Kadijevic, *Moje Vidjenje Raspada*, Belgrade: 1993, p. 140.

⁵⁶ Glenny, p. 136.

⁵⁷ The following account draws heavily on Silber and Little's chapter on the peace negotiations, "Yugoslavia a la Carte," and Borisav Jovic's notes on the meetings of the Federal, Serbian, and Montenegrin leadership.

⁵⁸ Silber and Little, pp. 190-193.

⁵⁹ Jovic noted that on 18 October the Serbian leadership had analyzed Carrington's plan and found it unacceptable and "must be rejected" because it broke up Yugoslavia and split Serbs into several states. Jovic entry for 23 October 1991.

⁶⁰ Serbian opposition to the Carrington Plan was nearly upset when Montenegro seemed ready to accept it. Montenegrin President Momir Bulatovic stated openly at the conference that he supported the plan. After extremely strong pressure from the Serbian leadership to reverse their position, the Montenegrins joined the Serbians in submitting an amendment to the conference on 30 October, stating that the Federal Republic would continue to exist for those who wished to remain in a single state, thus undermining the Carrington Plan. The Montenegrins appear to have initially gone against the Serbian position because of anger that, from their perspective, the Serbian Government was not fully prosecuting the war and that Montenegro was carrying more of the war burden proportionally than Serbia was. The Montenegrins apparently believed that the SFRY should either declare full mobilization and destroy the Croatian Government or accept the peace deal. See Jovic entry for 23, 28, and 30 October 1991 and Silber and Little, pp. 194-196. Silber and Little also believe that Italian offers of aid money influenced the Montenegrin decision to support the plan.

⁶¹ Milosevic and Jovic had discussed their willingness to achieve a negotiated solution on 6 October, with Jovic stating that, "We cannot employ the war option to an extent that is not necessary and perish for something that we can achieve through negotiation." Jovic entry for 6 October 1991. See also the earlier section, "Mobilization and the Political-Military Conflict, September-December 1991" for a discussion of Serbian/federal war aims and political-military differences over the course of the war.

⁶² Jovic noted that the Serbs controlled most of the territory—except parts of Western Slavonia—in which they were a "majority," while greater Croatian mobilization and armament was leading to a larger commitment of the JNA and increasing JNA calls for full mobilization. Jovic indicated that an intensification of the fighting was "completely counterproductive to our policy." Jovic entry for 2 November 1991.

⁶³ Vance, US Secretary of State under President Carter, was appointed the UN Special Representative of the Secretary General on 8 October. Reuters 8 October 1991.

⁶⁴ Belgrade Tanjug 31 December 1991; Reuters 1 January 1992.

⁶⁵ Belgrade Tanjug 2 January 1992. European Community Monitoring Mission personnel had negotiated most of the previous cease-fires, which had not been linked to a peace plan. Most of these truces broke down almost immediately.

⁶⁶ A Belgrade Tanjug report from 2 January 1992 has a full readout of the plan.

⁶⁷ The RSK had been formed on 19 December with Babic as President through the merger of the three Serbian autonomous regions in Eastern Slavonia-Baranja-Western Srem, Western Slavonia, and Krajina.

⁶⁸ See Jovic entry for 2 and 7 February 1992 and Silber and Little, pp. 202-204.

⁶⁹ See Jovic discussion with Cedric Thornberry, UNPROFOR civil affairs chief, in late March 1992. Jovic entry for 24 March 1992.

⁷⁰ Reuters 8 March 1992.

⁷¹ The RSK Territorial Defense was redesignated the Krajina Serb Army (SVK) on 19 March 1992. Reuters 19 March 1992. Upon the withdrawal of the JNA from Bosnia and the formation of the Bosnian Serb Army, the remaining JNA units in UNPAs North and South also became part of the SVK.

Croatia 1990-91



Eastern Slavonia, near Vinkovci, November 1991. Yugoslav People's Army (JNA) officers, reservists, and volunteers possibly from the 3rd Guards Mechanized Brigade or the 130th Motorized Brigade.



JNA regular officer with reservists.



JNA reservists.



Two JNA volunteer soldiers from the Serbian Radical Party (SRS). An M-83 BOV-1 armored vehicle equipped with AT-3 antitank missiles is in the background.



Group of JNA officers.

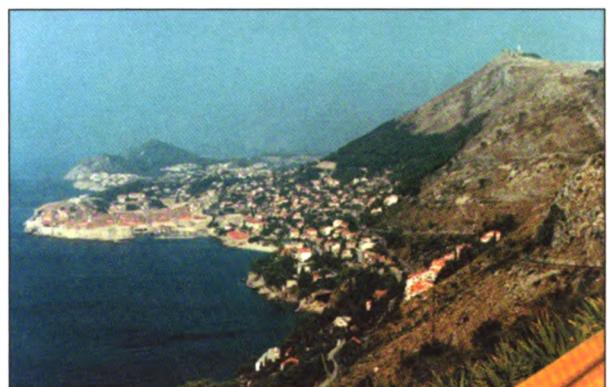
Croatia 1990-91



Wartime damage to Vukovar, as seen in 1992.



Zeljko Raznjatovic "Arkan," commander of the Serbian Volunteer Guard, "Tigers," late 1991.



Dubrovnik and the Dalmatian coast, as seen in 1993.

Section III

Bosnia 1991-1992: Yugoslavia's Time Bomb

Chapter 14

Bosnia: Yugoslavia's Time Bomb

Why should I be a minority in your state when you can be a minority in mine?

Macedonian President Kiro Gligorov¹

The Historical and Political Landscape

As fighting flared first in Slovenia, then raged across neighboring Croatia, Yugoslavia's central republic of Bosnia looked on nervously and waited for the worst.

The civil war that tore Bosnia apart in the spring of 1992 cannot be explained without an understanding of the historical events in the region up to that date. This is not to say that the war and the atrocities it spawned were the inevitable product of centuries of pent-up hatreds or that its participants were merely fated to act out roles dictated to them by history. Rather, it is to highlight the fact that the events that followed could not have taken place as they did (or at least not with the rapidity they did) without the historical background that led up to them. Before discussing the fire it is necessary to look at the flammables and the kindling: the Bosnian setting that placed a variety of nationalities within a single border and the catalog of real or imagined grievances each group had against the other.

Bosnia-Herzegovina, as the name implies, consists of two contiguous regions. "Bosnia" comprises roughly four-fifths of the modern nation of Bosnia-Herzegovina, excluding roughly the southernmost 20 percent of the country. "Herzegovina" is the remainder.² Bosnia had a brief period of independent nationhood in the middle ages, stretching, with some interruptions, from the reign of Ban Kulin in 1180 up through the conquest of the country by the Ottoman Sultan Mehmet II in 1463. Bosnia spent most of its modern history as an occupied province—first under the Ottoman Empire,

then under the Austro-Hungarians—with a unique cultural identity, but not a fully independent history. Croat-dominated Herzegovina, by contrast, has had a distinct history from most of Bosnia and thus retains a different population and attitude.

After the Congress of Berlin in 1878, administrative control over Bosnia was transferred to the Austro-Hungarians, although the province technically remained part of the Ottoman Empire. This awkward decision was to prove problematic for everyone involved. The transfer was pushed through over the objections of the Ottomans, who had just been defeated by the Russians and were forced to accept a de facto ceding of their territory. The Austro-Hungarians not only gained control over a strategic territory but also over roughly a million new Slavic subjects who were by no means overjoyed about rule by the Dual Monarchy. (When the Austrians occupied the country in 1878, the Bosnian population mounted a brief but violent revolt that lasted three months and claimed several thousand lives.) In particular, the ethnic Serbs of the region were infuriated by the "loss" of Bosnian territory to the Austro-Hungarians, especially after the formal transfer of the territory in 1909. This outrage was rapidly translated into the formation of two underground societies dedicated to pan-Serb unification: the "National Defense" (*Narodna Odbrana*) and the more famous "Unification or Death," better known as "The Black Hand" (*Ujedinjenje ili Smrt* or *Crna Ruka*, respectively). By the summer of 1914, relations between Austria-Hungary and Serbia had grown especially strained, and Serb separatists within Bosnia had been pinioned by a series of harsh legal measures.

It was at this crucial moment that the Archduke Franz Ferdinand—heir to the Habsburg throne and Inspector General of the Armed Forces of the Austro-Hungarian empire—made a decision that would change the

course of history. In a display of truly phenomenal bad judgment, he decided to visit the Bosnian capital of Sarajevo on 28 June 1914—the anniversary of the Serb defeat at the epic Battle of Kosovo Polje in 1389—and to publish the itinerary of his vehicle convoy in the newspaper the day before. No fewer than six Serb assassins lurked in the crowds, but only one acted, throwing a bomb that bounced off the Archduke's car and wounded passengers in the vehicle behind. Franz Ferdinand then diverted from the published convoy route in order to visit the injured officers in the hospital, and, with singularly bad luck, as his car reversed direction, it pulled in front of yet another Serb nationalist assassin, Gavrilo Princip. Princip took aim and fired the first shots of World War I, killing both the Archduke and his wife, the Duchess of Hohenberg. Austria-Hungary issued an ultimatum to Serbia, and exactly a month later the two states went to war. Within days the rest of Europe had lined up behind the adversaries, and the First World War had begun.

Although the imperial Austro-Hungarian Army expected a quick victory, the ill-equipped Serbian forces put up a heroic resistance—twice repulsing Austrian attacks in 1914 before conducting a legendary winter retreat in 1915. Both sides suffered massive casualties. The Serbs eventually joined with the advancing forces of the Allied armies that moved north from Salonica, emerging on the winning side at the war's end. Bosnia, where the war had started, was amalgamated into the “Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes,” which was carved out of part of the Austro-Hungarian empire and most of prewar Serbia and Montenegro. (Later the name was simplified and shortened to Yugoslavia, “Land of the South Slavs.”) But the ill-fated country's independence was to prove short lived. Hitler's Wehrmacht invaded on 6 April 1941, assisted by Italian, Hungarian, and Bulgarian forces approaching from all directions. Resistance crumpled as the Yugoslav Army dissolved, and the German Army captured the entire country in 11 days with the astonishingly low casualty list of 151 fatalities.³⁴⁵

During the Second World War, Bosnia was to become the ugliest and bloodiest battleground of a very ugly, bloody, and multisided war within Yugoslavia. As resistance to the German-Italian occupation degenerated into a Yugoslav Civil War, a bewildering series of

shifting alliances, interfactional rivalries, and military campaigns began. On the one side were German and Italian military forces, supported by their Croatian and Bosnian auxiliaries. On the other side were the two main resistance movements, the “Chetniks” (headed by a former Yugoslav Army Colonel, Draza Mihailovic) and the “Partisans” (headed by the leader of the previously outlawed Yugoslav Communist Party, Josip Broz Tito).⁶ Though both resistance groups sought a united, independent Yugoslavia, they had mutually exclusive political objectives. Mihailovic's Chetniks were Royalist and favored the prewar political order, while Tito's Partisans were Soviet-leaning Communists who wanted to assume control of an entirely new political structure after the Germans were expelled from Yugoslavia.

Chetnik and Partisan forces at first maintained a loose alliance against the Nazi occupiers, but this soon broke up into open warfare between the two factions. In their campaigns against each other, both Chetniks and Partisans (the Chetniks more frequently) made local alliances or accommodations at different times with the Germans and Italians. The situation was further muddied after the Italians capitulated in September 1943, leaving most of their equipment to be captured by Tito's Partisans. The British and Americans—through the British Special Operations Executive (SOE) and the American Office of Strategic Services (OSS)—initially backed Mihailovic's Chetniks with arms and supplies but later switched their support to the Partisans in mid-1943. Brigadier Fitzroy Maclean, the British SOE representative at Tito's headquarters, explained Churchill's decision to support Tito's Partisans despite Tito's leftist political orientation and the likelihood of his leading a Communist postwar Yugoslavia:

“Do you intend,” he [Churchill] asked, “to make Yugoslavia your home after the war?”

“No, sir,” I replied.

“Neither do I,” he said. “And, that being so, the less you and I worry about the form of government they set up, the better. That is for them to decide. What interests me is, which of them [Partisans or Chetniks] is doing most harm to the Germans?”⁷

The casualties in Bosnia reflected the violence of an internecine and most uncivil war. An estimated 1.7 million Yugoslavs were killed during the conflict—about 1 million of these by other Yugoslavs. These deaths represented no less than 11 percent of the pre-war population, giving Yugoslavia the second-highest mortality rate (after Poland) of any country in World War II.⁸ Although the Bosnian Muslims suffered, by a slight margin, the highest percentage casualties of any Yugoslav ethnic group in Bosnia (8.1 percent killed), the Bosnian Serbs also suffered egregiously at the hands of the German and Croat occupying forces (some 7.3 percent). Many Serb civilians were massacred in reprisals for operations by the Serbian Chetniks and Serb-led Partisans (indeed, reprisals were an *aim* of many of Tito's Partisan operations, in order to inflame the population and produce more supporters for the revolution). These wartime pogroms left the Serbs a minority population in postwar Bosnia. (A contributing factor was that the Muslims had the highest birthrate of the ethnic groups in Bosnia.)

When at last the world war and the civil war ended, Bosnia-Herzegovina became one of the six constituent republics of Tito's new Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY), with essentially the same borders it had as a province of the Ottoman Empire.

Bosnia's checkered history produced a similarly checkered ethnic distribution across the republic. At the outset of the war, Bosnia was an ethnic collage within Yugoslavia's larger collage. Scattered, mixed, and intermingled within its borders were three ethnic groups—Serbs, Croats, and Muslims. Republic-wide, Muslims were a plurality but not a majority, with approximately 43 percent of the population. Bosnian Serbs were the second-most-numerous ethnic group, with about 32 percent, while the ethnic Croats made up the remainder, with some 17 percent of the population.⁹ The Serbs, who tended to be rural, occupied a somewhat disproportionate percentage of the land area of Bosnia. One of the three ethnic groups usually predominated in any given area, but in most places there was at least some ethnic commingling at some level of dispersion. Before the war there were places in Bosnia where one could, for instance, find a Serb-majority street within a Croat-majority town in a Muslim-majority *opština* (county or municipality).

Although the Bosnian Serb population was in general agreement regarding national aims and objectives, they were not a completely uniform population either culturally or philosophically. Bosnia's Serb population did share a common Orthodox religion and a historical legacy of persecution under first the Ottomans and then the Nazi-allied Croatian *Ustashe*, which in large measure gave the Bosnian Serbs a collective "martyr complex." There was a cultural divide, however, between the mostly rural Serbs and their rarer urban cousins—the latter exemplified by the cosmopolitan Serbs of Sarajevo. The Serbs of west Bosnia and those of east Bosnia also frequently varied in their political views and objectives.¹⁰

The Bosnian Croat population was no longer homogeneous. Most notably, there was a difference in character and political attitudes between the Croats of western Herzegovina and those scattered across the rest of Bosnia. The Herzegovinian Croats were historically more rural and usually more extreme in their political views. As one Serb saying put it, "nothing grows in western Herzegovina except rocks, snakes, and *Ustashe*."¹¹ By contrast, the Croats of northern and central Bosnia—more numerous, though occupying less land area than the Herzegovinian Croats—tended to be more politically moderate and multiethnically inclined. The more outspoken Herzegovinian Croats, however, played a disproportionately large role in Bosnian and even Croatian politics, and they usually held the tiller as the Bosnian Croat community decided which direction it would move in.

In contrast to the other two ethnic groups, the Bosnian Muslims were a "nationality" with no nation. This was their central, underlying dilemma. The ethnic Croats had their "homeland" republic of Croatia. The ethnic Serbs had the literal republic of Serbia and the conceptual homeland of "Greater Serbia." Though more numerous, the Muslims of Bosnia lacked a similar geographic or cultural center of gravity. Indeed, the Muslims were defined more by what they were *not*—neither Croat nor Serb, not Catholic or Orthodox—than by what they *were*. Visually indistinguishable from the Serbs and Croats, the Muslims lacked even

an ethnic term to distinguish themselves. By default, “Muslim” became their cultural descriptor rather than a religious one. By the 20th century the great majority of Bosnian “Muslims” had become secular: most drank alcohol and had a limited knowledge of the Koran and its principles. The dilemma of Muslim identity—was it a religious, ethnic, or cultural descriptor?—was reflected in the debate over whether the Muslims were an ethnic “nation” within the Yugoslav system. As a result, the term “Muslim, in the sense of a nation,” did not appear on the Yugoslav census form until 1971—and only after years of debate.¹² The 1974 Constitution finally granted the Muslims (the third-largest ethnic group in Yugoslavia, after the Serbs and Croats) the status of a separate nationality, equivalent to the Serbs and Croats.

In Bosnia the three ethnic groups had coexisted for decades, and city dwellers frequently intermarried. Yet even here the SFRY’s high-minded and politically desirable policies of multiracial national unity had failed to eliminate ethnic differences or competing interests among the three Bosnian groups. These differences alone, however, were hardly deep or sharp enough to spontaneously ignite a civil war lasting several years and costing perhaps 200,000 lives. As was the case in Yugoslavia as a whole, it took a combination of ambitious political leaders, extremist ethnic chauvinists, and carefully constructed media campaigns aimed at generating popular hysteria to finally set neighbor against neighbor. Here again it was the post-Communist rise of ethnic nationalism that ruptured the delicate relations within Bosnia and set the stage for war.

Chapter 15 Political Developments Along the Road to War, 1990-1992

A house divided against itself cannot stand.

—Abraham Lincoln, 1858¹³

If a Bosnia populated by three increasingly nationalistic ethnic groups was a powder keg, it was the formation of ethnically based political parties that provided a slow fuse. The organization of the Muslim-based Party for Democratic Action (*Stranka Demokratske*

Akcije—SDA) came first, on 26 May 1990. Alija Izetbegovic (a soft-spoken intellectual who had been jailed after a highly publicized trial in 1983 for allegedly conspiring to overthrow the Socialist government and establish a Muslim state in Bosnia) became the SDA’s first party leader. The Bosnian Serbs formed their own Serbian Democratic Party (*Srpska Demokratska Stranka*—SDS)—technically and actually an offshoot of the Krajina Serb SDS party in Knin—two months later on 12 July 1990. The Croatian Democratic Union (*Hrvatska Demokratska Zajednica*—HDZ), a self-professed branch of Franjo Tuđman’s ethnically based party of the same name in Croatia, followed suit shortly thereafter on 18 August 1990.

The first free multiparty elections in Bosnia were held in November 1990, confirming the political dimension of the ethnic fault lines dividing the republic. Nearly 90 percent of the parliamentary seats went to representatives of the three ethnic nationalist parties, with the distribution of seats closely mirroring the republic’s ethnic percentages. The Muslim-based SDA won 86 of the 240 seats in the National Assembly, the Serb SDS party won 71 seats, and the Bosnian Croat HDZ won 44 seats. In a smaller version of the Yugoslav presidency, the newly elected Bosnian parliament established a coalition government with power-sharing arrangements among a mix of representatives from each ethnic group.¹⁴ Alija Izetbegovic, one of the SDA candidates, became President of the Republic.¹⁵¹⁶ The Bosnian Serb, Momčilo Krajišnik, was appointed Assembly Speaker. A Bosnian Croat, Jure Pelivan, was named Prime Minister.

At the time, the three parties agreed to accept a consensus system whereby all must agree to a legislative change before it could pass; any one of the three ethnic groups could block a proposed item of legislation, with the views of each “nation” counting equally regardless of its relative population. If or when this system failed, not only the republic’s government but the republic itself would break down. Unfortunately, 1990 and 1991 were not years in which broadminded, consensus-oriented ethnic leaders thrived, and the coalition would last barely a year.¹⁷

The three main political parties were at this point explicitly looking out for the interests of their own ethnic groups rather than the interests of Bosnia-Herzegovina as a whole. Moreover, each group believed its interests were threatened by—and directly at odds with—the other ethnic groups. The Bosnian Croats—especially those of western Herzegovina—had little interest in Bosnia per se and instead aspired to a political and economic merger with Croatia. The Bosnian Serbs likewise wanted affiliation with neighboring Serbia or at most an autonomous status within Bosnia as part of a rump Yugoslavia. Most Bosnian Serbs genuinely and rightfully feared any political change that would leave them outvoted by a Muslim-Croat coalition and subjected to a tyranny of the majority.

The Bosnian Serbs Move Toward Autonomy

While the Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina moved slowly away from Federal Yugoslavia, the ethnic Serbs within Bosnia were moving, perhaps a little faster, to leave the Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina. By the latter half of 1991 the independence-minded Bosnian Serbs were beginning to play out their hand in the same manner as their Croatian kin. Radovan Karadzic's SDS leadership began by declaring Serb-majority chunks of Bosnia as "Serb Autonomous Regions" exactly analogous to the SAO's over the border in Croatia. By late September 1991, there were four of these self-proclaimed regions in Bosnia: the "Serbian Autonomous Region East and Old Herzegovina" (declared on 12 September); the "Autonomous Region [Bosnian] Krajina" (declared on 16 September); the "Serbian Autonomous Region Romanija" (declared on 17 September); and the "Serbian Autonomous Region Northeast Bosnia." (declared on 19 September).¹⁸

These four regions together included almost one-third of Bosnia-Herzegovina's municipalities, with some 20 percent of its total population and about 45 percent of its ethnic Serbs. All of the "autonomous regions" asserted that they were constituents of a Federal Yugoslavia first and members of a "federalized" Bosnia-Herzegovina only second—so long as the republic remained a nonsovereign constituent of

Federal Yugoslavia. The Bosnian SAO's presented their proclamations to the republic assembly as established facts and vowed to secede if the republic refused to recognize their autonomy.

In mid-October 1991 the Bosnian Serbs found the occasion to pull the rug out from under the three-party coalition, which had held together only since the previous November. On 14 October the Muslim SDA and the Croat HDZ jointly proposed a parliamentary resolution in favor of sovereignty for the republic. The debate became supercharged and ran late into the night. SDS leader Karadzic reacted with rhetoric that may have seemed exaggerated at the time but in the end proved no more than prophetic. Addressing the assembly, he threatened the Muslims in the starker terms yet heard:

You want to take Bosnia-Herzegovina down the same highway of hell and suffering that Slovenia and Croatia are travelling. Do not think that you will not lead Bosnia-Herzegovina into hell, and do not think that you will not perhaps make the Muslim people disappear, because the Muslims cannot defend themselves if there is war . . .¹⁹

At two o'clock in the morning of 15 October 1991, Assembly Speaker Krajsnik led his ethnic Serb members out of the hall. The remainder of the parliament—now virtually all SDA and HDZ members—was thus able to adopt the motion on sovereignty, more as an expression of intention than an act of policy. On 24 October the Bosnian Serbs separately announced the formation within Bosnia of a "Serbian Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina" that would have its own constitution and parliamentary assembly, whose laws would take precedence over those of the Bosnian Republic. Then, on 9–10 November, the Bosnian Serbs held a referendum of their own, in which they chose to remain within Federal Yugoslavia.^{20 21}

On 9 January 1992, SDS leader Radovan Karadzic went further and publicly proclaimed a fully independent "Republic of the Serbian People in Bosnia-Herzegovina," which quickly became known by the

earlier title of “Serbian Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina” (SRBH). The previously proclaimed Serbian autonomous regions in Bosnia were incorporated into the new entity and specifically excluded from the authority of the Bosnian Government and President Izetbegovic. The Serbs underwrote their proclamation with the adoption of a constitution drafted unilaterally and without reference to the Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina Constitution.

With less than one-third of their parent republic’s population Bosnia’s Serbs nevertheless claimed almost two-thirds of Bosnia’s territory, including “historically Serb” areas where they were in the minority. They also declared that all taxes and customs revenues collected within their self-proclaimed republic would be withheld from Bosnia’s central government. Bosnia—not yet independent itself—was already riven by secession.

The Republic-Wide Sovereignty Referendum

If Bosnia was a figurative powder keg and ethnically based political representation was the fuse, then it was the European Community–sponsored referendum on independence that actually lit the fuse. In October 1991, at The Hague peace conference on Yugoslavia, the EC representatives had made a simultaneous but conditional offer of recognition to all of the Yugoslav republics, stating that any republic desiring recognition as an independent country would have to apply formally by December 1991. This was promptly modified in January 1992 by the Badinter Arbitration Commission associated with the peace conference, which offered recognition only if each republic had first ratified its independence with a popular referendum.

When the Republics of Slovenia and Croatia accepted the EC conditions, first holding popular referendums and then issuing declarations of independence, they crowded Bosnia into a trap that was sprung by the EC’s formal recognition of Slovenia and Croatia as fully independent states. If Bosnia now remained part of the dissolving Yugoslavia, it would become even more overwhelmingly dominated by Serbs; but if it declared its own independence, it would step over a cliff and into almost certain civil war. Izetbegovic was trapped both politically and physically between

Croatia and Serbia. As he put it, choosing between Tudjman and Milosevic was like choosing between leukemia and a brain tumor.²² In October 1991, Izetbegovic had publicly declared Bosnia’s neutrality regarding the conflict in neighboring Croatia, a fence-sitting statement that accomplished nothing other than antagonizing the radical Serbs within Bosnia.²³ After two months of fruitless temporizing, on 24 December the Bosnian Presidency followed the republic governments of Slovenia, Croatia, and Macedonia in formally requesting diplomatic recognition from the European Community.²⁴ The Badinter Commission duly concluded that Bosnia met the criterion for EC recognition provided it held a republic-wide referendum on independence to confirm that a majority of its people favored secession from Yugoslavia.

The referendum process, and the explicit debate on sovereignty it generated, burned away the last fragile bonds of Bosnia’s coalition government and touched off the process that would set the republic aflame. In February 1992 the Croat-Muslim parliamentary coalition voted for independence with a solid majority; the Serb assembly representatives simply refused to vote rather than participate in a process in which they knew they would be the losers.

The republic-wide referendum on independence demanded by the EC’s Badinter Commission followed on 29 February–1 March. The results were unambiguous, both in what was recorded and what was not. Among Bosnia’s Muslims and Croats—some 64 percent of the population—an overwhelming majority (99.7 percent) voted for independence. Bosnia’s Serbs, the remainder of the population, acted in almost complete unison to observe the boycott initiated by the SDS. Virtually no Serbs voted, and those who did resided mostly in the cities.²⁵

When the referendum results were announced on 3 March, the Serb reaction was immediate and predictable. Radovan Karadzic, still only the Serbian Democratic Party leader and at the time holding no public office, announced categorically, “We are not going to accept an independent state of Bosnia-Herzegovina.”

Within a day of the referendum announcement, the first barricades began to go up in Sarajevo—an ominous precursor of the battlelines that would later snake through the republic's capital. On the cold night of 3 March, small gangs of armed Serbs began to travel about the city, threatening violence if the referendum should actually be implemented. With preternatural organization they began blockading streets with trucks, buses, and cars and barricading all routes out of the city center. The Muslims responded with armed groups of their own that set up counterbarricades from within the city. Occasional clashes between the two groups left four dead by morning.

For a brief moment it looked as if open warfare was about to begin. The following day, however, the predominantly Muslim Sarajevo police force began to dismantle the barricades, and within a few days order had been restored. Why the Serbs backed off from their anti-independence ultimatums remains unclear. Izetbegovic had the shortest, simplest explanation. "It seems," he said later, "that they were not quite ready for war."²⁶

War had not come, but after the referendum and the Sarajevo barricades it became almost unavoidably clear that war would come sooner or later. It was in this environment of fear, dread, and mutual suspicion that neighbor began arming against neighbor. Civil war was all but inevitable—a question not of whether war would start, but when and how.

The Shaping of the JNA's View of Bosnia-Herzegovina

The histories of Bosnia-Herzegovina and the Yugoslav People's Army (JNA) were inextricably intertwined, from the JNA's formation in Bosnia during the Second World War until the Army's demise in 1991 and 1992, when Bosnia seceded and Yugoslavia fell apart. The JNA had been forged in the cauldron of World War II Bosnia, where the JNA's lineal predecessors, Tito's Partisans, fought their most vicious battles with German, Italian, and Croatian forces. After the war, Yugoslavia reshaped its national defense doctrine into a formula for a new partisan war if the country

should be invaded. Belgrade looked again to the mountain republic as the first and last redoubt of a defensive guerrilla war, and the JNA not only built up an elaborate military infrastructure within Bosnia but also moved key portions of the Yugoslav arms industry to the republic.²⁷

The JNA forces in Bosnia initially played little role in the sovereignty debates that raged between the Federal Government and Serbia on the one hand and Croatia and Slovenia on the other. The JNA's primary concern in Bosnia, as in the other two republics, was to deter separatist activities from becoming military insurrections. In May 1990, simultaneously with the seizure of the weapons in Slovenia and Croatia, the JNA impounded or confiscated the arms allotted to the Bosnian Republic's Territorial Defense (TO) forces.

What shaped and molded the JNA's view of Bosnia was the war in Croatia. As clashes escalated in Croatia during the summer of 1991, the JNA became more deeply involved in "peacekeeping" operations to separate Serbs and Croats. Most Croatians and other non-Serbs throughout Yugoslavia, however, saw these actions by the JNA as more and more directly backing the Croatian Serb separatists. Muslim and Croat members of the Bosnian Government, including President Izetbegovic, feared that the JNA's Bosnian conscripts would be used to fire on fellow Yugoslavs in pursuit of pro-Serb policies. These objections prompted many Bosnian Muslims and Croats to ignore their callup orders during the first phase of the JNA's mobilization for its strategic offensive in the summer of 1991. As the fighting in Croatia grew more intense and one sided, in late August the Bosnian Government announced its refusal to send any new conscripts to the Army.²⁸

The JNA's mobilization to implement its strategic offensive in Croatia in response to the Croatians' attack on the JNA barracks in September 1991 was the key event that began the final split between the Bosnian Government—particularly the Muslims—

from the JNA.³⁰ The strategic offensive forced the Bosnians to choose sides: the Bosnian Serbs sided with Belgrade and the JNA, believing that the Army was protecting fellow Serbs and would protect them too if necessary, whereas Bosnia's Muslims and Croats sided with Zagreb.

The JNA attack required two things from Bosnia: the use of its territory as a base of operations and the mobilization of its reservists to fill out formations required for key aspects of the attack. Both of these were anathema to Izetbegovic and the Muslim and Croat leaders. They believed in what they perceived to be Serb-dominated efforts to forcibly keep republics in Yugoslavia was morally objectionable, as well as detrimental to Bosnia's own interest in loosening its ties to the federal state. Muslim and Croat leaders therefore encouraged reservists to refuse to respond to the mobilization, and most of these reservists followed their guidance. The leadership formally protested to Belgrade the deployment to Herzegovina of thousands of Montenegrin reservists, who they thought were being used to intimidate Muslims and Croats and support Bosnian Serb separatism.³¹ The Montenegrins had actually been moved to Bosnia to position themselves for an offensive into southern Croatia, but their obstreperous behavior frightened many Bosnian Muslims and Croats. The Bosnian Government had little legal justification and less power to stop the JNA from using Bosnian territory for its military operations against Croatia, but the JNA buildup in Bosnia during the fall of 1991, as units redeployed from Croatia or new units arrived from Serbia, inspired new fears that Belgrade would use the JNA to forcibly keep Bosnia in the Yugoslav Federation.

Bosnia's Muslims and Croats also began to covertly devise ways to form and arm military units that could defend the republic against Serb separatists or federal actions to thwart their desires for sovereignty.³² The JNA attack on Croatia spurred both groups, usually acting separately rather than in harmony, to develop formations that could combine with the existing Ministry of Internal Affairs (MUP) and Republican Territorial Defense forces to put up some kind of defense

against the Serbs or even the JNA. Meanwhile, Bosnian Croats were crossing the border to serve in the nascent Croatian armed forces then battling the JNA, playing a prominent role in many elite Croatian units.³³ (See following chapters for details on the arming of the Bosnian Muslims and Croats).

With the Muslims and Croats refusing to respond to the JNA mobilization order in Bosnia, while the Bosnian Serbs were working hand-in-glove with the Army, disputes over the future of Bosnia and its adherence to Yugoslavia grew hotter. The Bosnian Serbs were almost devout in their allegiance to a Federal Yugoslavia that fully and firmly incorporated their own republic. They viewed the JNA's defense of the Serb population within Croatia as a moral obligation that also served their own interests in preserving their position within a Federal Yugoslavia.³⁴ The Bosnian Serbs regarded Muslim and Croat refusals to support the offensive against Croatian secession as another clear indicator of their own intentions to secede, and the Serb leaders stepped up their preparations to leave Bosnia if that occurred.

Bosnian opposition to the JNA's war in Croatia, and particularly the refusal of Muslims and Croats to take their assigned places in JNA units, caused real problems for the Army and affected the thinking of most Serb and Montenegrin officers in negative ways. First, the limited response to mobilization among Bosnian Muslims and Croats badly undercut the strategic offensive. Two full JNA corps in Tuzla and Sarajevo were unable to take part in the offensive because there were not enough reservists to fill out their formations. Concern over antiwar sentiment in the area near Mostar—especially among Croats—prompted the retention of almost an entire Serbian JNA corps in the Mostar region to guard JNA facilities. When some formations of the corps in Banja Luka were forced to deploy at half strength,³⁵ the corps commander there illegally ordered the mobilization of the Banja Luka Territorial Defense District over Izetbegovic's express disapproval.³⁶ More ominously, the JNA, as it had elsewhere, was recruiting almost exclusively Serb volunteer units—often organized by local SDS party

³⁰ For a detailed discussion of the war in Croatia, including the JNA strategic offensive planning, mobilization problems, and the use of volunteer units, see the previous section, "Croatia 1990-1991."

leaders—to expand its manpower. By these actions it armed some of the most radical elements in the Bosnian Serb population.

Psychologically, the Army viewed Muslim and Croat refusals to cooperate (as well as their creation of “paramilitary” forces and service by some against the JNA in Croatia) as yet another act of betrayal, pushing the Serb and Montenegrin members of the officer corps even closer to the Serb nationalists. At the same time, the JNA’s multiethnic character was diminishing as non-Serbs deserted or refused to mobilize, making the Army more and more a Serbian force. The adjustments this forced on the JNA commanders made them more susceptible to the demands of Milosevic and his allies that the Army give up all efforts to preserve its vision of a Yugoslav state.³⁵

The failure of the JNA’s strategic offensive in Croatia and the Army’s final acceptance of Serbian President Milosevic’s war aims in November were the final steps in the JNA’s diminution to a force that would fight almost exclusively for Serbs rather than a multi-ethnic Yugoslavia. By November-December 1991, the Army believed that Croatia and the Bosnian Muslims and Croats were not only opposed to the JNA but that moves toward independence in Croatia and Bosnia threatened the Croatian and Bosnian Serbs’ political future and represented a physical threat to the Serb population’s existence.³⁶ Under Milosevic’s influence, the Serbianized JNA now viewed itself as the only guarantor of the safety of Serbs everywhere.³⁷ The results for Bosnia were to be dire indeed.

Chapter 16 **Serbia, the JNA, and the Bosnian Serbs:** **January 1990–April 1992**

Simultaneously with its program to organize and arm the Croatian Serbs, the Serbian State Security Service (*Sluzba Drzavne Bezbednosti*—SDB) also undertook a less ambitious project of providing arms and assistance to the Serbian Democratic Party (SDS) in Bosnia.³⁸ By the beginning of 1992 the JNA superseded the SDB as the primary weapons supplier to the Bosnian Serbs. As had happened elsewhere, the JNA was being sucked into the witches’ brew of the

Bosnian conflict as it began to bubble. Not only did the Army supply arms to nascent separatist Bosnian Serb police and military structures but it also directly assumed the role of Serb protector throughout Bosnia. More subtly, on orders from Serbian President Milosevic the JNA proceeded to alter the ethnic balance of its forces in Bosnia so that they could be converted rapidly into a Bosnian Serb army in the event of international recognition of an independent Bosnian republic—which the Bosnian Serbs regarded as a *casus belli*. As a result, when recognition actually came in April 1992, the Bosnian Serbs and their JNA allies were prepared to strike at anyone who stood in the way of Bosnian Serb secession from the prewar Bosnian Republic. It was a position Milosevic had been working toward for at least two years.

Serbia Assists the Bosnian Serbs, 1990-1992

As the Serbian Government under President Milosevic undertook its program to assist the Croatian Serb leadership politically and militarily during the late 1980s and into 1990, it conducted a parallel program to cultivate and support Bosnian Serb political leaders and provide them with weapons.* The same key political and intelligence personalities and institutions that ran the Croatian Serb operation, led by the Serbian State Security Service of the Serbian MUP, served as the overseers and conduits for the aid to the Bosnian Serbs. It is worth repeating part of Radmilo Bogdanovic’s statement—mentioned earlier in conjunction with Croatia—in which the former Serbian Internal Affairs Minister indicates that the SDB provided assistance to both the Croatian and the Bosnian Serbs:

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

* For a detailed account of Serbia’s covert operation to support the Croatian Serbs, see the previous Croatian War section, and particularly Annex I in Volume II.

*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.*³⁹

Details of the Serbian assistance are few, but it appears to have consisted of a combination of organizational support (and probably funds) for the SDS and some weapons for select SDS supporters. Politically, the senior Serbian leadership, including Milosevic, were conferring with Karadzic at least as early as mid-1991, and support to or organization of the SDS probably dates to 1990 or earlier.⁴⁰ The SDB appears to have distributed weapons to small, select groups—almost certainly SDS supporters—beginning in 1990 and continuing into possibly September 1991. For example, the Bosnian Government acquired documentation showing the distribution of M-48 bolt action World War II-era rifles, as well as other weapons, to 35 Serbs in the Foca area. These weapons almost certainly were provided by the SDB from Serbian MUP or Serbian TO stocks.⁴¹ The SDB probably distributed no more than 3,000 such weapons in platoon-sized batches of 30 or so to groups likely centered on the local SDS municipality board in most of Bosnia's municipalities.⁴² There may have been a surge in these SDB deliveries late in 1991, but they would soon be eclipsed by shipments from the JNA.

In addition to its support for the SDS, the SDB covertly worked inside Bosnia—as it did in Croatia—to link Serb members of the MUP so that one day they could rapidly form a separate Bosnian Serb police force. Given clear indications that then SDB Deputy Chief Jovica Stanisic and his subordinates helped create the Bosnian Serb MUP when it came into being in the spring of 1992 and the rapidity with which the changeover took place, the SDB almost certainly had laid plans for such a move at least as early as 1991.*⁴³

The JNA: Defender of Serbs

As the Croatian war dragged to a finish during November and December 1991, the JNA had become more and more committed to shifting its loyalties

* See Annex 22 for a detailed description of the Bosnian Serb MUP's formation.

from the old Yugoslav Communist state to a new Serb-dominated Yugoslavia. In such a state, the Army believed, its primary mission was the defense of Serbs, not the preservation of multiethnicity. As a result, from January through April 1992, the JNA in Bosnia had two priorities. The first was to work with and support a peaceful settlement of the political differences among the three ethnic groups. The second, and more important, was to see that the Bosnian Serbs and their position in the republic were secure.

The Army's first step to ensure that the Bosnian Serbs would be protected in the event of Bosnia's breakup came in late 1991 at the behest of the Serbian leadership. Serbian President Milosevic and Serbian Federal Presidency member Borisav Jovic concluded early in December 1991 that international recognition of Bosnia would follow soon after that of Croatia and Slovenia, placing unbearable pressure on Belgrade to withdraw the JNA from the republic. As Jovic notes:

*When Bosnia and Herzegovina are recognized internationally, the JNA will be declared a foreign army and its withdrawal will be demanded, which is impossible to avoid. In that situation, the Serb populace . . . will be left defenseless . . . Sloba feels that we must withdraw all citizens of Serbia and Montenegro from the JNA in Bosnia and Herzegovina in a timely fashion and transfer citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina to the JNA there in order to avoid general military chaos upon international recognition . . . That will also create the possibility for the Serb leadership in Bosnia and Herzegovina to assume command over the Serb part of the JNA.*⁴⁴

Shortly thereafter, Milosevic began secretly engineering the transfer of Bosnian-born JNA officers, the majority of whom were ethnic Serbs, back to their home republic.⁴⁵ Federal Defense Secretary General Kadijevic—who two months earlier probably would have turned down such a request—accepted Jovic's order and reported on 25 December that it had been carried out. This was a naked attempt to position the JNA to serve as an ethnic Serb military force within Bosnia if and when independence came. It was also a direct contradiction of the JNA's policy on the distribution of soldiers from a given republic—one of the

central issues over which Slovenia had gone to war in June 1991. As Jovic explains it:

*Milosevic and I were talking about it. We did not talk to anybody else. We instructed the General Staff to redeploy troops and transfer all those born in Bosnia to Bosnia and withdraw those born in Serbia and Montenegro to Serbia and Montenegro . . . [By the time of recognition] out of 90,000 troops in Bosnia, I think, 85 percent of them were from Bosnia.*⁴⁶⁴⁷

By this time, too, the JNA had begun to fully articulate its dual-track policy for Bosnia of working for peace between all three ethnic groups but preparing for war in support of the Serbs. A 20 March assessment of the Bosnian situation from General Kukanjac, the senior JNA commander in the republic, to the JNA General Staff clearly outlines his command's distaste for an interethnic war but notes that "the Serb people is objectively in danger, and we are therefore protecting their interests."⁴⁸

The JNA had already begun, however, to make thorough preparations for a war to "defend" the Serbs. The Army took a liberal view of the formation of Serb volunteer units within the JNA and the provision of weapons to Bosnian Serb Territorial Defense and police formations, while working to relocate JNA units, depots, and military industries away from predominantly Muslim and Croat areas. JNA actions to support local and regional Bosnian Serb police and military elements appear to date from 30 December 1991 when the JNA General Staff issued an order, which, in context, appears to have authorized JNA military assistance to such authorities. Muslim researcher Dr. Smail Cekic notes that,

*In conformity with the orders of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of the SFRY, in particular the order of 30 December 1991, and instructions of the Federal Secretariat of National Defense (especially those of 21 February . . .), JNA supplied arms and equipment for Serb armed units of the Territorial Defense and Police, as well as for other Serb "volunteer" units . . .*⁴⁹

Meanwhile, by late March, as the situation in Bosnia continued to degenerate, the JNA concluded that it needed to hasten the redistribution of its forces from Muslim and Croat areas within Bosnia to "safe," Serb-controlled territory. On 3 April, just before the outbreak of hostilities, Acting Federal Defense Secretary General Adzic issued an order to General Kukanjac and the Second Military District (as well as presumably Fourth Military District elements in Herzegovina) to "hasten the withdrawal." Moreover, the JNA was not only pulling out its units but was also withdrawing all Bosnian TO weapons, military-industrial facilities, and, in some ways more important, all ammunition and fuel stocks.⁵⁰

Organization of JNA and Serb Military and Police Forces, April 1992^{*}

As a result of the SDB and JNA preparations, at the outbreak of fighting in April 1992, federal and Serb forces in Bosnia consisted of four types of armed formations: the regular Yugoslav People's Army, volunteer units raised by the JNA, municipal Bosnian Serb Territorial Defense (TO) detachments, and Bosnian Serb Ministry of Internal Affairs police forces.

With the conclusion of the Slovenian war and the agreed-upon withdrawal of all JNA forces from Croatia, a tremendous amount of military equipment had been withdrawn into Bosnia-Herzegovina by the beginning of 1992. (This was, of course, in addition to the disproportionate fraction of Yugoslav military units and defense industries that were already concentrated in the nation's central republic.) As a result, the republic was a veritable arsenal on the eve of war. After giving up the war in Croatia, the JNA had reorganized its forces in western Croatia and Bosnia, redistributing units and equipment withdrawn into Bosnia from Slovenia and Croatia and revamping its regional command structure. JNA forces in all of

^{*} See Annex 22, Organization of Bosnian Serb and Yugoslav People's Army Forces, April 1992, for a detailed description of the various Serb and federal armed forces.

Bosnia—most of the new Second Military District, which covered the bulk of Bosnia and Croatia, together with elements of the Montenegrin-based Fourth Military District—by early April numbered some 100,000 to 110,000 troops.⁵¹ These forces were equipped with an estimated 500 tanks, 400 field artillery pieces over 100 mm, 48 multiple rocket launchers, and 350 120-mm mortars. The JNA also had some 120 fighter-bombers, some 40 light attack/observation helicopters, and 30 transport helicopters based in the republic.

At the same time, the JNA-armed and SDS-controlled Bosnian Serb Territorial Defense units—formed from Serb-dominated Bosnian Republic TO headquarters—together with volunteer units that were melded into TO formations, had almost 60,000 loosely organized personnel. These units operated primarily under the control of the local municipal officials, although JNA regional headquarters exercised command authority when nearby. Finally, the newly formed Bosnian Serb MUP, which came into existence on 1 April, had an estimated 15,000 police—active, reserve, and special. The MUP police usually worked under the authority of the local municipality in conjunction with TO and volunteer troops.

Chapter 17

The Bosnian Muslims in 1992: The “Patriotic League”—Bosnia’s Muslims Begin To Organize

In early February 1991, leaders of the Muslim-based SDA party met in the small town of Međurici outside Travnik to consider alternatives should the Slovenian and Croatian Republics carry out their stated plans to declare independence in June. Shortly after this SDA Executive Board meeting, Hasan Cengic (later Bosnian Defense Minister) met with Ruzmir Mahmutčehajic (at that time Deputy Prime Minister in the Bosnian Republic Government) to propose the formation of a paramilitary organization as an adjunct of the SDA political party. The subject was broached with then Republic President Izetbegović in early March 1991, and early preparations proceeded with his approval. Thus was born the “Patriotic League of Peoples,” generally known simply as the “Patriotic League.”⁵²

With Izetbegović’s approval, on 10 June 1991 the SDA convened a meeting in Sarajevo of the most prominent Muslim leaders,⁵³ who proceeded to establish a “Council for the National Defense of the Muslim Nation.” Its purpose was to oversee military preparations—to be executed through the Patriotic League—for armed defense in the event of Bosnian independence.⁵⁴ As Hasan Cengic later explained it:

We decided to form the [Patriotic League] organization through the structure of the [SDA] party because that was the only structure we could rely on . . . We decided to form a military organization with a very broad basis—the patriotic [basis], for the defense of the constitutional order in Bosnia-Herzegovina, if needed, of democracy, market economy, human rights and pluralism. The main idea was simple: we should have an organization of a military nature which would, in the case of a serious military attack, be the spine of the total national and patriotic gathering. We did not think about weapons much. At that moment, we concentrated on organizing people.⁵⁵

The Patriotic League’s stated purpose was to defend a “united” Bosnia-Herzegovina, although what this meant was left somewhat unclear. Overwhelmingly Muslim in its membership, the Patriotic League included some Croats and even a small number of Serbs.

According to Maj. Gen. Aleksandar Vasiljević—the KOS officer assigned to monitor developments in Slovenia and Croatia, and who later became chief of the JNA Security Directorate—KOS had two agents at the very top of the SDA leadership who were able to inform the federal authorities of any actions by the nascent Muslim paramilitary underground. KOS also stepped up its surveillance of all previously identified Muslim nationalists within the JNA officer ranks.⁵⁶ Vasiljević later maintained that JNA counterintelligence repeatedly warned the JNA General Staff and the Yugoslav Presidency that the SDA was organizing a military arm but that KOS’s warnings were disregarded by a preoccupied and indecisive Belgrade

leadership that was unable to put KOS's findings to any good use:

We had documents, conversations recorded by tape recorders and cameras. We got hold of the entire organizational structure of the Muslim armed forces. We used cameras to record illegal meetings by military personnel. We knew that a republican command had been formed and that it consisted of two parts: the military and the political crisis commands. There are nine regional commands in the territory of B-H and one each in Kosmet and Sandzak [in Serbia] . . .

The "Patriotic League of Nations" [PLN] was made up of mobile units, units with a regional structure for protecting inhabited places and territories, and special-purpose units—for special tasks of a sovereign-territorial character. They are known by the public as "Green Berets."

As always, we [KOS] gathered detailed information and sent it to the appropriate place [i.e. the Federal Presidency] . . . Thus, they knew in time that there existed a secret Muslim military organization (the PLN), which comprised about 50,000 more than well-organized people, nearly half of which were already armed even at the very outset. Thus, well organized but poorly armed . . .

The voluminous and secret information that we sent to the State Presidency on the creation and organization of Muslim paramilitary forces included a blank page at the end on which the members of the Presidency could write down their remarks. They did not do this either. They simply did not know what they wanted . . .

Then we worked up an exact plan on what had to be done. We formed a command for coordinating this activity and appointed mixed units for seizing weapons. It was necessary that the Republican MUP of B-H, the Federal SUP [Secretary for Internal Affairs], and the Army take part in that disarming campaign. In the end, we concluded that we would not do anything until

representatives of all three nations support this campaign. Izetbegovic, Karadzic, and Kljuic did not do this, so that the whole thing fell through . . .⁵⁷

Arming the Bosnian Muslims

On 25 September 1991 the UN Security Council had adopted Resolution 713, which called for an immediate end to hostilities within the former Yugoslavia, UN-sponsored mediation in the conflict, and—most important—a complete embargo on all weapons shipments to the former Yugoslavia. Even after Slovenia, Croatia, Macedonia, and Bosnia were recognized by the UN as independent countries, the UN continued to apply the arms embargo to them. The Security Council's objective was to minimize the number of weapons in circulation in the former Yugoslavia and, by extension, to reduce the potential for bloodshed. The practical consequence of UN Resolution 713 was to lock in the weapons advantage of one side—the Bosnian Serbs—and to close off the other side's ability to achieve parity.⁵⁸

With the republic placed under an arms embargo and denied the weapons sources of the Bosnian Serbs—the JNA and the Serbian MUP—Bosnian Muslims not already in the Territorial Defense looked to the Patriotic League as their only effective mechanism for arming themselves. Unfortunately for them, the Patriotic League failed miserably to acquire and distribute weapons. Shortages of time and money were compounded by some officials who misappropriated the funds given them to buy arms and by an inflationary spiral that drove prices up as all sides scrambled to arm themselves. The Patriotic League managed to acquire covertly some weapons from the Bosnian MUP and procured some others through Croatia. The number of weapons it was able to stockpile before the war, however, fell far short of its requirements.

So, how many armed units did the Patriotic League actually have at the outset of the war? Subsequent testimony suggests that the Patriotic League had at most

40,000 armed personnel and a fairly evolved organizational structure. By the start of the war, it had established nine regional commands (reportedly located in Sarajevo, Doboj, Cazin, Prijedor, Livno, Mostar, Visegrad, Tuzla, and the Sandzak in Serbia)⁵⁹ further subdivided into 103 municipal headquarters.⁶⁰ These formations varied widely in size, ranging from platoons to small brigades.⁶¹

Significantly, the JNA and the Bosnian Serbs most likely believed the Patriotic League was both larger and better organized than it actually was. The JNA's official journal, *Narodna Armija*, claimed in March 1992 that the Patriotic League had a membership of over 50,000 organized into a republic-level staff and nine regional political-military headquarters.⁶² A week later, a colonel from the JNA's Second Military District publicly claimed that the Muslim paramilitary units ("Patriotic League" and "Green Berets") together had 60,000 men under arms.⁶³ A post-JNA Yugoslav military journal, *Vojnska*, claimed in July 1992 that the Patriotic League had about 50,000 men organized into "four divisions, three regiments, 55 units of battalion-detachment strength, 62 units of company-platoon strength, and several dozen special units."⁶⁴ Such numbers and details, whether they had any basis in fact, were bandied about for some time and were widely believed by at least the Bosnian Serb citizenry, who grew neurotically afraid of an underground Muslim army with armed shadow units in their midst. Worries like these readied them for the idea of ethnic cleansing when the opportunity presented itself.

Izetbegovic would later state that the Patriotic League had between 30,000 and 40,000 armed personnel at the outset of the war.⁶⁵ The Sarajevo regional headquarters alone reportedly had 10,000 armed personnel out of a total membership of some 30,000.⁶⁶ ⁶⁷ As Izetbegovic narrated it:

... in the second half of 1991, the League of Patriots ('Patriotska Liga') was formed in an attempt to arm the people and to be, to a certain extent, ready for any possible attack. I can say that the main headquarters of the League of Patriots was formed immediately before the war. Nine regions and municipal headquarters were also formed; in some places better, in some more poorly organized... according to our counts, the League had approximately 30,000 to 40,000 armed people when we were attacked.⁶⁸

Izetbegovic further elaborated on the history and role of the Patriotic League in a speech in 1997. His long narration is worth examining both for the chronology he provides and for illustration of the credit Izetbegovic gives to the Patriotic League as the organizational and philosophical forerunner of the future Bosnian army:

In June 1991 the SDA Council for National Defense was formed. This meeting was attended by about 400 representatives of Bosnians from the entire territory of the former Yugoslavia, primarily from Bosnia-Herzegovina.

In July 1991 the first military experts [e.g. ex-JNA officers] joined the Patriotic League and provided the first directives for the defense of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The first truckload of weaponry arrived in August 1991.

The first military training began in September.

The first units were formed in October.

In November a long-range radio transmitter was acquired to cover all of Bosnia-Herzegovina, and the training of communications operators began.

In December the organizing of personnel and the arming of reserve police units of the Bosnia-Herzegovina MUP (Ministry of Internal Affairs) began at the initiative and under the leadership of the Patriotic League.

In January 1992 the first unit of the Patriotic League with military training was created, and the distribution of TO arms began at the initiative of the Patriotic League, an action that was carried out through the highest organs of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

In February 1992 at a conference in Mehurici, orders for the staff of the Patriotic League of Bosnia-Herzegovina were defined and issued, and political directives on the principles of defense of Bosnia-Herzegovina were set out. The political goals were: defense of the territory, democracy, a multiethnic community, and human rights.

In April 1992, after the decision by the Bosnia-Herzegovina Presidency that the Territorial Defense of Bosnia-Herzegovina was the state defense structure, the three high-ranking Territorial Defense officers who were appointed then joined the command of the Patriotic League of Bosnia-Herzegovina and began commanding the existing structure of the Patriotic League . . .

At the beginning of the war the Patriotic League of Bosnia-Herzegovina had around 30,000 armed volunteers arranged in units, with an established corps area and commander.

Prior to the war, the Patriotic League had a well-developed logistical system. That system remained the backbone of logistics for the Army of Bosnia-Herzegovina until the end of the war, thanks to SDA state policy and the solidarity of friendly countries in the Islamic world . . .

If it were not for the Patriotic League of Bosnia-Herzegovina, the defense of Bosnia-Herzegovina would not have been possible. It was the first army of our defense. From it emerged the Army of the Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina . . .⁶⁹

Chapter 18

The Bosnian Croat Militaries: HOS and HVO

This is a war between Serbs and Croats that will be fought down to the last Muslim.

—A Bosnian Army commander in Mostar, August 1992.⁷⁰

As 1992 opened, the Bosnian Croats had two main political/military organizations, the HSP party-affiliated Croatian Armed Force (HOS) and the HDZ

party-affiliated Croatian Defense Council (HVO). Both were offshoots of larger, already established parent organizations in Croatia. Despite the similar nomenclature and ostensibly similar goals, the two organizations were political, military, and philosophical rivals, and they initially competed for influence within the Bosnian Croat ministate. As events unfolded, the HOS rapidly lost out to the HVO, which had the full and explicit backing of Franjo Tuđman's HDZ party and the Croatian Army itself.

The Croatian Defense Force

In late 1991 the extreme rightwing Croatian Party of Rights (*Hrvatska Stranka Prava*—HSP) within Croatia proper began to establish a paramilitary presence in Croat-majority Bosnia. This armed wing of the HSP political party was named (in both Croatia and Bosnia) the Croatian Armed Force (*Hrvatske Oruzane Snage*—HOS).

The leader of the HSP in Croatia, an extreme Croat nationalist named Dobroslav Paraga, appointed Blaz Kraljević to head the HOS paramilitary forces in Bosnia. Paraga established a “main headquarters for Herzegovina” in Ljubuski on 3 January 1992, but overall direction appears to have come from the HSP leadership in Zagreb.⁷¹⁷² Mile Dedaković (a.k.a. “Jastreb,” or “Hawk”) was named Commander of the HOS with his headquarters in Ljubuski. Dedaković had helped lead the unsuccessful Croatian Army defense of Vukovar and had then been imprisoned briefly in Croatia early in 1992. By March 1992 he had become the leader of the HSP’s military wing.⁷³⁷⁴ In total the HOS had perhaps 5,000 active fighters at any given time.⁷⁵

Oddly enough, despite the HOS’s affiliation with the Croat-nationalist HSP party, it was more willing to accept Muslims into its ranks than the HVO. The HOS was also more acceptable to Muslims than the HVO, since the latter openly advocated a territorial partition of Bosnia, which was squarely against the objectives of most Muslims.⁷⁶

With the outbreak of the war, the HVO and the HOS would compete for power and influence within the nascent Bosnian Croat state, and, by the close of the first year of fighting, the HOS as an independent fighting force would cease to exist and play no role of significance in the remainder of the war. Although the HOS may have started with some organizational advantages, it was not explicitly backed by Zagreb in the way the HVO was, and it was always fated to be the junior force among the Bosnian Croat militaries. The HOS lost out when the HVO-HOS rivalry descended into open confrontation in the late summer of 1992, and its influence plummeted thereafter. The demise of the HOS became all but complete after the HVO's assassination of HOS commander Blaz Kraljevic and eight of his staff on 9 August.⁷⁷

The Croatian Defense Council

The Croatian Defense Council (*Hrvatska Vijeće Odbrane*—HVO)—frequently just called the Bosnian Croat Army—was formally established in early January 1992, although the Croat-based HDZ political party had begun organizing paramilitary units in Bosnia late in the summer of 1991. With Zagreb's extensive assistance—and with the example of the 1991 Croatian war to motivate local populations to organize and arm themselves—the HVO appears to have made considerable headway toward establishing itself before fighting began. Fully formed HVO units would surface within days of the Bosnian war's beginning, complete with officers, staffs, organizations, and weapons.

The HVO leadership was almost exclusively Bosnian Croat, although the ethnic composition of HVO units varied significantly by region. A few Muslims were accepted into HVO formations in central Bosnia and Herzegovina, while a significant percentage were accepted into some of the "MHVO" brigades in northern Bosnia where Croat-Muslim relations were much better.

Organized and directed from Zagreb, the HVO in 1992 was for all practical purposes a subordinate command of the Croatian Army (*Hrvatska Vojska*),

directed by HV General Janko Bobetko through former HV officers reassigned to the HVO.⁷⁸ The HV-HVO relationship went well beyond the deployment of allied HV units fighting alongside HVO forces in Bosnia. Not only were HV and HVO forces operating under a joint command but the HVO Main Staff was itself an HV forward command post, established on 16 April in Grude at Tudjman's direction.⁷⁹ Bobetko personally selected the first HVO commander, former Croatian Army Colonel Milivoj Petkovic, and Petkovic's newly established HVO headquarters was simultaneously also an HV command post both officially and in practice.⁸⁰ During the entire Bosnian war—but especially during the first several months—the HVO's chain of command, both political and military, would run all the way back to Tudjman's desk in Zagreb.

When war began the HVO probably had some 15,000 and perhaps as many as 20,000 troops under arms. These were initially formed as "Croatian Defense Councils" for each Croat-controlled municipality (for example, the "Kiseljak Croatian Defense Council") but would later be organized into battalions and brigades. The Bosnian Croat forces were on average better organized and equipped than their Bosnian Army counterparts but still lacked the professionalism and expertise of their JNA and Bosnian Serb Army opponents and had little armor and artillery. These limitations were to constrain the HVO's performance for the remainder of the war, preventing it from ever becoming a robust, fully independent fighting force.

Chapter 19 The War Begins: The Bosnian War in 1992

By March 1992, Bosnia was clearly drifting toward civil war. Barricades sprang up along roads and outside towns as villagers armed themselves against the inhabitants of the next town over—or elsewhere within the same town. On 18 March 1992, in a last-ditch, admittedly stopgap effort to avert war, the EC persuaded all three ethnic leaders to sign the "Sarajevo agreement" to divide the republic into ethnically

based cantons. On 25 March, however, Bosnian President Izetbegovic announced one of the policy reversals for which he would soon become known. He repudiated his statement of the previous week—claiming he had been pressured into signing by the EC representatives—and called for all Bosnian citizens to reject the terms of the Sarajevo agreement on the grounds that it effectively divided the republic along ethnic lines. Instead, Izetbegovic renewed his call for a governmental system founded on the principle of a unitary, multiethnic Bosnian state.

Izetbegovic's call, though perhaps well intentioned, was far too late, and the fragile structure of the ineffective republic central government was in no position to do anything to back it up. The centrifugal forces driving the country apart were far greater than the weak forces binding the country together and which might have given hope to the idea of a multiethnic Bosnia.

If "April is the cruellest month," then April 1992 in Bosnia was to prove cruel indeed. As the month began, the EC foreign ministers flew in to Luxembourg to debate whether to extend diplomatic recognition to Bosnia, while at the same time a similar debate went on in Washington. As Europe's ministers met yet again to discuss the future of Bosnia, the Bosnian population was already taking up arms and settling matters for themselves on the ground.

All the catalysts that had brought war to Slovenia and Croatia—paranoia, ethnic referendums, covert arming, the formation of paramilitaries, and "ethnic cleansing"—finally came together in the first week of April in the Bosnian town of Bijeljina. An ethnically divided town of about 36,000 people in the very northeast corner of Bosnia, Bijeljina sat less than 15 kilometers from the Serbian border at the junction of two important roads.⁸¹ The town was key to the Serb-proclaimed "Semberija and Majevica Autonomous Region," and the SDS had made substantial efforts during 1991 and early 1992 to "Serbianize" its police force and ensure Serb political control of the town.⁸² On 31 March, in an apparent attempt to provoke an armed Muslim response that would justify a Serb takeover of Bijeljina, local Serbs attacked a Muslim-frequented coffee shop. The provocation worked. The

next day Serb TO and volunteer troops surrounded and flooded the town, routing scattered members of the Bosnian Muslim Patriotic League and police and executing Muslim leaders in the streets. They were led by the already infamous Arkan's Tigers, the Serbian Volunteer Guard that had fought around Vukovar the previous summer. Their reign of terror continued even after JNA troops moved in to "keep the peace" on 3 April, and by 4 April the Serbs had full control of the town. The town's Muslim residents either cowered in their homes or fled for their lives.⁸³ The operation had been a setpiece recreation of the summer 1991 fighting in Croatia.^{84 85}

The Bosnian Serb takeover in Bijeljina set in motion a chain of events that would leave all the military players—the Bosnian Serbs, the Bosnian Republic TO, and the JNA—armed and ready for war when the republic declared its independence only a few days later. Angered by the JNA's failure to contain the violence the Serbs had staged in Bijeljina, the Bosnian Presidency voted to mobilize the republican Territorial Defense, reserve MUP forces, and civil defense elements. On 4 April, Izetbegovic issued the order for general mobilization to, as he put it, "... enable people to defend themselves ... from future Bijeljinjas."⁸⁶ The Serb members of the Bosnian Presidency, Koljevic and Plavsic, promptly declared the mobilization illegal and resigned from the Presidency that same day.⁸⁷ The JNA meanwhile refused the Presidency request for the return of the TO's weaponry, which the Army had confiscated in 1990.⁸⁸ Bosnia's Muslims and Croats had by this point left the JNA, and Serb members of the TO ignored the mobilization order. Now there were two legally constituted armies in Bosnia—the JNA and the Bosnian TO—and they were already at odds.

The SDS and the Bosnian Serbs had been making their final preparations for the establishment of the Serbian Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina" in March. The last step, taken as fighting flared in Bijeljina, was the creation of an independent Serb police force, the MUP, on 1 April. SRBH President Karadzic and the rest of the Serb leadership now were ready for

a pretext to declare independence. The Bosnian Presidency's decision to mobilize the TO on 4 April gave them that pretext. The Serbs immediately rejected the mobilization order and activated their Municipal Crisis Headquarters, reserve police units, and TO forces.⁸⁹ The next provocation in the escalating crisis soon came as Serb TO troops and Serb members of the Bosnian Republic MUP antiterrorist unit seized the Republican Police Academy on a key hill overlooking central Sarajevo, apparently in preparation for a Serb attempt to partition the city by force. Armed clashes soon spread to other parts of Sarajevo.⁹⁰ Cease-fire negotiations and the deployment of small JNA "peacekeeping" units failed to halt the fighting.⁹¹

Open Warfare: April 1992

Declared or not, the Bosnian civil war began on 6 April 1992 in reaction to the Republic's formal declaration of independence from the SFRY.⁹²⁹³ This is not to say that no blood had been shed in Bosnia before then. During March 1992, Croat and JNA/Serb forces clashed in Bosanski Brod along the Republic's northern Sava River border. By 1 April organized violence had begun with the interethnic fighting in Bijeljina. Serb forces had begun positioning themselves on Vraca hill south of Sarajevo on 4 April, and shooting broke out in Sarajevo on 5 April. It was on 6 April, however, that fighting ceased to be local and sporadic and flared into a country-wide conflict. After that day, the entire population—Serb, Croat, and Muslim; man, woman and child; near or far from the frontlines—found themselves in a country undeniably at war. There was no longer any way to avoid choosing sides.

That same day—as the Bosnian Serbs prepared to take full and overt control throughout their new republic—the European Community formally recognized Bosnia-Herzegovina as a fully sovereign, independent country. The United States followed suit the next day.

Radovan Karadzic had earlier stated that, if Bosnia should ever be recognized as an independent nation, it would not survive a single day. He was as good as his word. At virtually the same moment the Europeans and Americans were recognizing Bosnia as a sovereign nation within its republic boundaries, the Bosnian

Serb Assembly was declaring its secession from the new nation and claiming most of its land area. Politically appointed SRBH police officers quickly moved to establish control in those Serb-coveted areas where Serb officials had not already achieved quasi-independent status. When supporters of the Bosnian Republic contested this power grab in several key towns, shooting erupted, the fighting spread, and rival governments declared their opponents outlaws. The international community had performed the diplomatic equivalent of adopting a stillborn child.

Yugoslav People's Army Objectives, Strategy, and Operations in April-May 1992*

As war erupted in April, the JNA continued to follow its schizophrenic, two-track policy of attempting to defuse hostilities and arrange negotiations among the three ethnic groups while continuing to provide practical support to the Bosnian Serbs. As the fighting escalated, the Army's objectives and actions veered between the two poles, and its exact role in some events remains obscure. What is clear is that the JNA, already at war with the Croatian Army, came to believe that Croatian forces had intervened in Bosnia to threaten Bosnian Serbs in Kupres, Bosanski Brod, and southern Herzegovina. The JNA responded to this perceived threat with direct military action, joining forces with Bosnian Serb Territorial Defense troops. Elsewhere, however, JNA commanders appear to have tried to fulfill their peacekeeping mission of providing a buffer between the republican and Bosnian Serb TO forces. In practice, however, these actions were rendered almost completely ineffective by the JNA's overt sympathy toward the Serbs, who were never attacked or punished. In many incidents—including the capture of Zvornik—the JNA would provide direct support in a Serb attack or occupation of a town.

The overriding priority for the JNA, however, remained the security of its barracks and depots—

* For a detailed account of JNA objectives and strategy see Annex 23: Yugoslav People's Army Objectives, Strategy, and Operations, April-May 1992.

particularly in light of its experience in Croatia—and it reacted fiercely any time these were threatened. When Bosnian Republic TO troops blockaded JNA barracks beginning 1 May and attacked evacuees from the JNA Second Military District Headquarters in Sarajevo, the JNA gave its full support to the Bosnian Serb military and police forces. JNA units helped organize the siege of Sarajevo and assisted in the capture of a number of Serb objectives. The JNA's days in Bosnia, though, were already numbered. Bowing to the fact of Bosnian (and Macedonian) independence, on 27 April the SFRY Presidency had proclaimed a new Federal Republic consisting of Serbia and Montenegro, and had ordered that all federal personnel of these nationalities be withdrawn from Bosnia. By 20 May this had been generally accomplished, and the JNA's headquarters staffs and formations stationed in Bosnia, drained of Serbians and Montenegrins (as well as Croats and Muslims), became the nucleus of the new Bosnian Serb Army.

Chapter 20

Northeastern Bosnia, April 1992: The Axe Falls*

Zvornik

At the beginning of April 1992, Zvornik was a town of about 15,000 people (60 percent of them Muslims) nestled on the west bank of the Drina River. A two-lane bridge connected it with the even smaller town of Mali Zvornik on the opposite bank of the river in Serbia. Interethnic violence came to the region on the winds of the republic-wide turbulence that followed the independence referendum results announced on 2 March; two weeks later, Zvornik's Serbs proclaimed their own independent "Serbian Municipality of Zvornik."⁹⁴ At the end of March, the Zvornik police force split into two rival bands.⁹⁵ By the republic's declaration of independence on 6 April, emotions had reached fever pitch.

The Serb forces that rose to attack the Zvornik area were a hodgepodge of professional and ultranationalist troops, including elements of the Zvornik TO, possibly some local police, Arkan's unit, Serbian ultranationalist leader Seselj's "Serbian Chetnik Movement," the Serbian State Security Department

* For a detailed account of the fighting in northeastern Bosnia in April 1992, see Annex 26: Northeastern Bosnia, April 1992: The Axe Falls.

(RDB) special operations unit, and JNA regular troops, all supported by JNA artillery fire from Serbia. The Muslim forces inside the town apparently were mostly Patriotic League defenders led by an individual named "Captain Almir"⁹⁶ whose real name was Samir Nistovic.⁹⁷ All available evidence indicates that Captain Almir's Muslim forces were few in number or poorly organized—and probably both.

The first fighting broke out in and around Zvornik on 8 April, and at the same time JNA artillery blatantly began shelling Zvornik from inside Serbia on the far side of the river.⁹⁸ The now-notorious "Arkan" arrived on the scene that evening and delivered an ultimatum, ordering the Muslims of the Zvornik municipality to hand over their arms by the following morning or "experience the fate of Bijeljina."⁹⁹ Serb forces surrounded the town while the Muslims manned hastily thrown-together barricades on the outskirts and waited anxiously through the night.¹⁰⁰ Minutes after the ultimatum expired the next morning, the Serb forces began their attack. Within hours they had occupied the town, and Muslim resistance within the town effectively ceased by nightfall.

The Yugoslav People's Army actively supported the Serb forces assaulting Zvornik, something it had not done in Bijeljina.¹⁰¹ Indeed, the JNA made no effort to conceal its involvement at Zvornik, and an official JNA 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.*¹⁰²

It was the RDB's elite special operations unit that would be identified as the decisive force in the brief battle for Zvornik. The Serb extremist Vojislav Seselj later bragged:

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 . . . Everything was well organized and implemented.¹⁰³

The capture of Zvornik typifies how the well-organized Serb forces (created, supplied, and backed by the State Security Department of the Serbian Internal Affairs Ministry), the Serbian RDB's own forces, and the JNA could collaborate to rapidly demolish a stunned, ill-equipped, and disorganized Muslim resistance.

Visegrad

South of Zvornik lay the east Bosnian town of Visegrad, once a Turkish stronghold in Bosnia. In 1571 the Ottoman Vizier of Bosnia commissioned the empire's greatest architect, Sinan, to design and build a 180-yard, 11-arched bridge over the Drina there. This jewel of Turkish architecture was to provide the inspiration for the acclaimed book *The Bridge on the Drina* by Yugoslavia's only Nobel Prize-winning author, Ivo Andric.¹⁰⁴ Andric's bridge imagery notwithstanding, the Visegrad municipality had been fracturing since January 1992, when its Serbs voted to join two of the self-proclaimed "Serb Autonomous Regions, while the town's Muslims remained loyal to the Sarajevo government.¹⁰⁵ The same disputes over municipal authority and the composition of the police force that had been seen in Zvornik led to tension, barricades, and low-level violence in Visegrad as well.^{106 107 108 109 110}

Open warfare erupted on 7 April when Bosnian Serb Territorial Defense forces moved to seize control of the town. The local Serb TO probably numbered some 1,000 irregular troops backed by roughly 100 to 200 municipal police, and these would most likely be assisted by some soldiers of the JNA 37th (Uzice) Corps. Against this array Visegrad's Bosnian Muslim forces were clearly overmatched in numbers, organization, and weapons. The Muslims probably still had a few of the local police and reserve police forces—perhaps 100 or so men—and perhaps several dozen

members of the Patriotic League. At most, there may have been 250 armed Muslims in the Visegrad area, not necessarily all answering to any single authority.

Details of the contest in Visegrad are very hazy. The heaviest fighting appears to have occurred 8 April around the police station and as Serb forces made an organized drive to clear Muslim forces from the left bank of the Drina during the day.¹¹¹ Panic gripped the population as rumors circulated of Arkan's imminent approach (which were false); by the next morning the entire Muslim population had fled Visegrad and its environs.¹¹²

Pockets of armed Muslim resistance seem to have survived for a few days after the fall of Visegrad itself. As the town 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.¹¹³ Serb forces also snuffed out local Muslim resistance in the nearby villages over the next few days.^{114 115} Minor skirmishing may have continued for as much as a week after the 7 April attack, but the Bosnian Serbs had effectively established control over the area within 48 hours.¹¹⁶

Foca

The ethnically split town of Foca (52 percent Muslim, 45 percent Serb), about 20 km southwest of Gorazde, sat along a north-south road running alongside the Drina River. As elsewhere in the Drina valley, there had been trouble in Foca for weeks before April 1992.^{117 118} On 23 March, following a series of inter-ethnic confrontations, 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 Serbs of Foca to arm themselves.¹¹⁹

Organized Serb forces in the area consisted primarily of the Foca Territorial Defense, numbering probably about 1,000 troops. Elements of other Territorial

Defense units from nearby towns (at the very least, the Cajnice TO) probably assisted,¹²⁰ and as many as 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.¹²¹ Finally, the JNA's 37th (Uzice) Corps may have provided limited support. On the Muslim side, the Foca SDA appears to have been exceptionally well organized, and the several hundred defenders were probably the best armed and best organized in eastern Bosnia. Their comparatively high level of organization and armament gave the Foca Muslims a fighting chance: whereas Muslim forces in Bijelina, Zvornik, and Visegrad had been all but wiped out within a day or two, those in and around Foca were able to resist for almost three weeks.

When Bosnia formally declared its independence on 6 April, the Foca Serbs took over the municipal institutions, including the police, and declared themselves loyal to the SRBH and independent of the Sarajevo government.¹²² Sporadic fighting by the evening of 8 April focused on a contest for control of the hydroelectric plant near the town.¹²³ In the pattern established at Zvornik, the Serbs on 9 April formally declared that the local Muslims could either surrender their arms or face retribution. When the deadline passed later that day, Serb forces began a mortar barrage against the Muslim-majority Donje Polje and Sukovac neighborhoods.¹²⁴ The next few days saw the most intense Muslim resistance in the Drina valley of April 1992.^{125 126} Most of the town became a no-man's land by day and a looter's paradise by night.¹²⁷ By 14 April, the Serbs—frustrated with their inability to dislodge the stubborn Muslim defenders from the Donje Polje district—battered the neighborhood with concentrated mortar fire and eventually pried the Muslim defenders out of a high-rise building that had given snipers a dominating position overlooking the town.¹²⁸ After this, the overall Muslim defensive position became untenable, and most Muslims had fled the Foca area by 17 April.^{129 130}

The fall of the town did not end Muslim resistance, which continued in the area 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 and attempted to block

further Serb advances while holding out in a few other areas. Serb units proceeded to mop up captured areas, repeating their demands for the surrender of Muslim forces in the remaining villages.^{131 132} When Serb forces had finally crushed all Muslim resistance in the Foca area itself, the focus of the Muslim defense shifted to the defensive ring around Gorazde.

The Battle for Weapons: Capturing the JNA Barracks

Given Sarajevo's desperate need for weapons and the virtual impossibility of importing any from abroad in the near term, it was imperative that the government forces capture as much materiel as possible from JNA stores in Bosnia at the outset of the war. Surrounded JNA garrisons and munitions factories became prime targets.

The Bosnian Army was plagued from the start by acquisition and allocation problems, for even the little equipment it possessed or captured often proved useless. For instance, the Bosnian Army's Sarajevo-based First Corps appears to have captured a relatively large amount of field artillery—but the Army was unable to find ammunition for these pieces, and most of these weapons lay idle during the war. When the Patriotic League successfully stormed the Pretis factory in Vogosca in mid-April 1992, they captured some 800 "Osa" 90-mm antitank rockets, but no rocket launchers. It is an indication of how desperate the Bosnians were in the early days of the war that they directed then Colonel Sulejman Vranj to fly at great risk from Sarajevo to Visoko and back just to bring a *single* shoulder-fired rocket launcher into the city so the captured rockets could be utilized. The precious weapon was driven from place to place and used at critical points throughout the city for weeks afterward.¹³³

An agreement on the evacuation of JNA forces was finally signed on 18 May 1992 (in conjunction with a very short-lived country-wide cease-fire). In general, the JNA was allowed to withdraw its personnel from surrounded barracks along with all JNA-owned heavy weapons and soldiers' small arms. Bosnian Territorial

Defense weapons—confiscated from the republic in 1990 and stored in JNA facilities since then—were to be turned over to the besieging government forces.¹³⁴

In some cases, the evacuation of JNA forces and the handover of TO weapons proceeded smoothly and without incident. Travnik Barracks had already been transferred to Muslim-Croat forces on 6 May under a locally negotiated arrangement.¹³⁵ Muslim Patriotic League fighters seized Visoko's "Ahmet Fetahagic" Barracks on 26-27 April, allowing the JNA troops to depart with their personal arms only. Zenica's "Josip Jovanovic" barracks complex was blockaded on 8 May, and at least the TO equipment inside had been handed over to the Bosnian Army by 18 May.^{136 137} Tuzla's "Husinska Buna" Barracks was turned over around 16 May.¹³⁸ In western Bosnia, the JNA surrendered control of two barracks outside Bihać on 19 May.^{139 140 141}

In other cases, however, the facilities had already been taken by storm, the evacuations were delayed, or the retreating JNA forces were attacked. HV and HVO forces had attacked Capljina's "Milo Popara" Barracks even before the war began. The JNA evacuated the large military school at Pazaric uneventfully, but not until 30 May. It was the JNA barracks in Sarajevo, however, that were to prove the most contentious and require the most difficult negotiations. Evacuations of the major JNA installations in the city—the "Marshal Tito" Barracks along sniper alley, and the "Viktor Bubanj," "Jusuf Dzonlic," and "Jajce" Barracks elsewhere around the city—were originally to have begun on 19 May but were delayed repeatedly. The Viktor Bubanj Barracks was evacuated on 24 May, although it is unclear whether any Territorial Defense weapons were left behind.¹⁴² The JNA unilaterally abandoned the Jusuf Dzonlic Barracks in Nedzarici on 28 May, leaving behind mortars and other equipment as the troops escaped overnight to Serb-held Ilidža.¹⁴³ The Marshal Tito Barracks—largest of the JNA casernes in Sarajevo—was not evacuated until 5 June.¹⁴⁴

Chapter 21

Bosnian Serb War Aims and Military Strategy, 1992

The Bosnian Serb political leadership, led by Radovan Karadžić, formed their own entity and went to war in April 1992 because they did not wish to be part of an independent, unitary Bosnian state. Without the

restraining influence of the federal hierarchy, the Bosnian Serbs believed that Muslims and Croats would dominate such a state to the detriment of the Serbs. Later in 1992 the Bosnian Serb Assembly formally codified its war aims, explicitly spelling out the objectives and future borders of the Serbian Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina—soon redesignated the "Republika Srpska":

- Separate the Bosnian Serbs from Bosnia because "outside Yugoslavia we do not have a future in someone else's country."
- Create a corridor linking western Bosnia (the Bosanska Krajina) to Serbia through the Posavina, placing the border of the Serb Republic on the Sava River.
- "... the Drina River is not a border," and the Bosnian Serb Republic should be allowed to unite with the new Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.
- The border of the Serb Republic with the Muslim and Croat section of Bosnia should run along the Neretva and Una Rivers, in addition to the Sava.
- The Serb Republic should receive part of the city of Sarajevo.
- The Serb Republic should have access to the sea.¹⁴⁵

In other words, the Bosnian Serbs wanted to create an independent, territorially contiguous republic that could eventually rejoin the Federal Republic. (Although they never formally said so, the Serb leaders were probably still willing to accept a single state organized into a loose confederation divided into three ethnic "cantons," a concept they had argued for before the war erupted.) Unstated but essential to the Serbs' physical achievement of their geopolitical goals and the ending of the war would be the acquiescence of the Muslim and Croat leadership in these objectives. In the event, the Serbs would find creating their republic far easier than ending the war on their terms. A further, unstated war aim also appears to have been that the population of the new state, Republika Srpska, must be almost purely Serb. Although little evidence exists that the most senior of the SDS leaders, such as Karadžić and Krajisnik, officially approved such a war aim, the systematic way in which the Bosnian

Serbs, particularly local SDS organizations, carried out their ethnic cleansing operations makes it almost certain that they had high-level direction.

To achieve the Serbs' primary war aim of a contiguous state within its proposed "borders," Bosnian Serb military strategy during 1992 called for Serb forces to take the strategic offensive. Through a series of large-scale campaigns and smaller operations, the Bosnian Serb Army (VRS) hoped to seize key territorial and economic objectives. The most important of these was the establishment of a northern supply corridor stretching across the Posavina region through the river town of Brcko to link western Bosnia to eastern Bosnia and northern Serbia. Without this "Posavina corridor" the nascent Serb state would have been a bifurcated one. The VRS therefore launched a large operation lasting over six months to open and secure a corridor from Doboj to Brcko. The second significant VRS operation was the campaign to capture the town of Jajce and the territory around it, including two hydroelectric plants vital to the economic viability of Serb-controlled western Bosnia. Earlier, the VRS had conducted a series of smaller actions in western Bosnia to secure the area against a Muslim-Croat military threat that existed only in Serb propaganda, while expelling most of the Muslim-Croat population. The VRS sustained and extended the siege of Sarajevo to seize parts of the city for a Bosnian Serb capital and, more important, maintain pressure on the Bosnian Government to meet Serb terms. Smaller operations swept the length of the Drina valley against strong Bosnian Government resistance, often alternating between the defensive and offensive. The VRS also unsuccessfully attempted to secure one of the "borders" of Republika Srpska along the Una River near Bihac in western Bosnia. Only in southern Herzegovina did the VRS operate in a purely defensive mode, defending the "borders" against HV/HVO operations around Mostar and Trebinje.

Mladic's Own: The Bosnian Serb Army¹⁴⁶ *

Created from the ashes of the JNA, the Bosnian Serb Army under General Ratko Mladic was to become one of the most proficient military forces in the Balkans during the 1992 to 1995 war, as well as one of the

* For a detailed discussion of the Bosnian Serb Army's ethos, organization, and methods, see Annex 24: "Mladic's Own: The Bosnian Serb Army."

most reviled armies in the world. The *Vojske Republike Srpske* (VRS—Army of the Serb Republic), was formed through the melding of two distinct forces, superimposing the structure of the JNA's Second Military District over the disorganized, SDS-controlled Bosnian Serb Territorial Defense. The melding was not an altogether happy one. Differences between the VRS's ex-JNA (and ex-Communist) senior commanders and the Serbian nationalists of the SDS over war aims, military strategy, and the SDS role in the Army were to lead to political-military conflicts throughout the war. These conflicts were exacerbated by the well-founded belief within the SDS that the VRS often answered more directly to Serbian President Milosevic and Belgrade than it did to the Bosnian Serb Presidency.

The VRS was initially organized into a Main Staff and five regional corps (later joined by a sixth) with some 80 maneuver brigades and regiments, plus a full complement of support formations, by the end of 1992. The force initially comprised over 250,000 troops—falling to 155,000 troops by war's end—equipped with 500 to 550 tanks, about 250 armored personnel carriers or infantry fighting vehicles, some 500 to 600 field artillery pieces, and 400 to 500 heavy mortars. The VRS's Air and Air Defense Force had some 20 fighter-bombers, 15 light attack and observation helicopters, and 15 transport helicopters.¹⁴⁷ One of the Army's first priorities was to convert the mob of TO personnel into properly organized, well-led light infantry brigades, while simultaneously reining in many of the virtually autonomous volunteer units.

Despite the JNA's recent war in Croatia, relatively few of the JNA corps or maneuver brigades inherited by the VRS had combat experience, although most of the Army's senior and midlevel commanders and staff officers had seen service during the fighting in neighboring republics. The brain of the VRS, the Main Staff (*Glavni Stab*), was formed from the remnants of the Second Military District headquarters and infused with new life through the introduction of such veteran officers as Mladic and the Chief of the Main Staff, Manojlo Milovanovic. The professionalism of the

¹⁴⁶ For a description of the role which the VRS Air and Air Defense Force played in 1992, see Annex 33: The Role of the Bosnian Serb Air and Air Defense Force in 1992.

Main Staff was to be one of the VRS's key advantages throughout the war. The most experienced corps command was the 1st Krajina Corps (formerly the JNA 5th Banja Luka Corps), which formed the Army's backbone during the conflict.

The heart and soul of the VRS was Ratko Mladic. His charisma, combined with an aggressive, no-compromise attitude and a frontline leadership style, made him a hero among Serb soldiers and civilians alike. Mladic molded and shaped the Army into a ruthless and efficient machine that made the most of his own fiery offensive style, cool, calculating JNA staff work, and the army's inherited firepower. The VRS was Mladic's army. His defiance of Bosnian Serb President Karadzic on many key issues throughout the war, culminating in Karadzic's failed attempt to relieve him in late 1995, demonstrated that the Army answered to one man, Ratko Mladic; and the only man Mladic was willing to answer to was Slobodan Milosevic.

Despite the VRS's impressive military capability, a strategic reality afflicted it throughout the war—the lack of sufficient troop reserves, ensuring that the Army would never have the ability to deliver a knock-out blow to its enemies or adequately hold a frontline of more than 1,000 kilometers. Even during 1992, the VRS was repeatedly forced to shuttle units across the country from battle to battle. This shortage of reserves required the VRS to concentrate on holding down casualties and rely heavily on concentrated firepower in its operations. Despite good doctrine, however, inadequate training hampered tactical efficiency in VRS units and kept casualties high. Substantial assistance provided by the Yugoslav Army (VJ)—the JNA's successor in Serbia and Montenegro—throughout the war helped make up shortfalls in officer and NCO cadres, logistics, and maintenance, but the VJ never deployed large combat formations into Bosnia. The VJ, Serbian State Security Department (RDB), and the Serbian Ministry of Internal Affairs sent only token combat units into the country during the fighting and probably never had more than 2,000 men in Bosnia at a single time. The usual figure was almost certainly far lower.

Chapter 22

Bosnian Government War Aims and Military Strategy

From the outset of the war the Bosnian Government found itself behind the curve of events, leaving it with one fundamental war aim: simple survival. After the first few battles in Bijelina, Zvornik, and Foca, it rapidly became apparent that the Bosnian Serbs were fighting a war for ethnic purity and territorial gains. The Bosnian Government's basic objective was therefore to retain control over as much of Bosnia's territory as possible. Besides being vital for military and domestic political reasons, it was also critical that the Sarajevo government convince the international community that Bosnia was a viable state that merited international attention and involvement.

The Bosnian Army enjoyed a modicum of central organization from the start, and its coordination of forces improved somewhat over the first few months. Bosnian Government objectives and military strategy tended to be locally focused, however, and not coordinated across regions. Forces in the Drina valley or Herzegovina, for instance, operated almost completely independently of those in, say, the Posavina or western Bosnia. Regional commands did occasionally support each other, as when forces from the Herzegovina area worked to help those in Sarajevo by operating on Mt. Igman, but this was the exception rather than the rule. A tenuous supply train passed a trickle of weapons and ammunition up from Croatia through Herzegovina and on to central and northern Bosnia, but in general the supply system was also locally based. For the first year of the war, both the government as a whole and each government-held region essentially fought its own battle for survival.

The Bosnian Territorial Defense

While the Bosnian Serbs inherited much of the infrastructure and equipment of the JNA in Bosnia, the Bosnian Muslims and Croats started the war in control of virtually no Army installations and could hope to

surround only a comparative handful of JNA garrisons (for example, Sarajevo, Tuzla, Mostar, Bihać) in the hope of collecting their weapons.

Bosnia's multiethnic character had prevented Sarajevo from consciously transforming its Territorial Defense—much of which was drawn from Serb-majority areas—into an independent force to counter the Bosnian Serbs. The Slovenians had had an ethnically homogeneous force committed to independence, but the Bosnian Government could not use its republic TO to establish or train a secret army without Belgrade instantly learning about it. The SDA had attempted the next best thing, using the organization of the political party to conceal a paramilitary organization. The Patriotic League (less than a year old and with no formal training or heavy weapons) was no match, however, for the VRS, already a regular, combined-arms army. Therefore, when Bosnia fractured three ways in the opening days of the war, the republican Territorial Defense did so as well. In a country-wide race for arms, weapons stocks were seized by whichever ethnic group could get there first with the most people.

By the eve of the war JNA headquarters in Belgrade had gone a long way toward its goal of reducing the potential threat of the Bosnian Territorial Defense to the JNA. As of 1992 the Bosnian TO had been shrunk from its all-time high of over 300,000 troops in the mid-1980s down to a theoretical mobilized strength of only 86,000 troops. Almost all of the TO's weaponry had long since been moved to JNA-controlled storage sites. On paper the Bosnian TO may have had nine regional subcommands and tens of thousands of troops and weapons, but the reality was that the territory, the manpower, and the TO inventories would all be divided (quite unequally) among Bosnia's Serbs, Muslims, and Croats. The JNA passed the lion's share of the TO weaponry to the Bosnian Serbs, with the Croat-dominated HVO and HOS obtaining most of what could be seized in Croat-majority areas. The forces directed by the Sarajevo government—by this time a shaky de facto alliance of armed ethnic Muslims and ethnic Croat militias— inherited what little remained.¹⁴⁷

With war already underway, it was imperative that the Bosnian Government establish some form of centralized direction over the fragmented, competing commands and the haphazard mix of regular and volunteer units loyal to it. Fortunately, the Patriotic League—no longer an underground militia—agreed to merge its volunteer units with the government-held fraction of the Territorial Defense. On 10 April the Patriotic League announced that it was effectively disbanding and “ . . . placing itself at the disposal of and . . . de facto joining the structure of the Territorial Defense . . . ”¹⁴⁸ At least in theory, the largest paramilitary organization and the closest thing to a regular Bosnian military unit had merged at the outset of the conflict.

On 15 April 1992, when the Bosnian Government in Sarajevo declared the establishment of a military force based on the former republic Territorial Defense, the Bosnian Army consisted of little more than the text of the announcement. All across the country, Bosnian Muslims and Bosnian Croats were gathering up arms wherever they could be found and using whatever structure happened to exist locally—Territorial Defense, Patriotic League, police forces, criminal gangs, or hodgepodge volunteer units—to organize themselves for defense. For all practical purposes, the Bosnian Government had found itself at war without an army. The price for this unreadiness would prove steep indeed, and the Bosnian nation would pay it in blood.

By late April the Bosnian Government had reorganized the republic's Territorial Defense—omitting the Serb-held areas of Bosnia from its organization and incorporating the Patriotic League's volunteers—into seven regional districts and 75 municipal headquarters.¹⁴⁹ In total, the Bosnian Government probably started the war with more than 100,000 men but probably only 40,000 to 50,000 small arms and virtually no heavy weapons. Later it would surround a few JNA garrisons and confiscate their weapons, adding probably several thousand more small arms, limited amounts of ammunition and explosives, and at most a few dozen tanks and artillery pieces. The Bosnian Croat militias, the HOS and HVO, had a combined

strength of as many as 25,000 adequately armed troops with a handful of heavy weapons—and, of course, Croatian Army support. Their Bosnian Serb adversaries could, however, if fully mobilized, field more than 200,000 troops already established in dozens of well-organized brigades and support formations, with hundreds of tanks and APCs and hundreds more field artillery pieces. The war began as a very uneven contest weighted heavily in the Serbs' favor.

Chapter 23 **Croatian Political Objectives and Military Strategy in Bosnia, 1991-1992***

As it prepared for its own independence, Zagreb's primary political objective in Bosnia was to secure the position of the Bosnian Croat population, developing at least a measure of political autonomy in the near term, and working toward either a partition of Bosnia with the Serbs or a confederal state with full Bosnian Croat autonomy. The first overt steps toward Bosnian Croat political autonomy came in November 1991 with the formation of the "Croatian Community of Herceg-Bosna" (*Hrvatska Zajednica Herceg-Bosna—HZHB*), and soon after the "Croatian Community of Bosanska Posavina." President Tudjman's efforts to promote an agreement with Milosevic and the Bosnian Serb leadership on the possible partition of the country had begun early that year, however, and Zagreb officials met several times with Bosnian Croats in early 1992 to try to harmonize their objectives. Western outrage over these doubledealings forced Zagreb to backtrack and promote instead public support for an intact Bosnian Republic while tacitly approving Bosnian Croat moves toward autonomy. The military strategy that Zagreb pursued in support of these goals consisted of a two-track plan to organize and arm indigenous Bosnian Croat military units—begun in 1991 by Croatian Army "volunteers" under Zagreb's control—while deploying regular Croatian Army (HV) and MUP troops to the republic in 1992 when Croat communities came under direct threat. The primary theaters in which HV forces operated were Herzegovina and Posavina. HV forces in these regions, in conjunction with the Bosnian Croat Army (HVO), carried out both defensive and

offensive operations to hold and expand Croat territory while cutting the Bosnian Serbs' most strategic supply line in northern Bosnia.

Croatia's later efforts to retake the southern Dalmatian coast and relieve the siege of Dubrovnik were part of its war of independence, but they were also directly related to military events occurring in southern Herzegovina. The Croatians would deploy troops into Herzegovina both to exploit terrain advantages and—together with the Zagreb-controlled HVO—broaden the front faced by Bosnian Serb Army and JNA forces so that the Serbs' resources might be stretched to the breaking point.^{**}

Chapter 24 **Ethnic Cleansing as a Military Operation: Prijedor, Sanski Most, and Kljuc, May-July 1992¹⁵⁰ *****

Houses and whole villages reduced to ashes, unarmed and innocent populations massacred en masse, incredible acts of violence, pillage and brutality of every kind—such were the means which were employed by the Serbo-Montenegrin soldiery, with a view to the entire transformation of the ethnic character of regions.¹⁵¹

Report on the International Commission to Inquire Into the Causes and Conduct of the Balkan Wars. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1914

The Chetniks started picking up civilians, and asked about refugees from Rogatica. They had caught them and killed them all. I did not see them torture the civilians, but they boasted in my presence how many Muslims each had killed and I saw with my own eyes the bridge covered in blood, and in the water under the bridge, corpses . . . I do not know how many people were killed in Foca, but I heard Captain Sergije

^{**} For a detailed account of these operations, see Chapter 30 and Annex 32, The Battles for Herzegovina and the Relief of Dubrovnik, 1992.

^{***} For a detailed description see Annex 27: Ethnic Cleansing as a Military Operation: Prijedor-Sanski Most-Kljuc, May-July 1992.

* For a more detailed discussion see Annex 25: Croatian Political Objectives and Military Strategy in Bosnia, 1991-1992.

*Mihailovic saying, ‘We have got rid of the enemy. We have killed 5,000 Muslims in Gorazde and Foca.*¹⁵²

Dragutin Ocko, a Serb prisoner of war interrogated by *Ustashe* on 29 January 1942

The war crimes committed against Muslims and Croats in the Prijedor–Sanski Most–Kljuc areas of western Bosnia during the late spring and summer of 1992 were some of the worst atrocities to occur during the Bosnian war. The scope, scale, and programming with which these actions were carried out would have been impossible had they not been conducted as *military* operations by units of the Bosnian Serb Army’s 1st Krajina Corps. Although the Serbian Democratic Party and the Bosnian Serb Ministry of Internal Affairs also played key roles in the violence, the VRS was the primary actor in the assaults and occupation of Muslim and Croat villages throughout the region.

The main objective of VRS operations in this area was to eliminate the so-called threat posed by Muslim and Croat residents to Serb control over a key section of western Bosnia. Some elements of the Muslim and Croat population were armed and put up resistance to the Serb takeover of the area, but never on a scale that threatened the Bosnian Serbs’ control in the region. In addition, the VRS’s methods of eliminating this “threat” involved the wanton killing of civilians, the complete removal of the civilian population from their homes, barbaric treatment in detention camps, and finally their ejection from Serb territory. Concurrently, the “cleansing” of the region helped achieve a key Bosnian Serb war aim—the creation of an ethnically pure Serb state.

Military actions in the Prijedor–Sanski Most–Kljuc region began in April, when JNA formations supported SDS actions to take over the political administration, seizing government offices, police facilities, utilities, and other key infrastructure. The formation of the Bosnian Serb Army prompted the VRS to order all Muslims and Croats living in the area to turn over their weapons to the Serb police. The Army enforced this order and, beginning 23 May, invaded several villages and towns near Prijedor, Sanski Most, and Kljuc

to physically eliminate those who had refused to relinquish their arms. The VRS meanwhile joined other Serb authorities to accelerate the removal of the entire Muslim and Croat populations. In reaction a small band of Muslims and Croats launched a suicidal counterattack on 30 May, seizing part of Prijedor city before Serb troops overwhelmed them. Throughout June these Serb forces unobtrusively swept the area of non-Serb citizens while redeploying some units for operations elsewhere. The final VRS operation in the area began in late July, apparently aimed at a forested mountain area where poorly equipped Muslim military bands were still holding out, to mop up the last of the Muslim hamlets and neighborhoods. This operation appears to have satisfied the VRS that it had eliminated the primary “threat,” and it continued to transfer its combat units to more active sectors.

Chapter 25

The Battle for the Corridor: Operations in the Posavina¹⁵³*

During 1992 some of the largest battles of the Bosnian war—engaging more than 50,000 troops on both sides—occurred in the most strategic area of the country, the Posavina region of northern Bosnia. One of the first clashes of the conflict enveloped the Sava River town of Bosanski Brod in early March, when mixed Croat and Muslim HVO forces used weapons provided by the Croatian Army to stop a Serb takeover of the municipality.¹⁵⁴ During April and May, as HV troops reinforced the HVO, their combined formations pushed JNA and Serb TO troops completely out of Bosanski Brod, overran the towns of Modrica and Derventa, and temporarily severed the east-west route running between the Serb-controlled Bosanska Krajina region (and the Republic of Serbian Krajina) and the rest of the Serb Republic, as well as the Yugoslav Federal Republic. No supplies could reach these areas, and the nascent Serb Republic was cleft in two. Mitigating the effects of this dramatic penetration, Bosnian Serb and JNA units managed to take and hold key towns on its flanks at Doboj, Bosanski

* For a detailed account, see Annex 28: The Battle for the Corridor: Operations in the Posavina March 1992 to January 1993.

Samac-Pelagicevo, and Brcko. Holding these positions allowed the newly created VRS to move reinforcements from its 1st Krajina Corps and East Bosnian Corps to these areas and prepare for a major counteroffensive.

In early June the VRS 1st Krajina Corps, under General Momir Talic, began a series of preliminary operations to open up some breathing space between Doboj and Derventa and move forces into position to reopen the vital supply corridor. By 20 June the fall of Kotor-sko and Johovac, north of Doboj, left the path clear. On 24 June the 1st Krajina Corps launched the first phase of Operation "Corridor 92," attempting to break through to East Bosnian Corps troops northeast of Gradacac. Two days of heavy fighting enabled the units to link up and cut the connection between enemy-held Modrica and Gradacac. Modrica itself fell on 28 June. Although this main effort was successful, supporting attacks on the flanks and near Derventa-Bosanski Brod achieved little gain against strong HV/HVO resistance.

The 1st Krajina Corps prepared its next major strike for early July to seize Odzak and Derventa-Bosanski Brod. On 4 July a three-pronged attack kicked off toward Derventa, Bosanski Brod, Odzak, and the Sava River. Over the next 10 days, VRS troops drove HV/HVO forces out of strong positions near Odzak, seizing the town on 12 July, and reached the Sava on 14 July. Other units pushed to within 10 kilometers of Bosanski Brod after an advance of 10 to 15 kilometers. Meanwhile, formations further to the west retook Derventa on 4-5 July. The VRS had driven HV/HVO forces out of all the territory between Bosanski Brod and Bosanski Samac, while forcing their troops into a now constricted bridgehead around Bosanski Brod itself.

After a series of attacks around Bosanski Brod during August and September achieved only limited success, the 1st Krajina Corps prepared to launch a decisive assault on the Croat bridgehead. On 27 September, VRS troops began their attack, again making only small initial gains. On 4 October, however, after shifting the attack sector, VRS troops broke through HV/HVO lines and captured the town on 6 October. Many have argued that the Serbs owed their victory to a

secret agreement by Croatian President Tudjman to trade the enclave for the JNA-held Prevlaka peninsula in southern Croatia. There is no direct evidence to support this theory but, whatever the truth, the HV/HVO defenses cracked during the final offensive only after the VRS unexpectedly shifted the direction of its attack to avoid the stiff resistance it had met during the initial push. Given the sudden execution of the Serb maneuver, the Croats' success in withdrawing their men and equipment in good order looks suspiciously like a prepared or planned withdrawal, either because Zagreb had already concluded the enclave was untenable or as part of a deal. It seems unlikely that Bosanski Brod would have fallen as soon or as neatly as it did without these coincidental actions.

The VRS was now able to turn its attention to the eastern end of the corridor, where HV/HVO forces in their remaining enclave at Orasje and joint Bosnian Army-HVO units near Brcko town remained in position to threaten the RS supply route. In mid-September, while the VRS was still focused to the west, HVO and Bosnian Army troops had even cut the link south of Orasje. VRS troops were able to reopen the route but lost it again for a time in mid-October.¹⁵⁵ While the 1st Krajina Corps was preparing another major offensive for November to clear the Orasje pocket and secure the route permanently, HVO units again cut the road in early November. After a promising start, the VRS November offensive failed, and HV/HVO forces drove the Serb attack units back in heavy fighting and terrible weather. It would be May of 1995 before the VRS would attempt another assault on Orasje. Instead, VRS planners turned their gaze to the threat on the south side of the corridor. In middle and late December, 1st Krajina and East Bosnian Corps units attacked Bosnian Army 2nd Corps and HVO troops west of Brcko, driving them back about 2 to 3 kilometers, giving the Serbs a bit more room. Still, the corridor remained a bare 3 kilometers wide at its narrowest point, southwest of Brcko town. Widening this portion of the vital route would have to wait until 1993.

Despite these lingering problems, in 1992 the VRS had achieved one of its most strategic victories of the

war, creating what many Bosnian Serb military articles call the “corridor of life.” The victory unified the Republika Srpska politically, and it physically linked its western wing and the Krajina with the rest of the Serb republic and the rump Yugoslav federation. The VRS was able to achieve this victory over experienced and numerically superior Croatian, Bosnian Croat, and Bosnian Army forces thanks to its typical mixture of professional leadership, organization, and fire-power, enhanced in these operations by the commitment of most of the VRS’s battle-tested former JNA units.

In coming years, the strategic importance of the corridor would loom large in the background of battles in the rest of the country. None of the subsequent clashes in the area would be on the scale of the 1992 campaign, but the perpetual threat that Bosnian Army and Bosnian Croat Army forces might retake the corridor and the implications for Republika Srpska if it were cut forced the VRS to station a sizable portion of the troop reserves from its best corps to safeguard it. Occasionally the VRS was able to draw on small increments of these reserves for other operations, but for the most part they had to remain untouched. Only when a combined HV/HVO and Bosnian Army offensive in 1995 threatened to overrun western Republika Srpska would the VRS be forced to draw down these reserves because the loss of the western portion of the state would have rendered the corridor they were defending meaningless.

Chapter 26

The VRS Assault on Jajce, July-November 1992*

While operations in the Posavina continued, the VRS began preparations during June and July to eliminate the large Croat-Muslim salient at Jajce, northwest of Travnik. The troops in the salient threatened Bosnian Serb lines of communications in the area and controlled two hydroelectric dams vital to Serb-controlled western Bosnia. The VRS was able to deploy some 7,000 to 8,000 of its troops from the 30th Infantry Division of the 1st Krajina Corps. VRS forces had a clear advantage in heavy weaponry, fielding 20 to 30 tanks and 30 to 50 field artillery tubes larger than

100 mm, while again demonstrating a distinct superiority in command and control and organization. Balanced against the VRS strengths were some very difficult terrain and strong fortifications defended by over 5,500 highly motivated HVO and Bosnian Territorial Defense (TO) troops. The lack of a unified Croat and Muslim command structure and squabbles among the two groups over the shape of their alliance would weaken these strong defenses.

The VRS campaign plan may have called for thrusts to cut the supply artery between Travnik and Jajce prior to reducing the pocket. Preliminary operations in July, however, failed to gain significant ground and the VRS switched instead to a straightforward attack toward Jajce itself.¹⁵⁶ The plan, in keeping with VRS doctrine, called for careful, step-by-step advances along three separate axes to deal thoroughly with the defenses and minimize losses.

This slow campaign began in earnest in mid-August when the VRS launched its first major attack, biting off a chunk of territory along the western approaches and advancing to within 2 kilometers of the town. The second step came in early/mid-September when the VRS seized another piece of ground to the southwest, pushing to within a kilometer of Jajce from that direction. A simultaneous joint HVO-TO attack north of Bugojno and Novi Travnik to divert this Serb drive failed to gain any ground or affect the VRS assault. Perhaps it was this failure that induced the Bosnian Croats to sign a separate cease-fire with the Serbs on 9 October in exchange for a pledge to provide electricity from the power plants. The Muslims, however, took no part in the discussions, and their relations with the Croats were frayed by a number of contentious issues. On 21 October, Croat and Muslim units holding the main supply route to Jajce opened fire on each other. The VRS took advantage of the discord and launched a final push to seize the enclave on 25 October, attacking hard along all three axes. Despite their differences, the HVO and TO troops fought well, yielding only after four days of heavy fighting. VRS troops entered the center of town on 29 October while a bedraggled column of disheartened soldiers and

* For a detailed account, see Annex 29: Operation ‘Vrbas 92’: The VRS Assault on Jajce, July-November 1992.

some 40,000 panicked civilians made their way out of the enclave to Travnik. The Serbs had again won their victory through superior organization, firepower, and planning. Although the disagreements between the Croats and Muslims certainly contributed to their defeat, there is no evidence to suggest that Jajce's fall involved a deal between the Croat and Serb leaders. The defenders were simply beaten in a straight fight.

Chapter 27

The Bihac Pocket, 1992

The Bihac region in the northwestern corner of Bosnia was ethnically a fairly homogeneous area, with a substantial Muslim majority in all of the region's four *opštinas*.¹⁵⁷ Nearly 90 percent of the region's approximately 250,000 residents were Muslims, with 25,000 or so Serbs living mostly on the southern edge of the pocket (for example, in Bihac and Bosanska Krupa) and a small Croat community of about 6,000 living in the Bihac suburbs.¹⁵⁸ The large Muslim presence in the area—a demographic oddity—was the result of a conscious Ottoman effort dating back several centuries to encourage Bosnian Muslims to settle in the westernmost corner of the Ottoman Empire, the permanent tide-mark between it and the Austro-Hungarian empire.¹⁵⁹ The resettled Muslims of the Bihac region became the counterweights to the Serbs of the Croatian Krajina, who had been resettled on the opposite side of the border by the Habsburgs to form a buffer against the Ottomans. Centuries later, the descendants of these resettled Serbs and Muslims would do battle along a cultural fault line whose original purpose had vanished into history.

What would later become known as the “Bihac pocket” had as its core area about 2,000 square kilometers of territory (roughly 4 percent of Bosnia’s land area) bounded by the Una River and the Bosnian-Croatian border. Most of the region’s terrain is hilly but not truly mountainous. (The most significant terrain feature, the high hills of the Grabež plateau overlooking Bihac proper, are immediately south and east of Bihac city.) The few primary roads traversing the area tended to channel major military operations along a few axes. One main highway ran north-south through the entire pocket, from Bihac through Cazin and on to the northwestern tip of Bosnia at Velika

Kladusa. A lesser road ran west from Cazin through the small town of Coralici and on to the Croatian border. Another major road ran east from Bihac along the south side of the Una River to Bosanska Krupa and Bosanski Novi. The region’s most important means of transport was not a highway, however, but rather a segment of the railway line that stretched all the way from Belgrade through north Bosnia to Bihac and ultimately to Serb-held Knin, the self-proclaimed capital of the Krajina Serbs. All three Serb communities—Serbian, Bosnian Serb, and Krajina Serb—thus had a stake in the recapture of Bihac city and the southern half of the Muslim-held pocket.

Partly because of the region’s significant Muslim majority, Bosnian forces in the Bihac region were able to organize much more quickly and effectively than elsewhere in the country.¹⁶⁰ The foundation of the Bihac region’s defense structure was the existing Territorial Defense headquarters. (As early as 16 April, Bihac had been established as one of the seven territorial districts—*okrug*—subordinate to the Bosnian Republic’s reorganized Territorial Defense Staff.)¹⁶¹ The Bihac area Territorial Defense provided the region’s Muslims with both a preestablished organization and the nucleus of a command staff. This military structure was at first called the “Una-Sanska Operational Group,” but in the fall it was renamed the ARBiH 5th Corps—destined to become one of the most distinguished fighting formations in the Bosnian military.

As elsewhere in Bosnia, frictions had heated the atmosphere of the Bihac area for months before the outbreak of actual conflict. Roadblocks mushroomed after the proclamation of the ethnic referendum, and someone fired shots at a JNA facility near Bihac twice in March.^{162 163} While most of the rest of Bosnia went up in flames within days of the Republic’s independence declaration, violence does not appear to have come to the Bihac area for almost two weeks.¹⁶⁴

When it did come, it was Bosanska Krupa, a medium-sized town of 15,000 residents on the south side of the Una River, that suffered first. The town had started to

split in July 1991 when Serb leaders established their own assembly in the town and began passing their own resolutions. Then, with only 27 percent of the population but with better organization and more arms than their Muslim neighbors, the Bosnian Serbs proposed a map whereby they would take over 60 percent of the town; they also made it clear they would enforce their demands with violence.¹⁶⁵ Their threats were realized late in the day on 21 April when Bosnian Serb Territorials from the Grmec area crossed the Una River and clashed with Bosnian Republic TO forces within Bosanska Krupa.¹⁶⁶ (The JNA's 10th Bihać Corps denied any involvement in the fighting, although at least a battalion of the 6th Partisan Brigade of the JNA's 5th Banja Luka Corps was almost certainly engaged.) The following morning, Serb forces surrounded Bosanska Krupa, and most of the Muslim citizens evacuated the town under a rain of mortar rounds.¹⁶⁷ By 23 April, Serb Territorials and the JNA battalion had occupied most of Bosanska Krupa, although some Muslims continued to resist in the western half of the town for several more days.¹⁶⁸¹⁶⁹¹⁷⁰¹⁷¹ The Bosnian Serbs now occupied the entire city on the eastern bank of the Una and most of the town's smaller half on the western bank; Muslim forces retained control of the hills overlooking Bosanska Krupa and some suburbs as close as 1 km from the edge of town.

An uneasy lull settled over the Bihać region after the fall of Bosanska Krupa, during which the evacuation of federal armed forces began in earnest, and Air Force and Army personnel began flying back to Serbia around 8 May.¹⁷²¹⁷³ On 16 May 1992, the last of the withdrawing JNA forces demolished Bihać's Zeljava airfield—one of the most modern military facilities in the former Yugoslavia—by detonating explosives under the runways and in the 5 kilometers of underground tunnels.¹⁷⁴¹⁷⁵ JNA units surrendered control of the two main barracks near Bihać on 19 May but do not appear to have left any significant military equipment behind.¹⁷⁶¹⁷⁷¹⁷⁸

Shooting started again on 12 May, this time in Bosanski Novi, a town along the Una River on the Bosnian side of the Bosnian-Croatian border. Rifle fire and mortar shelling began suddenly after the JNA claimed that Muslims had attacked a military police patrol.¹⁷⁹ Serb forces responded by taking control of the town within 24 hours.¹⁸⁰

Fighting approached the Bihać area itself in June after clashes broke out southeast of the city at the end of May;¹⁸¹ the city and some of its suburbs were first hit with small arms and mortar fire on 12 June.¹⁸² Thereafter, Bihać would huddle under periodic mortar and artillery fire for the rest of the war, VRS forces from the 2nd Krajina Corps (the former JNA 10th Bihać Corps) having established themselves on the Grabez plateau near the town of Tihotina, some 10 km southeast of Bihać. From positions here their artillery and mortars could fire into the city with virtual impunity.¹⁸³ For years Serb and Muslim forces would expend much of their resources and energy vying for control of this strategic plateau. As Bihać was coming under attack, fighting also began west of Cazin—a town in the center of the developing pocket.¹⁸⁴ Clashes also spread north to Buzim, northeast of Bihać, where fighting was reported in mid-July.¹⁸⁵

Trying to clear Muslim forces from the Grabez plateau south of Bihać, the Bosnian Serbs pressed a wider offensive, directing increased shelling, scattered infantry probes and even some air attacks against the defenders. VRS 2nd Krajina Corps forces first attempted to break through Muslim defenses at the town of Golubic on the Una River on 13 September.¹⁸⁶¹⁸⁷ After three days of unsuccessful attacks there, they tried attacking along a broader front south of Bihać and at Bosanska Krupa and Buzim.¹⁸⁸ Bosnian Army forces from Cazin responded by advancing south of the Una, capturing two towns at the foot of the Grmusa mountains.¹⁸⁹ The VRS tried to press the Muslim defenders along the entire front through the rest of September and into the middle of November.¹⁹⁰¹⁹¹¹⁹² The Bosnian Army counterattacked where it could in early and mid-October, gaining some strategic ground northeast of Bihać,¹⁹³ east of Buzim,¹⁹⁴ and in the Velika Kladusa area in the extreme northwest of the Bihać enclave.¹⁹⁵

The VRS occasionally bombed the Bihać area in the fall of 1992, but with few aircraft and to little effect. Two aircraft hit Cazin on 28 August,¹⁹⁶ and both Bihać and Cazin were bombed on 9 and 14 September.¹⁹⁷¹⁹⁸¹⁹⁹ Bosnian Government forces claim to have downed three VRS aircraft on 22 September.²⁰⁰²⁰¹

On 20 October 1992, the Bosnian Army formally established its 5th Corps under the command of Ramiz Drekovic, a former JNA officer from the Muslim-majority Sandzak region of Serbia.²⁰² The corps was formed by simply reflagging the TO-based “Una-Sanska Operational Group,” which had been directing the area’s defense up to that point, and under its new designation the corps would direct ARBiH operations in the pocket for the remainder of the war. The new command had nominal responsibility as well for Bosanski Novi, Prijedor, Sanski Most, Kljuc, and Mrkonjic Grad, but 5th Corps troops would see none of those other cities for over three years and would never set foot in most of them.²⁰³

The VRS 2nd Krajina Corps—possibly supported by the Krajina Serb Army’s 15th Lika Corps—mounted its last operation of the year in November. This more ambitious operation—“Una 92”—sought to clear the Grabež plateau and seize the entire southern bank of the Una River.²⁰⁴ The operation began on 14 November,²⁰⁵ but a week of fighting failed to dislodge the 5th Corps from its positions.²⁰⁶ After a short pause the attack resumed about 12 December, only to sputter out less than a week later with few gains. The VRS would become quite familiar with such results on the Grabež plateau in the years to come.

At the end of the year the Bihac enclave saw perhaps 7,000 to 10,000 defenders organized into six Muslim brigades and one battalion-sized Bosnian Croat unit, holding their own in a small triangular pocket completely surrounded by Serb forces.²⁰⁷ Opposing VRS forces comprised 6,000 to 7,500 troops of Colonel (later Major General) Grujo Boric’s 2nd Krajina Corps—five light infantry brigades—reinforced in the northeast by a light infantry brigade from 1st Krajina Corps numbering possibly another 2,000 to 3,000 troops.²⁰⁸ A battalion of armor, plus one or two field artillery battalions, backed up the Serb infantry.

By the end of 1992 the Bihac enclave fighting had assumed the general outlines—both figurative and literal—that would remain almost until the very end of the war in October 1995. The resilient Bosnian Army had already built a tough and resourceful fighting force—the 5th Corps—that was capable of holding its own against the forces of both Bosnian Serbs (to the south and east) and Krajina Serbs (to the north and west). While the Bosnian defenders of Bihac had

courage and imagination, they lacked weapons and strategic depth. Completely surrounded and cut off from the distant resources of Government-held Bosnia, the 5th Corps would be entirely dependent on the nearer anchor of Zagreb for the supply lifeline that would keep it in the war. Meanwhile, the Bosnian and Krajina Serb forces had problems of their own. Although Serb forces completely encircled Bihac’s Bosnian defenders, most of their frontage opposite the Bihac enclave was held by the 2nd Krajina Corps, the weakest and most overstretched of the Serb corps. The Krajina Serb units also had to deal with enemies in both front and rear. Forced to maintain a defense against the Croatian Army—their most dangerous foe—before them and the Bosnian Army 5th Corps behind them, the Krajina Serb military commanders could spare only limited reserves for offensive actions against the Muslims, lest an overambitious campaign leave them vulnerable to Croatian attack.

This improbable combination of opposing forces, capabilities, and geography created a dynamic imbalance in which each side could at times gain a local advantage but neither could wholly defeat the other. The Serbs started with the upper hand, since they had superior organization, equipment, and geographic position. From the outset, the Bosnian 5th Corps’ bottom-line goal was simply to stay in the fight. It is a testament to the Bosnian Muslims’ organization, dedication, and resourcefulness that they were able to do so.

Chapter 28

Battles on the Drina, Round One: April to December 1992*

Some of the most brutal fighting and atrocities of the Bosnian conflict occurred in the Drina valley. During 1992, Bosnian Serb efforts to control the strategic mountain valley bordering Serbia were repeatedly thwarted by stalwart Muslim resistance based on the numerous Muslim towns and farms dotting the valley. A seesaw series of vicious little battles—usually involving no more than a brigade on either side—raged up and down the valley during 1992. Overcoming great and persistent difficulties, the VRS managed to open a tenuous road corridor from the key border

* For a detailed account see Annex 30: Battles on the Drina, Round One: April to December 1992.

town of Zvornik to Serb-controlled areas around Sarajevo. Bosnian TO/Army troops, however, were also able to keep control over great swathes of territory around Srebrenica-Zepa and Visegrad-Gorazde-Foca, even opening a thread-like supply link to central Bosnia through the town of Trnovo, some 30 kilometers south of Sarajevo. From their valley bases, Bosnian Army troops were able to regularly threaten or cut the slender route from Zvornik to Pale. A successful Bosnian Army yearend offensive from Srebrenica against Serb-held Bratunac and Skelani was the last straw for the VRS, which decided to make the capture of the Drina valley its strategic focus for 1993.^{*}

The Drina valley theater can be divided into two major sectors: a northern one around Zvornik-Srebrenica and a southern one around Foca-Gorazde-Visegrad.^{**} In the Zvornik-Srebrenica area, the fighting was further subdivided into VRS efforts to create a road corridor from Zvornik to Sekovici and on to Pale, and Bosnian TO/Army moves to expand government control around Srebrenica. After the capture of Zvornik on 9-10 April, Bosnian Serb TO troops—with some support from the JNA—moved to expand the Serb-held bridgehead around Zvornik, pushing government forces back toward Kalesija. By mid-May, Serb forces had opened the road to Serb-held Sekovici, but they spent the rest of the year blocking repeated Muslim attempts to sever this route, which succeeded at least three or four times. Simultaneously, VRS troops had to stop the same Bosnian Army troops—those holding the Cerska-Kamenica enclave about 4 kilometers south of Zvornik—in their efforts to link up to Bosnian Army forces southeast of Tuzla. This Muslim-held enclave near Zvornik also lacked a territorial link to that around Srebrenica. Serb TO troops had initially seized Srebrenica, but on 8-10 May local Muslim forces, led by the charismatic Naser Oric, drove out the Serbs. Oric's forces were to

* The Bosnian Army offensive in late December 1992–January 1993 and the VRS counteroffensive, which began in February 1993, will be dealt with in Chapter 36, “Battles on the Drina, Round Two: December 1992 to August 1993.”

** The terrain in the Drina River valley is typically Bosnian, with heavily forested mountains and hills (a few rising to almost 2,000 meters in height) interspersed with small rivers and streams. In the main combat theater between the towns of Zvornik in the north and Foca in the south the geography varies so little that there is little benefit from a detailed discussion of the terrain in each sector. Instead, terrain will be discussed as appropriate in each section.

terrorize VRS troops—and the local Serb population—for the rest of the year, launching repeated raids on Serb villages and steadily widening government control in the area.²⁰⁹ The successful late December offensive that Oric carried out toward Bratunac and Skelani, combined with his foolhardy shelling of Serbia proper, finally forced the VRS Main Staff—and Belgrade—to deal with the Drina valley.

As in the Zvornik-Srebrenica area, operations in the southern region were seesaw affairs in which the Bosnian Serbs initially attempted to seize control over the Gorazde region. Bosnian TO/Army ripostes to open a supply route into the enclave soon followed, while the Muslims pushed to expand the territory under government control. The fighting around Gorazde-Foca-Visegrad sorted into three sectors: clashes between Cajnice and Gorazde town in the southeast, the fighting for the Gorazde supply corridor between Foca-Trnovo, and battles in the northeast between Rogatica, Visegrad, and Gorazde. The Serbs' initial efforts to capture the town in May, primarily from the direction of Cajnice in the southeast, came to naught, although battles for hilltops and passes in this area sputtered on until July. To the west, after the Serbs captured Foca in April and mopped up the rest of the municipality, fighting shifted to the southern edge of the Jahorina Mountains between the town of Trnovo and the enclave's western frontline. It was from this rugged area that the Bosnian TO/Army would successfully supply its forces in the enclave. After some early sparring, the government troops launched a major offensive in late July, seizing the passage to Gorazde and pushing VRS troops out of Trnovo. It then held the route open against VRS efforts to cut it in mid-November, which achieved only rare and temporary successes. Bosnian Army forces also won substantial victories in the northeast. Although Serb forces won the first round of fighting, seizing most of Rogatica municipality and positions southeast of Visegrad, a series of Bosnian Army attacks from late August to November retook key territory around Visegrad. This offensive placed ARBiH troops less than 3 kilometers from a key hydroelectric dam on the Drina River and within the same distance of the town itself.

The Bosnian Army had scored a number of notable victories against the VRS in the valley during 1992—victories that were to make the Drina the primary strategic target for the VRS in 1993. Outgunned by its opponents, the Bosnian Army made better use of the highly motivated natives of the region. Though they lacked formal training, these born mountain fighters were natural light infantrymen whose small, nimble units exploited their familiarity with the terrain to defeat the better armed VRS. VRS forces in the valley were also more vulnerable to these methods than Serb units in other theaters, who generally commanded more firepower and benefited from a higher proportion of former JNA units and personnel. The VRS would rectify this situation in 1993, bringing in better units and more firepower to conduct its next strategic offensive.

Chapter 29

Sarajevo, 1992: The Siege Begins*

From the very outset of the Bosnian war the primary focus of the world's attention was Sarajevo: the political and emotional heart of the nation. Well 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 glimpses of street fighting in the former Olympic village, the Kosevo and Zetra stadiums in ruins, and rows of new graves dug alongside the soccer field, the plight of besieged Sarajevo permitted most Western viewers to relate the carnage to something familiar and commanded media attention in a way that the often inaccessible and unfamiliar hinterland could not.

It was ironic and tragic that the cosmopolitan, peacefully multiethnic residents of Sarajevo were the last Bosnians to accept that war would indeed come to the republic. The shooting in Sarajevo began on 5 April, the day before Bosnia's formal declaration of independence and the onset of fighting elsewhere in the country. On that day, well-equipped Serb police, TO, and volunteer units surrounded and then attacked the Bosnian MUP's large police academy complex atop Vrace hill on the south side of the city.^{210 211 212 213} The building was contested for several hours, with about a dozen defenders wounded, before an EC-brokered

* See Annex 31: Sarajevo 1992: The Siege Begins for a more detailed account.

cease-fire was agreed to late in the day.^{214 215 216 217} The following day (the sixth of April, the anniversary of the city's liberation from the Nazi occupation in 1945) any illusion of normalcy in Sarajevo broke down completely. Bosnian Serb gunmen fired indiscriminately from upper floors of the Holiday Inn into the courtyard of the Bosnian Parliament building across the street, killing several people who were demonstrating for peace and injuring numerous others. Bosnian Government Special Police eventually stormed the hotel and captured six Serb snipers.^{218 219}

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 irrevocably changed the JNA's involvement in the siege and dramatically escalated the level of violence. It began after President Izetbegovic's plane returned from three days of unproductive international negotiations in Lisbon and landed at JNA-controlled Sarajevo airport.²²⁰ 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 the APC left when the Swedes learned that the flight was delayed.²²¹ So instead it was 30 JNA soldiers who met Izetbegovic and escorted him to the JNA barracks at Lukavica. JNA General Djurdjevac (commander of the 4th Sarajevo Corps) told Izetbegovic he was being detained "for his own safety," but the inescapable fact was that the Bosnian President was now a prisoner.²²¹

At the same time the Army was taking the Bosnian President hostage, the JNA itself was becoming a captive in most of Sarajevo. (Indeed, the JNA's capture of Izetbegovic may have been a direct response to the developing blockade of its forces.) Government police and Muslim volunteer forces ostentatiously surrounded several JNA barracks in the city—apparently on orders from someone other than Izetbegovic—and demanded the surrender of the troops inside. When the JNA troops refused, the Bosnian Government forces tightened their cordons and laid siege to the buildings. The Army responded with a bombardment of

²¹⁰ For an account of the UN's military role in Bosnia during 1992, see Annex 34: The Charge of the Light Blue Brigade: UNPROFOR First Deploys Fall-Winter 1992.

Sarajevo's medieval center by field artillery from positions outside the city, a shocking escalation of the familiar mortar fire that the Serb TO had sporadically used to pepper the city.²²²

An even more dramatic escalation was the JNA's next action—although the sequence of events is far from clear—against the Bosnian capital. From garrisons outside the city, the JNA sent two armored columns into the streets of Sarajevo in a maneuver that probably was aimed at relieving the besieged barracks and could have cut the government's defense of the city in half. One armored column advanced 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 into the government-held heart of the city. Muslim Patriotic League volunteers and Territorial Defense troops stopped the second Serb armored advance (within a hundred meters of the Bosnian Presidency building) with Molotov cocktails, rifle grenades, and a home-made artillery piece fashioned from a drainpipe. Caught at a disadvantage in the close-in fighting, four Serb tanks were destroyed and the rest withdrew south with no ground gained. Disaster for the government had been narrowly averted, and Sarajevo's beleaguered defenders scored a major psychological victory.^{223 224}

By the evening of 2 May, the President's capture had become public knowledge, and the Bosnian Government, the JNA, and the EC began a marathon negotiation of terms for a cease-fire and the President's release.²²⁵ By an agreement reached the next morning, the President would be exchanged for JNA General Kukanjac and his staff officers, who by then had been surrounded in the city's Second Military District headquarters. The Bosnian Government promised a safe conduct for the JNA convoy leaving the barracks, but—to Izetbegovic's fury—Muslim units opened fire on the withdrawing JNA vehicles, killing at least six federal troops and capturing the rear third of the convoy.²²⁶

As the JNA completed its withdrawal from the city in late May, the new VRS absorbed the JNA 4th Corps and Serb TO forces around the city and molded them

into a single force—the Sarajevo-Romanija Corps. This formation, using the structure of the 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.²²⁷ All told, the force comprised about 15,000 men, as many as 80 tanks, some 72 field artillery pieces, and 12 multiple rocket launchers, plus several hundred 60-mm, 82-mm, and 120-mm mortars. Initially, Major General Tomislav Sipcic commanded the corps, but Colonel (later Major General) Stanislav Galic replaced Sipcic at the end of the summer.

Sarajevo's defenders—initially numbering perhaps 10,000 to 15,000 armed personnel of all types, with only a few heavy weapons and very limited ammunition—were a motley lot.²²⁸ They included much of the former Sarajevo Territorial Defense headquarters and units from the Muslim-majority municipalities; some Muslim deserters from the JNA barracks in the city; probably several thousand Patriotic League members (at least organized, if not fully armed); and a few conspicuous, outright criminal gangs. These gangster bands—led by flamboyant outlaw chieftains like Juka Prazina, Musan “Caco” Topalovic, and Ramiz “Celo” Delalic—provided some of the city's best armed and bravest defenders, but they also brazenly extorted the citizens they were defending and for a time became a law unto themselves.

After a series of inconclusive skirmishes, the Bosnian Government attempted its first major offensive operation from within the city on 8 June. Bosnian Army forces mounted several simultaneous attacks aiming to capture four critical hilltop positions overlooking the city center: Moj Milo ridge to the southwest, Vrace hill and Vidikovac to the southeast, and the imposing Mt. Zuc to the northwest. With little more than surprise and determination, Sarajevo's defenders rolled back the besieging Serbs, but their ill-equipped troops were unable to hold on to much of their gains in the face of Serb counterattacks and artillery fire.^{229 230 231} In the end, the Bosnian Army was able to retain

control of only Moj Milo ridge, which at least removed the sniper threat to southwestern parts of the city.

Desultory shooting and shelling continued for several months while armed bands wrestled for control of individual Sarajevo neighborhoods, affecting the confrontation lines hardly at all. The next round of serious fighting opened in December with an offensive push by the VRS directed against the Otes and Stup suburbs of western Sarajevo, which were jointly held by HVO and Bosnian Army forces.²³² ²³³ By 6 December, the hard-pressed defenders had begun to fall back.²³⁴ The next day the Bosnian Government countered with another operation against the Serb-held peaks overlooking the city, attacking Zuc hill in the northwest and the edge of Mt. Trebevic in the southeast for several days. The Bosnians again pushed back their besiegers, taking most of Zuc hill and seizing the key Vidikovac peak on Mt. Trebevic.²³⁵ Vidikovac was lost to a Serb counterattack, but by 10 December the Bosnian Government triumphantly claimed control of the summit of Mt. Zuc—a crucial victory that largely secured the northern part of urban Sarajevo from Serb attacks.²³⁶ The city's Bosnian defenders had paid a high price in blood and effort, but they managed to close out 1992 with an important victory.

Perhaps more than anywhere else in Bosnia, the siege of Sarajevo highlighted the contrasts between a Bosnian Army with numerous determined but ill-equipped infantry forces and a Bosnian Serb military machine with far more heavy equipment but inadequate infantry reserves that had to be carefully husbanded. Most important, Sarajevo's defenders had no comparable weapons to counter the Serb artillery pieces that shelled the city with impunity from miles away. Unable to engage the guns directly, the Bosnian infantry had to assault directly the well-defended hills the Bosnian Serbs used as firing and spotting locations. Conversely, the several hundred artillery pieces, tanks, and mortars with which the Serbs ringed the city could inflict civilian and military casualties, spread material destruction, and sometimes put political pressure on the Bosnian Presidency, but they could not seize ground, and in the end artillery bombardment would prove unable to force the surrender of either the people or their leaders.

As 1992 drew to a close, Sarajevo's citizens could take some measure of pride and of hope from their handful of military victories: the halting of the JNA's surprise armored thrusts on 2 May, the capture of Moj Milo ridge in June, and the successful occupation of vital Mt. Zuc in December. The defense of Sarajevo at this time, however, was more a saga of disasters averted than of gains achieved. In a military situation where neither side could force a quick win, the stage was set for a protracted and bloody contest of wills.

Chapter 30 The Battles for Herzegovina, 1992

The JNA's attacks in Herzegovina and its campaigns along Croatia's southern Dalmatian coast directly intertwined the Bosnian and Croatian wars for the first time, as they would again more dramatically in 1994-1995. The JNA began offensive operations in April 1992 against Croatian and Bosnian Croat forces in western Herzegovina, near Kupres, and in southeastern Herzegovina near Stolac in order to achieve relatively limited objectives inside Bosnia. Forces from General Kukanjac's JNA Second Military District—drawn from the 5th (Banja Luka) and 9th (Knin) Corps—recaptured Kupres from a combined HV/HVO force on 7 April and threatened Croat-held Tomislavgrad and Livno to the southwest. The 13th (Bileca) Corps and 2nd (Podgorica) Corps from General Strugar's JNA Fourth Military District drove local Bosnian Croat troops out of Stolac in mid-April and captured nearly all of Herzegovina south of Mostar up to the Neretva. In May, after cease-fire talks collapsed, the JNA took control over much of Mostar, including part of the city on the western bank of the Neretva River. These operations were designed to defend "Serb" territory and pre-empt what the JNA perceived to be the threat of Croatian "aggression." Croatian political and military officials, however, saw in these attacks the first phase of a JNA strategic offensive to threaten and invade southern Croatia. They expected the JNA to drive through western Herzegovina while also attacking from Stolac across the Neretva toward the Croatian port of Ploce, permanently severing southern Dalmatia (and Dubrovnik) and possibly

threatening Split. This misperception initially drove Croatian strategic thinking, and, to meet the anticipated threat, the Croatian Army deployed additional combat troops into Bosnia and set out to reorganize and command the nascent Bosnian Croat military organizations and the Croatian Defense Council (HVO). With these forces the Croatian Government hoped to halt the expected JNA offensive, after which the HV would launch a counterstrike.

Corps General Janko Bobetko, a long-retired Croatian JNA general, led and organized the HV and HVO forces of the newly activated “Southern Front.”²³⁷ Bobetko launched his first offensive (or counteroffensive) in late May, attacking with units from inside Bosnia and from positions near Ston in Croatia to push JNA and Bosnian Serb Army forces from their positions northwest of Dubrovnik. Bobetko’s attacks conveniently coincided with the JNA withdrawal from Bosnia and the pullback of the JNA/VRS units in the area to positions inside Bosnia or near the Dubrovnik airport. This withdrawal greatly facilitated the Croatian advance, and HV troops in previously surrounded Dubrovnik linked up to Bobetko’s forces by the beginning of June.

Meanwhile, in Herzegovina to the north, Bobetko’s HV/HVO forces were preparing operations to eject the VRS from Mostar and the Stolac area. This offensive would guard the HV flank for further attacks to clear the Dubrovnik hinterland while simultaneously “liberating” large areas of Herzegovina populated by many Croats and Muslims.

Mostar: The Runup to Operation “Cagaly”

The city of Mostar was historically the capital of Herzegovina, and the heart of the region. The city’s name derives from the Serbo-Croatian word “*most*,” meaning “bridge,” and Mostar has for centuries been most famous for the *Stari Most* (“old bridge”), a single-span bridge of local white limestone spanning the Neretva river. The bridge was constructed at the direction of the Ottoman Sultan Suleyman the Magnificent and was completed in 1566. When it was first

completed, a garrison of bridge protectors, or “*mostari*” was assigned to guard the bridge at all times. Their name eventually passed to include all of the city’s residents.

Mostar had been a trouble spot before the war began, and relations between the JNA and the local citizenry were probably the worst of any place in Bosnia. After the JNA’s participation in the war in Croatia, JNA units were widely regarded by the Croat population of Mostar as an occupation force and a provocation. Even when the JNA attempted 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 were clearly unwelcome in most of western Herzegovina. On 1 February a JNA officer was severely wounded in a battle between an Army patrol and Croat police reservists.^{238 239} Three days later, hundreds of mostly Croat citizens blockaded the roads from Mostar to Ciluk and Siroki Brijeg in protest over the behavior of JNA reservists in the area. Two days later, the local Serbs responded by blockading the Mostar-Sarajevo road.²⁴⁰ Mostar citizens traded gunshots with the garrison of the JNA’s Mostar Bataljon barracks on 14 March,²⁴¹ and barricades went up once again the following day as Mostar citizens demanded the withdrawal of JNA reservists from the city.²⁴² Blockades partitioned the city into its ethnic neighborhoods for the next three days, and interethnic gunfire was exchanged in some outlying neighborhoods.^{243 244} 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.²⁴⁵ Finally, on 3 April 1992—only days before the outbreak of country-wide hostilities—a remote-controlled bomb was used to detonate an oil truck outside the JNA’s Mostarski Barracks, killing one and injuring 40.²⁴⁶ Mostar had practically become a war zone, even before the start of the actual war.

After the war did begin on 6 April, clashes between the JNA and primarily Croat forces began at several locations in Herzegovina. The town of Siroki Brijeg,²⁴⁷ west of Mostar, was hit by JNA air attacks

on 7 and 8 April.²⁴⁸²⁴⁹ JNA artillery began shelling some Mostar suburbs and shelled the city periodically thereafter.²⁵⁰²⁵¹ Croat forces unsuccessfully tried to gain control of Mostar's JNA-held military airfield on 9 April.²⁵² Serb territorialists seized control of two hydroelectric power stations on the Neretva two days later.²⁵³ JNA forces ejected the Croats from Stolac on 11 April, capturing the town with little or no resistance.²⁵⁴ Capljina, a Neretva river crossing some 25 km south of Mostar, was attacked repeatedly by JNA aircraft and artillery from early April onward.

In early May, Bosnian Croat leader Mate Boban met with Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic in Graz, Austria to discuss cease-fire terms and a possible political arrangement. They issued a formal statement on 7 May, agreeing to a cease-fire but indicating 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 eastern river bank should be Serb. The Bosnian Croats maintained that all of Mostar and the surrounding areas should belong to the Croats. The Bosnian Muslims—the largest percentage of Mostar's population—were neither consulted nor even mentioned in the official statement.²⁵⁵

The cease-fire was to prove short lived, for the following day JNA and Bosnian Serb forces mounted a concerted attack against the Croat-held portion of the eastern river bank.²⁵⁶ At this point, 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. 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 15 km away) was still free but subject to JNA shelling.²⁵⁷

Operation "Jackal": The Liberation of Mostar, June 1992

Almost from the outset of the war, the HV/HVO command been making preparations for the complete capture of Mostar itself, requiring the occupation of both the west and east banks of the Neretva river, followed by the capture of Blagaj and Stolac to the south. While the relief of Mostar was itself a critical objective, HV General Bobetko was also focused on the longer term goal of relieving Serb pressure on Dubrovnik. To these ends, the combined HV-HVO command devised a plan for a campaign to first retake much of eastern Herzegovina and then to relieve Mostar from outside the city, rather than breaking out from within. This plan was codenamed Operation (*Cagalj*) "Jackal" and was set for early summer of 1992.²⁵⁸

Bobetko's preparations were extensive. He first shored up weak HVO antitank capabilities by bringing in an HV unit from Sisak. He then worked to establish several small (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 effort would be assisted by Croatian Army artillery fire, which was intended to knock out the Serb command post in Aladinovici and to pin down Serb forces while the Croats executed a flanking maneuver through Klepci.²⁵⁹

At the end of May, the Bosnian Croats began a series of attacks 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.²⁶⁰ 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.²⁶¹²⁶² By 12 June, the

Bosnian Croats had cleared the Serbs from the western bank of the Neretva.²⁶³ 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.²⁶⁴

At the same time HVO troops were clearing Serb units from western Mostar and pushing them across the Neretva around the city, the main Croat attack, Operation *Cagalj*, was launched on 7 June. HV and HVO troops struck eastwards from Capljina, 25 km south of Mostar on the west side of the Neretva river, toward the twin objectives of Mostar to the north and Stolac to the east. The first important step was the capture of Tasovici, east of Capljina on opposite side of the Neretva, on 8 June.²⁶⁵ The Serbs' thin Herzegovina Corps lines collapsed, and rapid advances north and east followed. On 13 June, Capljina HVO forces captured the road junction at Recice and the towns of Bivolje Brdo and Lovke, then made a lightning advance east up to the outskirts of Stolac.²⁶⁶ The advance north along the east bank of the Neretva made similar progress, moving from Bivolje Brdo through Pijesci and Gubavica to reach the Mostar suburb of Buna by 14 June.²⁶⁷ By 15 June the Capljina HVO was consolidating its hold on Stolac and captured the nearby Serb stronghold of Hodovo.²⁶⁸

The final element of the operation was an advance northwest toward Mostar itself. One of Bobetko's columns struck north through Buna and Blagaj, reaching Mostar airport from the south. At the same time, another column consisting of troops from the 4th Guards Brigade and the Mostar HVO forces pushed south through Jasenica. The two Croat columns were able to effect a linkup at the Mostar-Soko airfield on 17 June.²⁶⁹ With this major objective accomplished, the Bosnian Croats turned their attention to mopping up the Bijelo Polje neighborhood in the northeast and advancing into the foothills of Mt. Velez to the east.²⁷⁰ By 21 June, follow-up attacks in Mostar and from the units advancing along the Neretva from the south had pushed the VRS completely out of Mostar, leaving the city more or less secure from Serb attack.²⁷¹ Although battles continued on and around Mt. Velez, between Mostar and Serb-held Nevesinje, through the rest of the summer and again in early November, neither side was able to make significant additional advances.²⁷²

The completion of Operation "*Cagalj*" was a major success for the combined HV and HVO forces. (Croat-Muslim relations were already strained in Mostar by this time, and the Bosnian Army was not included in any of the planning for Operation "*Cagalj*".)^{273 274} 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 (most important, 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 a subsequent operation to relieve the siege of Dubrovnik.

Operation "Tiger": The Croatian Relief of Dubrovnik and the Prevlaka Peninsula Agreement

At Dubrovnik, in early June, Bobetko had conducted a hastily organized attack to clear the VRS from key heights commanding the city from inside Bosnia. The attack failed. Bobetko took some time to develop a more thorough attack plan while building up his forces around the city. The new attack, Operation "Tiger," began on 4 July, and HV Southern Front troops were able to seize many of the important hill positions from the VRS by 10 July. After this, however, Colonel Radovan Grubac's Herzegovina Corps troops stiffened their defenses southwest of the Serb-held town of Trebinje. Repeated HV efforts to gain additional ground from July through September made only minor gains, despite the Croatians' superiority in manpower, thanks to the difficult terrain and a tenacious Serb defense backed by strong artillery support.

At the end of July, HV, VRS, and JNA commanders began talks mediated by UN and EU military officers on the withdrawal of JNA forces from their positions around Dubrovnik airport and the Konavli Plateau.²⁷⁵ Belgrade—and in particular the JNA General Staff—had insisted on maintaining control over the area after its formal withdrawal from Bosnia because of the strategic importance of the Prevlaka peninsula, which lies

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Dress Rehearsal for a New War: The 1992 Croat-Muslim Clashes

at the southern end of Konavli. If Croatian forces controlled the peninsula, they could look directly into Kotor Bay, where the entire Yugoslav Navy was stationed following the loss of all its other naval bases along the Croatian coast. The military officers deputed to the talks, however, had no authority to decide what essentially was a political matter. Instead, Lord Owen and Cyrus Vance, the EU and UN heads of the International Conference on the Former Yugoslavia—the international negotiation forum—brought President Tudjman and Federal Yugoslav President Dobrica Cosic together to work out a deal on Prevlaka. In late September agreement was reached for the JNA to withdraw from the area by 20 October in exchange for a UN-monitored demilitarization of the peninsula.

As the date neared, both the HV and the VRS began planning to fill the vacuum that would be left by the JNA withdrawal. The VRS realized that the JNA pull-out would uncover the flank of its Trebinje defenses, which the JNA positions in Konavli had guarded. The HV obviously wanted to forestall any VRS move into Konavli while “liberating” Croatian territory. On 20 October the HV enveloped the port of Cavtat with a well-executed landing from the sea and advanced to the hills along the border. Over the next six days, HV troops, in conjunction with units already in position north of Dubrovnik, pushed back the VRS troops that had attempted to occupy the hill positions. Key terrain that the HV had been unable to take earlier now fell as the VRS defenses came unhinged. The door to Trebinje lay wide open until President Tudjman bowed to international pressure to stop the fighting and ordered the operation halted. By 1 November, relative calm descended on the Dubrovnik front.

The Croatians’ skilled combination of military operations and negotiations brought them strategic success. Zagreb had regained control over all of southern Dalmatia and lifted the siege of Dubrovnik while joint HV/HVO forces had been able to defend and recapture key portions of Herzegovina, including Mostar, from the Serbs. Militarily, the HV had gained valuable experience in conducting large-scale offensive operations. The Dubrovnik campaign was the first in a long series of steps leading eventually to the Croatian victories of 1995. Events had also shown that dug-in Serb troops backed by ex-JNA artillery could still take the measure of Croatian forces and frustrate Croatia’s larger designs.

As Bosnia’s government fought for its political and military survival against its Bosnian Serb opponents, it soon became apparent that the Muslim-Croat Bosnian entity was a ship with two rudders—and, more ominously, two captains. On the one hand, Alija Izetbegovic was the nominal head of state of a newly independent country, most of whose land area was in rebellion, who was still working frantically to organize even the citizenry that remained loyal to him. On the other hand, Bosnian Croat political leader Mate Boban (a former supermarket manager from the Herzegovinian town of Grude) had rapidly risen through the workings of Tudjman’s visible hand to achieve political dominance over the self-proclaimed “Croatian Community of Herceg-Bosna”—an all-Croat, HDZ-dominated, one-party state with its own armed forces, schools, local governments, and currency. Izetbegovic was profoundly opposed to this de facto sovereign statelet within what was left of Bosnia, but—engaged in a life-and-death struggle with the Bosnian Serbs and dependent on Croatia for a precarious and vital supply line—he was in no position to do anything about it.

The capture of the JNA barracks and the divvying up of their weapons was the first occasion for open conflict between Bosnia’s Muslims and Croats. The first confrontations occurred in May 1992 as several JNA barracks and munitions production facilities surrendered in joint Muslim-Croat held territory. Disputes over control of the facilities and the division of the spoils within began immediately. Muslims and Croats first clashed over control over the Kaonik Barracks at Busovaca,²⁷⁶ then at the Novi Travnik “Bratstvo” arms factory,²⁷⁷ and over the contents of the Ljuta Territorial Defense depot.²⁷⁸ In July the disputes escalated and confrontations spread to Vares²⁷⁹ and Vitez, where control of the evacuated explosives factory was contested,²⁸⁰ and HVO forces seized JNA facilities from Muslims in Kiseljak.²⁸¹

In mid-August the Muslim-Croat divisions that were to plague the defense of Sarajevo throughout the war came to the surface as Serb forces pressed hard on the western Sarajevo suburb of Otes with artillery fire and infantry advances. A notorious gang of Muslim fighters led by Juka Prazina, one of Sarajevo's flamboyant local warlords, showed up to defend the town but immediately antagonized the local HVO. (The Sarajevo HVO also objected to Muslim forces launching uncoordinated attacks from Croat-held areas that provoked retaliatory Serb artillery fire into Croat neighborhoods.)²⁸² The unpleasantness was eventually smoothed over, but Bosnian Army-HVO relations in Sarajevo remained strained.

The level of Croat-Muslim violence escalated significantly in late October 1992. Outright fighting between the nominal allies appears to have begun first in Novi Travnik on 19 October and then in Vitez the following day. A truce was arranged in Vitez on 22 October, but Croat forces continued to shell Novi Travnik from the hills outside the town, causing serious damage. Meanwhile, the Serb troops outside the city watched in delight as their opponents battled each other. UNPROFOR finally arranged a cease-fire around Novi Travnik on 23 October, and the brushfire crisis appeared to have been stamped out. It would flare again.^{283 284 285 286 287}

Just as UNPROFOR was dousing the last of the embers in Novi Travnik, a conflagration was about to begin in Prozor, some 40 km directly to the south. Prozor was an unassuming town of about 15,000 Croats and Muslims, far from the frontlines and noteworthy only because it had the fortune or misfortune to sit astride the main north-south highway in Bosnia, running from the sea at Ploce to Mostar and Jablanica, through Prozor to Gornji Vakuf, and on to Jajce and western Bosnia. One version of the story is that the violence began in Prozor on 23 October as a gangland dispute over which mafia organization would receive a delivery of black-market gasoline.²⁸⁸ Another version is that the Bosnian Army objected when the HVO refused to allow passage for a military supply convoy.²⁸⁹ Yet another version is that Bosnian Army troops in Prozor refused to allow HVO special forces to reinforce the Bosnian Croats fighting the Muslims in Novi Travnik.²⁹⁰ Whatever the reason, the little

town of Prozor quickly and briefly became a tiny Stalingrad as both armies intervened on behalf of their ethnic populations and street battles raged. HVO forces brought up from Tomislavgrad shelled the Muslim sections of the town with artillery fire overnight. By the following morning, Prozor's roughly 5,000 Muslims had fled southward and much of the town was reduced to a burnt-out wasteland.²⁹¹

Tensions came close to the breaking point in many of the nearby towns of mixed ethnicity—Konjic, Jablanica, Bugojno, and Gornji Vakuf—but did not erupt into open violence as they had in Novi Travnik, Vitez, and Prozor. Mostar perhaps came closest to igniting, as Croat commanders occupied government buildings, raided the local SDA party headquarters, disarmed Muslim soldiers, and pressured Muslim citizens to leave the city.^{292 293} Had the Bosnian leadership decided to retaliate against the HVO after the events in Prozor, the Croat-Muslim civil war could easily have begun in 1992 rather than 1993. (Bosnian Army commander Sefer Halilovic reportedly argued for a forceful military response against the Bosnian Croats but was overruled by Izetbegovic and the senior Bosnian Government leaders after a closely contested vote.)²⁹⁴ Instead, Izetbegovic opted to send a pleading letter to Bosnian Croat leader Mate Boban begging him to end the “systematic destruction” of the republic and met with Croatian President Tudjman on 1 November to discuss improvements in Croat-Muslim cooperation.^{295 296 297}

The confrontations of October 1992 were clearly a precursor to the Croat-Muslim civil war that would erupt the following spring. Even the short, nasty conflict of October 1992 was costly enough: at least dozens and possibly as many as 300 people were killed (most of them Muslims) over four or five days, and many more were wounded.^{298 299} In 1992 both sides backed away from the brink and restored the uneasy Croat-Muslim working relationship common to most of Bosnia. In 1993, however, the two sides would not turn back, and another war within Bosnia's existing war would be the bloody result.

Chapter 32

Conclusions

The war in Bosnia was not an inevitable result of war-like peoples' desire to fight, but instead came about through the conflict of vital political interests among Serbs, Muslims, and Croats. Ethnic chauvinism and historical grievances, combined with the brutalities inherent in a civil war, ensured that the Bosnian conflict would be a bloody affair. As 1992 ended, the unfinished business of the year would provide the main battlefields for 1993. During the new year, the Serbs would move to end the Muslims' military control over key parts of the Drina valley and thereby achieve one of the primary Serb war aims. Meanwhile, the Croats and Muslims would resort to war to settle their differences over the political shape of Bosnia, while the Serbs stood on the sidelines and laughed.

The side that started the war—the Serbs—was able to achieve most of its war aims during 1992, including the creation of a territorially contiguous Bosnian Serb state. They were able to do this primarily because of their extensive prewar preparations for secession from Bosnia, including the development of armed units. The backing given the Serbs by the Yugoslav People's Army in early 1992, together with the transformation of JNA units into a Bosnian Serb Army, however, was by far the most important factor in the Serbs' ability to fight and win. This new army, the VRS, was able to win key victories, such as those in the Posavina corridor, through its application of professional military expertise and firepower. The Serbs owed their failure to completely defeat their enemies to the cumulative effects of the ambitious war aims of the Serb political leadership and the rapid expansion—at the cost of necessary training and discipline—of major portions of the VRS. As a result, when it took on a highly motivated enemy, as it did in the Drina valley, the Serb army suffered a bloody nose.

The Muslims' lack of military preparedness for the consequences of the Bosnian Government's drive for independence had catastrophic consequences for thousands of Muslim citizens. Many paid for their leaders' lack of foresight with their livelihoods and their lives as the Serbs burned their villages and killed or drove off the inhabitants. Even so, with little military experience to go on, through the Republican Territorial Defense and paramilitary Patriotic League the Muslims were able to build a framework from which to defend their new country. With even these primitive formations, when animated by the Muslim soldier's typical motivation born of desperation, the central government was able to hold most of Sarajevo and key regions in central and northern Bosnia while strongly challenging the Serbs elsewhere.

The Bosnian Croats and their patrons in Zagreb were the wild card in 1992 and would remain so throughout the Bosnian War. There were times when they joined with the Muslims to raise a stout military opposition to the Bosnian Serbs, particularly through the deployment of thousands of Croatian Army forces into the country. Indeed, the introduction of HV troops to pre-occupy the VRS was one of the key obstacles to an early, total Serb victory. Zagreb and the Bosnian Croats had a different vision of an independent Bosnia, however, than did the Muslims, one in which the Croats did not answer to a government in Sarajevo. Muslim-Croat conflicts erupted briefly at different places and over different local circumstances throughout the year, but all essentially were rooted in the divergences over what the nature of Bosnia would be.

As 1992 drew to a close, the Bosnian stage had been set and the actors introduced. It remained to be seen how events would play out over the coming years.

Endnotes, Section III

¹ Woodward, Susan L. *Balkan Tragedy: Chaos and Dissolution After the Cold War*. Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution, 1995. Quoted before the introduction. Also mentioned as a popular saying in Reiff, David. *Slaughterhouse: Bosnia and the Failure of the West*. New York: Touchstone (Simon & Schuster) 1995. p. 65, but not attributed to Gligorov.

² For the remainder of this document, "Bosnia" will generally be used for the sake of brevity to refer to either the republic or the independent nation of "Bosnia and Herzegovina," unless specifically stated otherwise. The term "Herzegovina" will continue to refer to the region of Bosnia and Herzegovina described above.

³ Total German casualties, including wounded and missing, amounted to 558. Yugoslav civil and military casualties, by contrast, may have amounted to as many as 100,000. Roughly 345,000 Yugoslav Army troops surrendered at the campaign's end.

⁴ The degree of collapse within the Yugoslav military is evidenced by the fact that the entire city of Belgrade surrendered to 11 men from the SS "Das Reich" Motorized Infantry Division on 12 April. The unit had been blocked by a blown bridge, but the 11-man detachment simply convinced Belgrade's Mayor that a much larger force was following immediately behind them. It was several hours before any additional reinforcements arrived, but Klingenberg's bluff worked and he received the Knight's Cross for his daring act.

⁵ Antal, Maj. John F. "Operation 25: Yugoslavia Disintegrates," *Army*, May 1993. pp. 28-35.

⁶ His original name was Josip Brozovich.

⁷ Maclean, Fitzroy, *Eastern Approaches*.

⁸ *Yugoslavia, A Country Study*, p. 42. Belarus, with comparable casualty rates, could compete for this dubious distinction but was not an independent country at the time.

⁹ The remaining 8 percent consists mostly of mixed-ethnicity individuals who declared themselves as "Yugoslavs" in the prewar census. Zametica, John. *The Yugoslav Conflict*. International Institute for Strategic Studies, Adelphi Paper #270, p. 36.

¹⁰ Both the urban-rural and western-eastern divides—as exemplified by the rivalry between Banja Luka and Pale for primacy within Republika Srpska—were to assume greater importance later on, but internal divisions within the Bosnian Serb community always remained secondary whenever the Serbs believed they were threatened by an outside actor: for example, NATO, the Croats, or the Bosnian Muslims.

¹¹ Laura Silber and Allan Little, *Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation*. Penguin USA, p. 212.

¹² Malcom, Noel, *Bosnia: A Short History*, 2nd Edition. Papermac, 1996, p. 199.

¹³ Referencing Mark 3:25, "If a house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand."

¹⁴ The Bosnian Presidency system had a total of seven seats, with two each reserved for Muslims, Serbs, and Croats, and one seat for a "Yugoslav." The two Muslim seats in the 1990 elections went to Alija Izetbegovic and Fikret Abdic. Biljana Plavsic—later to become President of Republika Srpska—and Nikola Koljevic took the two Serb seats. Stjepan Kljuic and Franjo Boras won the Croat seats. Ejup Ganic (a Muslim) won the "Yugoslav" seat.

¹⁵ Of the six republic presidents who took office after the first multiparty popular elections in Yugoslavia, Izetbegovic was the only one who was not a former Communist.

¹⁶ For reasons which have never become entirely clear, Izetbegovic got the office of president even though his political rival, Fikret Abdic, had won roughly 15 percent more votes. In a mysterious deal, Abdic traded his position as President of the Presidency in exchange for the selection of Alija Delimustafic as Interior Minister. Abdic would later not only break with the Bosnian Government but declare his own autonomous province north of Bihać and raise his own military (with Krajina Serb support) to defend it against Bosnian Army forces.

¹⁷ Silber and Little, pp. 210-211.

¹⁸ Gow, James, *Triumph of the Lack of Will: International Diplomacy and the Yugoslav War*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1997, p. 34.

¹⁹ Silber and Little, p. 215.

²⁰ Reuters, "Dubrovnik Bombardment Causes 'Irreparable Damage'" By Richard Meares, 12 November 1991.

²¹ Belgrade Radio, 11 November 1991. FBIS Vienna AU1111152691, 111526Z November 1991.

²² Malcom, Noel, p. 228

²³ Predictably, the SDA and HDZ eventually declared their support for the Croatian cause, whereas the SDS declared its support of the breakaway Krajina rebels.

²⁴ Reuters, "Four Yugoslav Republics Apply For EC Recognition," 24 December 1991.

²⁵ Technically, one could argue that the Bosnian referendum did not meet the criterion laid out by the Badinter Committee, since the Bosnian Serbs refused to participate and the vote was thus not representative of the population as a whole. The specific language stated that a "referendum vote in which all of the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina would participate" could "possibly" establish the will of the Bosnia-Herzegovina populations to constitute Bosnia and Herzegovina as a sovereign and independent state. [European Community Arbitration Committee Opinion No. 4—The Recognition of Bosnia-Herzegovina, reprinted in *Yugoslav Survey*, No. 1, 1992, p. 125.]

²⁶ Silber and Little, p. 206.

²⁷ The postwar Federal Yugoslav Government also imported or created many of the arms factories in Bosnia in order to help industrialize the previously backward republic.

²⁸ On 25 August 1991, during an address in Foca marking the one year anniversary of the formation of the SDA, Izetbegovic stated that "they" (presumably the JNA and Serbia) were trying to draw Bosnia into the war in Croatia, stated "This is not our conflict." Izetbegovic went on to claim that more Muslim JNA generals should be given command in Bosnia and stated that "Our boys will not be getting killed and will not be cannon fodder. They will not be commanded by others." (Sarajevo Radio, 25 August 1991.) On 27 August, a large group of parents of Bosnian conscripts serving in the JNA invaded the Bosnian Assembly, demanding that the JNA reassign their children to JNA units stationed in Bosnia and that in the future no recruits be allowed to serve outside the republic. (Sarajevo Radio, 27 August 1991.) The same day, Bosnian Defense Minister Jerko Doko announced that the republican government would postpone the dispatch of the September conscripts to the JNA and refuse to turn over conscription records to the Army

so that Bosnia could call up the draftees by itself. Belgrade Tanjug (27 August 1991.) (In the SFRY, the republican ministries of defense and local subordinate defense secretariats were responsible for maintaining conscription and reservist records and conducting actual callups for the JNA, as well as the republican territorial defense.)

²⁹ Belgrade Tanjug 20, 24, 26, 27 September 1991, Belgrade Radio 27 September 1991. The JNA and the Bosnian Ministry of Internal Affairs did reach an agreement for JNA reserve formations deployed in the area to be garrisoned in existing JNA facilities rather than quartered in local towns and villages. Belgrade Tanjug 26 September 1991. In at least one incident, JNA forces clashed with civilians (probably Croats) near the town of Stolac.

³⁰ Many Herzegovinian Croats were in fact more radical than their ethnic brothers in Croatia. Herzegovina had been one of the breeding grounds for the Croatian World War II Fascists, the *Ustashe*.

³¹ For example, the Croatian military newspaper, Zagreb *Velebit* noted that the HV's elite 4th Guards Brigade included many Herzegovinian volunteers upon its formation in spring 1991. See Zeljko Stipanovic, "Unit That Won All Its Battles," Zagreb *Velebit* 2 May 1997, pp. 16-17.

In addition, many prominent Croatian leaders were born in Herzegovina, in particular many of the Croatian emigres who returned home in 1989/1990 when the HDZ was formed. These included Croatian Defense Minister Gojko Susak and many of the ex-French Foreign Legion personnel, such as Colonel Ante Roso (later HVO commander), who played prominent roles inside the Croatian Army.

³² See interview with SDS member Momcilo Krajsnik, then President of the Bosnian Assembly in Degan Jovic, "Yugoslavia or War?" Zagreb *Danas* 6 August 1991, pp. 29-31.

³³ See Z. Ecim, "We Know Our Goal," *Kozarski Vjesnik* 20 May 1994 and "The Brigade of a Long and Honorable Warpath," *Kozarski Vjesnik* 29 July 1994, issue 984 for discussion of mobilization problems in one JNA and one Bosnian TO brigade, both of which were mobilized in the Prijedor area.

³⁴ Zagreb Radio, 29 September 1991; Sarajevo Radio, 29 September 1991; Belgrade Tanjug, 30 September 1991.

³⁵ Nevertheless, many Muslim JNA officers continued to serve in the Army throughout the Croatian war, much to the chagrin of their future Croat "allies" in the Bosnian conflict. These include such prominent figures as Rasim Delic, who was to become the Bosnian Army commander, and Enver Hadzihasanovic, who was a brigade commander in Sarajevo, later commanded the Bosnian Army 3rd Corps, and became the Chief of the Bosnian General Staff, although neither of them took part in combat.

³⁶ Although there is no evidence to substantiate Serb claims that either the Muslims or the Croats intended to launch military operations to expel the Serbs or at least eliminate their political leadership, many Serbs believed that they were threatened by such actions.

³⁷ Although the JNA clearly saw its role as the defender of the Serbs by the end of the Croatian war in 1991, that does not mean that the JNA desired to start a new war in Bosnia. During late 1991 and early 1992, the JNA appears to have still been working for a peaceful solution to the republic's crisis, although ready and willing to use force to defend the Serbs in the event it came to war.

³⁸ The SDB was later redesignated the RDB (*Rezor Drzavne Bezbednosti*—Department for State Security).

³⁹ Bogdanovic also stated that "[Bosnian Serb SDS leader Karadzic] was working patriotically, and sought out our help in organizing the Serbs, and we looked favorably on that. He was often in my office." "The Logistics of Service for the People's Will," Belgrade *Duga* 7-20 January 1995, 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.

⁴⁰ On 11 June 1991, before a meeting between Milosevic, Tudjman, and Izetbegovic, Milosevic, Borisav Jovic (the Serbian member on the Federal Presidency), Dobrica Cosic (a famous Serbian nationalist thinker and future post-Croatian war Yugoslav president), and Karadzic met to discuss Serbian strategy for the meeting. Jovic entry for 11 June 1991.

⁴¹ The information is drawn from Dr. Smail Cekic, *The Aggression on Bosnia and Genocide Against Bosniacs*, 1991-1993 translated by Haris Mesinovic, Kadira Hadzic, and Ferica Ducic. Sarajevo: Institute for the Research of Crimes Against Humanity and International Law, 1995, pp. 66, 385, which includes summaries and citations for a large collection of JNA and SDS documents that the Bosnian Government captured during the war. The document cited in this case did not say who issued the weapons, and the author assumes the JNA rather than the Serbian SDB (later RDB) provided them. However, it seems clear that the JNA did not begin issuing weapons to Serbs (at least on an official, large-scale level) until the JNA became fully involved in the Croatian war during the fall of 1991. When the JNA began issuing these weapons to personnel officially registered as "volunteers," it appears that it usually provided them documentation and receipts for the weapons that identified them as JNA, in contrast to the absence of a record for the 1990 document. In addition, the type of weapons distributed and the way they appear to have been issued are consistent with what is known about the SDB's provision of weapons to the Croatian Serbs.

⁴² Additional supply shipments found by the Bosnian MUP include one stopped on 24 May 1991. The truck, traveling between Niksic, Montenegro and Bileca, was carrying 80 Russian submachineguns and 16,000 rounds of ammunition. Cekic, p. 45. The description of the weapons as "Russian submachineguns" sounds like the Soviet World War II PPSh submachinegun, which given its age almost certainly came from Serbian TO stocks rather than the JNA. See also Cekic, pp. 76-79, for additional descriptions of weapons distribution to SDS local boards. Again, these appear to have been SDB-provided weapons, vice JNA. The list of submachineguns and machine pistols given to the senior SDS leadership during June 1991, and described in Cekic, pp. 86-87, also probably came from the SDB, although Cekic asserts it was the JNA. Cekic, however, does not say whether the documentation explicitly states that the SDS received the weapons from the JNA.

⁴³ Stanisic and key subordinate "Frenki" Simatovic both attended the four-year anniversary of the Bosnian Serb MUP's Special Police Brigade in April 1996. A *Nasa Borba* reporter who attended the gathering stated that "it was explained to us that the Serbian DB [State Security] was actively involved in the creation and training of this brigade, and that is the reason for the visit by high-ranking Serbian MUP officials." D. P., "Who Are Special Agents of Republika Srpska: 'Second Echelon' of Karadzic's Security," Belgrade *Nasa Borba* 13 August 1997 (Internet Version). The first Bosnian Serb Internal Affairs Minister was Mico Stanisic, who apparently is a close relative—possibly a cousin—of Jovica Stanisic.

⁴⁴ Jovic entry for 5 December 1991.

⁴⁵ This was concurrent with but entirely independent of the callup of Serb reservists in Serb-majority Bosnia.

⁴⁶ Silber and Little, p. 218.

⁴⁷ By early the following year, 85 to 90 percent of the JNA forces in Bosnia were Bosnian citizens. See Jovic entry for 25 December 1991.

⁴⁸ A full translation of this assessment was included in Cekic, as Supplement XII, pp. 304-321.

⁴⁹ Cekic, p. 92. A number of examples, based on captured documents, are provided on pp. 92-94, 97. For example, on 18 February 1992, the "illegal" (from the Muslim-Croat standpoint) Serb Regional TO headquarters for Bihać requested from the JNA 405th Rear Base—a logistic unit—2,000 infantry weapons, uniforms, and other supplies from the JNA in order to form a "Serb unit." In forwarding the request to its higher headquarters, the 405th noted that this request should be considered in light of the 30 December General Staff directive. Note that some of the examples given on pp. 94-97 involve Krajina Serb TO formations—6th Lika Division—as well as a regular JNA formation (10th Partisan Division), and thus for the JNA's purposes did not come under the nascent Bosnian Serb TO and police.

In addition to the 30 December General Staff directive, the SSNO appears to have issued a similar order on 21 February. See Cekic, p. 104, for a description of a JNA 10th Corps request to provide weapons and supplies to TO units in Bosanska Krupa during late April that uses the 21 February SSNO order as justification.

⁵⁰ On 25 March, the chief of the First (Operations) Directorate/JNA General Staff, Lieutenant Colonel General Dragoljub Simonovic, informed Adzic:

about the situation and capabilities of JNA units on the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the problem of deployment and withdrawal of war material reserves from depots and of endangered JNA communication, command, control, and logistics facilities on the territory of BiH.

As a result of this briefing, Adzic issued an order on 3 April to the Second Military District (and, as noted, although Cekic did not cite a similar order, presumably also to the Fourth Military District for its units in Herzegovina) calling on the JNA to:

Hasten the withdrawal of war material reserves, especially of modern and valuable combat equipment . . . Unit reserves to be handled within the removal and relocation of units.

The Second Military District also was to prepare,

. . . a map analysis of the area which will clearly show: what is situated in secure areas; what can be successfully defended, with adequate reinforcements, until the conditions for evacuation are created (exactly specify quantities to be defended and to be evacuated); what can be evacuated through threats and force by creating the corridors for withdrawal (on maps of 1:25,000 scale detailed plans are to be made), with the alternative of demolition/destruction (plan in detail what can be extracted by surprise of most important technical assets and what can be distributed to the population for safekeeping.)

Adzic gave the Second Military District a deadline of 10 April for the completion of these plans. Cekic, pp. 115-116, which give the specific citation of Adzic's order—Federal Secretariat for National Defense, General Staff of the Armed Forces of the SFRY, First Department, Top Secret No. 585-2, 03 April 1992—Att. Commander or Chief of Staff of HQ Second Military District.

See Cekic, pp. 115-123 for a description of the JNA withdrawal.
⁵¹ This number is an estimate based on totals after the early April JNA mobilization in key areas of Bosnia. See Annex 22 and the next section for more details.

⁵² Sarajevo *Ljiljan* 13-20 November 1996, Interview with Hasan Cengic, "The Crisis of the Dayton Agreement Will Not be Solved by My Removal," FBIS Vienna AU1811194496, 181944Z November 1996.

⁵³ Cengic refers to probably the same meeting at the "Dom Milicije" in Sarajevo, although he states the meeting was not until July 1991. According to Cengic, this was when the name "Patriotic League" was adopted, the "Council for National Safety" of Muslims was established, and preparations began for an organized military underground. Sarajevo *Ljiljan* 13-20 November 1996, Interview with Hasan Cengic, "The Crisis of the Dayton Agreement Will Not be Solved by My Removal," FBIS Vienna AU1811194496, 181944Z November 1996.

⁵⁴ Luckin, S., "Committed to Democracy and the Idea of Freedom," Sarajevo *Oslobodjenje* 13-20 July 1995, FBIS Vienna AU AU1807090095, 180900Z July 1995.

⁵⁵ Sarajevo *Ljiljan* 13-20 November 1996. Interview with Hasan Cengic, "The Crisis of the Dayton Agreement Will Not be Solved by My Removal," FBIS Vienna AU1811194496, 181944Z November 1996.

⁵⁶ Vasiljevic also claimed that KOS established contact with Alija Delimustafic (then Bosnian Republic Interior Minister) and persuaded him to block efforts to establish a state of emergency in the republic. Belgrade Nin, 12 June 1992, pp. 30-33. FBIS Reston VA 92BA1147A, 091456Z July 1992.

⁵⁷ Belgrade Nin, 12 June 1992, pp. 30-33. FBIS Reston VA 92BA1147A, 091456Z July 1992.

⁵⁸ The arms embargo applied most significantly to heavy weapons, the Bosnian Muslims' critical deficiency. Although all sides would undoubtedly have welcomed more small arms during the conflict, there were in fact a very substantial number of handguns, semiautomatic rifles, and automatic weapons in Bosnia even before the TO stocks were distributed and covert arms imports began. Basically, prewar Bosnia was a well-armed society: according to police reports from June 1991, 92,500 Muslim citizens owned 110,400 registered firearms, 131,900 Serbs owned 157,200 registered firearms, and 43,000 Croatian citizens owned 51,800 registered firearms. Belgrade *Politika*, 21 June 1993 p. 7.

⁵⁹ Mijalkovski, Milan, "Terrorist Conspiracy Against the State," Belgrade *Vojска*, 28 October 1993, pp. 12-14, FBIS Vienna AU AU1311192493, 131924Z November 93.

⁶⁰ Lazanski, Miroslav, "One Plane and 80,000 Men," Belgrade *Politika* 21 June 1993 p. 7, FBIS Vienna AU0107093893 010938Z July 93.

⁶¹ Halilovic, Sefer, *Lukava Strategija* ("Clever Strategy"), Chapter 17.

⁶² Belgrade *Narodna Armija*, Commentary by Ivan Matovic, "The Leopard's Skin is Getting Tighter," FBIS Vienna, 191329Z March 1992.

⁶³ The officer also claimed at the same time that there were 30,000 troops in the Bosnian Serb "White Eagles" and 15,000 in the Bosnian Croat HOS and ZNG combined. Belgrade Tanjug, 20 March 1992. FBIS London 201416Z March 1992.

⁶⁴ Mijalkovski, Milan, "The Guilty Are Still Going Unpunished," Belgrade *Vojска*, 23 July 1992, p. 42. FBIS Reston VA 92BA1274G, 111330Z August 1992.

⁶⁵ Sarajevo Radio, Izetbegovic 13 February 1993 Speech, FBIS London, 141027Z February 1993.

⁶⁶ This appears consistent with a press report stating that there were 5,000 Patriotic League members registered in Sarajevo's Novi Grad district alone, which were to become the nucleus of four Bosnian Army Brigades (the 1st Motorized, 2nd Motorized, 102nd Mountain, and 5th Dobrinja Brigades.) Mehicevic, Alisa, "I Will Not Evict a Single Person Despite All the Pressures," Sarajevo *Ljiljan* 8 January 1997 pp. 30-31. FBIS Reston VA 97E17030, 110242Z February 1997.

- ⁶⁷ Sefko Hodzic, "Foundations of the Bosnian Miracle," Sarajevo *Ostlobodjenje* 3 January 1996, FBIS Reston 090014Z April 1996.
- ⁶⁸ Sarajevo Radio, Izetbegovic 13 February 1993 interview, FBIS London LD1402125793, 141257Z February 1993.
- ⁶⁹ Izetbegovic speech to the Second Congress of the Party of Democratic Action, reprinted in Sarajevo *Dnevni Avaz*, 9 September 1997.
- ⁷⁰ Gjelten, Tom, *Sarajevo Daily: A City and Its Newspaper Under Siege*. New York: HarperCollins, 1995. p. 34.
- ⁷¹ Vego, Dr. Milan, "The Croatian Forces in Bosnia and Herzegovina," *Jane's Intelligence Review*, March 1993, pp. 99-103.
- ⁷² Sarajevo Radio 2000 GMT, 19 Jul 1992, FBIS London 192214Z July 1992.
- ⁷³ Z. Zanko Report: "Croatian Party Of Rights Will Not Leave Starcevic House" Zagreb *Vecernji List*, 12 May 1992, p. 9.
- ⁷⁴ Dedakovic returned to Croatia in October 1992, whereafter he was accused of stealing some 300,000 DM intended for Vukovar's defenders and imprisoned. He faced a military court but was eventually acquitted.
- ⁷⁵ Malcom, p. 228
- ⁷⁶ Vego, Dr. Milan, "The Croatian Forces in Bosnia and Herzegovina," *Jane's Intelligence Review*, March 1993, pp. 99-103.
- ⁷⁷ Zagreb Radio, 9 August 1992, FBIS London LD0908190692.
- ⁷⁸ See particularly Bobetko pp. 212-216, 220-221, 224, 229 for photographs of Bobetko orders to HV officers organizing HVO defenses in key areas of Herzegovina.
- ⁷⁹ 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.
- ⁸⁰ 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.
- ⁸¹ Bijeljina municipality had about 96,000 people in 1991, comprising 59 percent Serbs and 31 percent Muslims, with a smattering of Croats. Although an ethnic breakdown for the town itself is not available, it probably was more heavily Muslim, while many of the surrounding villages were predominantly Serb. Population data taken from The Miroslav Krleza Lexicographical Institute, *A Concise Atlas of the Republic of Croatia & of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina*, Zagreb: 1993.
- ⁸² See Abdulah Sahinpasic, "Every Beginning is Hard," Sarajevo *Slobodna Bosna*, 5 April 1996, pp. 12-15. Although a Muslim account, it appears to provide the most accurate details of the events surrounding the capture of Bijeljina, including preliminary Serb political and bureaucratic moves preceding the actual seizure.
- ⁸³ Abdulah Sahinpasic, "Every Beginning is Hard," Sarajevo *Slobodna Bosna*, 5 April 1996, pp. 12-15; Sarajevo Radio 4 April 1992; Belgrade Radio 4 April 1992.
- ⁸⁴ Sarajevo Radio 3 April 1992. JNA troops in Bijeljina did not intervene during the fighting, either to halt the Serb attacks or to directly support them. JNA troops, however, did shelter both Serb and Muslim refugees in the JNA's Bijeljina area barracks. See Sejo Omeragic, "Tracking Down Crime: The Bloody Bijeljina Bayram," Sarajevo *Slobodna Bosna*, 5 April 1996, pp. 12-15.
- ⁸⁵ In one of the Bosnian Presidency's last official acts before the government collapsed, Izetbegovic sent a joint delegation (including Fikret Abdic, a Muslim; Jerko Doko, a Croat; and Biljana Plavsic, a Serb) to investigate what had happened in Bijeljina. Predictably, the inquiry went nowhere. The most memorable aspect of the "investigation" occurred when the future president of the Republika Srpska, Biljana Plavsic, first encountered Arkan after the Bijeljina takeover. She greeted him with a kiss.
- ⁸⁶ Sarajevo Radio, 4 April 1992.
- ⁸⁷ Koljevic's and Plavsic's gesture was largely irrelevant, since the entire SDS contingent had already walked out of the parliament.
- ⁸⁸ General Kukanjac ordered the JNA Second Military District subordinates not to hand over any weapons to the TO without written permission from the District commander. See Cekic, p. 91.
- ⁸⁹ Sarajevo Radio, 4 April 1992.
- ⁹⁰ Sarajevo Radio, 4-6 April 1992; Belgrade Radio, 4-6 April 1992, Belgrade Tanjug, 4-6 April 1992; Silber and Little, pp. 226-227.
- ⁹¹ On the night of 5 April the JNA seized control of Sarajevo airport.
- ⁹² The date 6 April was by coincidence a historically charged one. On 6 April 1941, Hitler's Wehrmacht began its lightning invasion of Yugoslavia, and Luftwaffe bombers devastated Belgrade. Appropriately, it was on 6 April 1945 that Sarajevo was liberated from the German occupation.
- ⁹³ Also by coincidence, the UN Security Council formally voted that same day to recommend full deployment of UNPROFOR peacekeepers in Croatia.
- ⁹⁴ Belgrade Tanjug, 15 March 1992, FBIS London LD1503154992, 151549Z March 1992.
- ⁹⁵ Belgrade Radio, 28 March 1992, FBIS Vienna AU2803162092, 281620Z March 1992.
- ⁹⁶ Sarajevo Radio, 10 April 1992, FBIS Vienna AU1004180392, 101803Z April 1992.
- ⁹⁷ Travnik *Bosnjak*, Interview With Senahid Hadzic, Commander of the 9th Muslim Liberation Brigade, "Crucial Test," 21 November 1995. FBIS Reston VA, 96BA0040A.
- ⁹⁸ Sarajevo Radio, 8 April 1992, FBIS Vienna AU0804181592, 081815Z April 1992.
- ⁹⁹ Sarajevo Radio, 8 April 1992, FBIS Vienna AU0804224092, 082240Z April 1992.
- ¹⁰⁰ Gjelten, Tom, *Sarajevo Daily: A City and its Newspaper Under Siege*. New York: HarperCollins, 1995. pp. 89-91.
- ¹⁰¹ JNA elements within Bosnia itself included part of the 336th Motorized Brigade, while JNA artillery from the First Military District was deployed on the Serbian side of the Drina River. 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.
- ¹⁰² Belgrade Tanjug, 10 April 1992, FBIS London LD1004224892, 102248Z April 1992.
- ¹⁰³ Silber and Little, p. 224.
- ¹⁰⁴ 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 that 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.
- ¹⁰⁵ Belgrade Tanjug Domestic Service, 13 January 1992, FBIS London LD1301140392, 131403Z January 1992.
- ¹⁰⁶ Belgrade Tanjug, 4 March 1992, FBIS London LD0403233392, 042333Z March 1992.
- ¹⁰⁷ Sarajevo *Ostlobodjenje*, Interview with Momcilo Mandic, Assistant Minister of Internal Affairs of Bosnia-Herzegovina, "They Want the Personnel Officer to Be Replaced!" 6 March 1992, p. 2.

- ¹⁰⁸ Belgrade Tanjug, 23 March 92, FBIS London LD2303114292, 231142Z March 1992.
- ¹⁰⁹ Belgrade RTV, 24 March 1992, FBIS Vienna AU2403194292, 241942Z March 1992.
- ¹¹⁰ Belgrade Tanjug, 24 March 1992, FBIS London LD2403234392, 242343Z March 1992.
- ¹¹¹ Sarajevo Radio, 8 April 1992, FBIS Vienna AU804151492, 081514Z August 1992.
- ¹¹² Zagreb Radio, 9 April 1992, FBIS London LD0904120792, 091207Z April 1992.
- ¹¹³ Belgrade Tanjug Domestic Service, 9 April 1992, FBIS London LD0904215792, 092157Z April 1992.
- ¹¹⁴ Sarajevo Radio, 10 April 1992, FBIS Vienna AU1004203092, 102030Z April 1992.
- ¹¹⁵ Belgrade RTB Television Network, 9 April 1992, FBIS Vienna AU0904191892, 091918Z April 1992.
- ¹¹⁶ As the fighting around Visegrad drew to a close, there was a bizarre epilogue involving a Bosnian Muslim, Murad Sabanovic, who took 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. The small amount of water released did little damage. Glenny, Misha, *The Fall of Yugoslavia*. Penguin, 1992. pp. 165-166.
- ¹¹⁷ Belgrade Radio 1 March 1992, FBIS Vienna AU0103210892, 012108Z March 1992.
- ¹¹⁸ Belgrade Tanjug Domestic Service, 2 March 1992, FBIS London LD0203160192, 021601Z March 1992.
- ¹¹⁹ Belgrade Tanjug Domestic Service, 23 March 1992, FBIS London LD2303132592, 231325Z March 1992.
- ¹²⁰ 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 sizable town with its own TO headquarters.
- ¹²¹ Belgrade Tanjug Domestic Service, 15 May 1992, FBIS London LD1505135392, 151353Z May 1992.
- ¹²² Belgrade Radio 8 April 1992, FBIS Vienna AU0804114792, 081147Z April 1992.
- ¹²³ Zagreb Radio 9 April 1992, FBIS London LD0904101192, 091011Z April 1992.
- ¹²⁴ Sarajevo Radio, 9 April 92, FBIS Vienna AU0904190792, 091907Z April 1992.
- ¹²⁵ Sarajevo Radio, 11 April 1992, FBIS Vienna AU1104213792, 112137Z April 1992.
- ¹²⁶ Zagreb Radio, 13 April 1992, FBIS London LD1304080792, 130807Z April 1992.
- ¹²⁷ Belgrade Radio, 13 April 1992, FBIS Vienna AU1304173292, 131732Z April 1992.
- ¹²⁸ Belgrade Radio, 14 April 1992, FBIS Vienna AU1404161692, 141616Z April 1992.
- ¹²⁹ Belgrade Tanjug Domestic Service, 17 April 1992, FBIS London LD1704152792, 171527Z April 1992.
- ¹³⁰ Following the Serb capture of Foca in mid-April, a particularly bad example of "ethnic cleansing" ensued. Muslim-owned houses were looted or torched, mosques were burned down, and the small Muslim population that remained behind was 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.

Glenny, Misha, *The Fall of Yugoslavia*. Penguin, 1992. p. 166.

¹³¹ Sarajevo Radio, 28 April 1992, FBIS Vienna AU2804192492, 281924Z April 1992.

¹³² Belgrade Radio, 30 April 1992, FBIS Vienna AU3004161292, 301612Z April 1992.

¹³³ Interview with General Sulejman Vranj by Fahira Fejzic, "They Didn't Believe That I Would Get to Sarajevo Alive, So They Only Entrusted One Launcher to Me," Sarajevo *Ljiljan*, 15 May 1996 pp. 20-21.

¹³⁴ Sarajevo Radio, 18 May 1992, FBIS Vienna AU1805141792.

¹³⁵ Sarajevo Radio 6 May 1992, FBIS Vienna AU0605161392, 061613Z May 1992.

¹³⁶ Sarajevo Radio, 12 May 1992, FBIS Vienna AU1305122492.

¹³⁷ Sarajevo Radio, 18 May 1992, FBIS Vienna AU1805141792.

¹³⁸ Bosnian MUP and Territorial Defense forces had already seized the arms, ammunition, and equipment of the former Regional Headquarters of the Tuzla Territorial Defense stored at Tuzla, Srebrenik, and Lukavac at the very outset of the fighting (15 April). (From the chronology in a 1993 Bosnian Army soldier's handbook.)

¹³⁹ These were the "27 July" and "Grmec" Barracks. "Grabezi" Barracks, somewhat further away, remained in the hands of Serb Territorials.

¹⁴⁰ Sarajevo Radio, 19 May 1992, FBIS Vienna AU1905092892.

¹⁴¹ Sarajevo Radio, 19 May 1992, FBIS Vienna AU1905174892.

¹⁴² Sarajevo Radio, 24 May 1992, FBIS Vienna AU2405163792.

¹⁴³ Sarajevo Radio, 28 May 1992, FBIS Vienna AU2805125792.

¹⁴⁴ Sarajevo Radio, 5 June 1992, FBIS Vienna AU506111792.

¹⁴⁵ These war aims are based on a speech and an interview that Bosnian Serb President Radovan Karadzic gave in 1995. See Banja Luka Srpska Televizija 12 September 1995 for a long interview with Karadzic in which he outlines the military and diplomatic situations in 1995 and relates them to war aims that the Bosnian Serb Assembly approved in 1992. Karadzic's speech to officials in Eastern Herzegovina on 25 August 1995 on Banja Luka Srpska Televizija is a more propagandistic, less straightforward discussion of the same aims, again in the context of the political-military situation in 1995.

¹⁴⁶ This section is derived largely from this author's experience analyzing the Bosnian Serb Army on a daily basis for more than five years.

¹⁴⁷ Drawn from the testimony of defense expert witness Brigadier Muhamed Zejzagic during the ICTY War Crimes Tribunal "Celebici" trial of Zeljko Delalic, et. al.

¹⁴⁸ Sarajevo Radio, 10 April 1992, FBIS Vienna 102132Z Apr 92, AU1004213292.

¹⁴⁹ Lazanski, Miroslav, "One Plane and 80,000 men." Belgrade Politika 21 June 1993 p. 7. FBIS Vienna AU0107093893 010938Z July 1993.

¹⁵⁰ 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 be a full examination of the war crimes issue. It also will not focus on the often exaggerated actions of so-called "paramilitary" units (more accurately designated volunteers); these cutthroats served as auxiliaries to VRS regular formations. Much of the reporting, unless otherwise cited, is drawn from a series of debriefings of refugees expelled by the Bosnian Serbs during their operations. This reporting has been judged to be highly accurate in most cases. Crosschecks between reports, together with other sources that corroborate these debriefings, have allowed us to develop a detailed picture of the VRS operations.

¹⁵¹ As cited in Reiff, David, *Slaughterhouse: Bosnia and the Failure of the West*. New York: Touchstone, 1994. pp. 76-77.

¹⁵² Vulliamy, Ed, *Seasons in Hell: Understanding Bosnia's War*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994. p. 66.

¹⁵³ 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. In addition, 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. Thus, for example, the Bosnian Serb military journals, *Krajiski Vojnik* and *Srpska Vojska* have many detailed articles on the corridor, describing 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. In addition, unlike the Croatian Army commander in Herzegovina and the Dalmatian coast, General Bobetko, General Stipetic—the last HV commander in Posavina—is still an active-duty officer and has not published his memoirs.

¹⁵⁴ This section will discuss events from March 1992 to January 1993 in a single narrative because there was no clear separation dividing operations in March from those in June. One set came right after the other and need to be discussed in context.

¹⁵⁵ As Bosnian Army 2nd Corps Commander Hasim Sadic was to say two years later:

You know that we fought a battle for the corridor once before, in cooperation with the 4th Operational HVO Zone of Orasje. The HVO progressed till Vucilovac, and we then took the position of Gorica-Krepsic and got as close as 1.5 km, but we did not manage to hold out. While the HVO brigades remained at the positions, we had to withdraw more to the south.

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. FBIS Vienna AU, 171056Z August 1994.

¹⁵⁶ It is also likely that the VRS chose to leave a route out of the pocket open to encourage the population to evacuate the enclave when it fell, thus removing the need for VRS personnel to eject the Croats and Muslims themselves.

¹⁵⁷ Bihać, Bosanska Krupa, Cazin, and Velika Kladusa.

¹⁵⁸ Figures are approximate and are taken from the 1991 Yugoslav census data.

¹⁵⁹ Unlike the rest of Bosnia—most of which was conquered in 1463—the Bihać region remained in Croat-Hungarian hands through most of the 16th century. Indeed, the Habsburg fortress in the city was not captured by the Turks until 1592.

¹⁶⁰ The Muslims were also somewhat better armed at the outset, since the Patriotic League had managed to intercept a significant fraction of the former Territorial Defense weapons that the JNA had intended to distribute to the area's Serbs. Halilovic, Sefer, Lukava Strategija ("Clever Strategy"), chapter 17.

¹⁶¹ Sarajevo Radio, 16 April 1992, FBIS Vienna AU1704094892.

¹⁶² Belgrade Tanjug, 1 March 1992, FBIS London LD0103120292.

¹⁶³ Belgrade Tanjug, 31 March 1992, FBIS London LD3103090492.

¹⁶⁴ As late as the second week of May, JNA 10th Bihać Corps commander Lt. Col. General Spiro Ninkovic cited the Bihać area as an area of relative stability and an example for the rest of Bosnia. As Ninkovic put it—with the exception of the town of Bosanska Krupa, which had already been taken over by Serb forces—Bihać was an area where "sanity prevails and interparty antagonisms are not as they are in the broader areas of Bosnia-Herzegovina." (Belgrade Tanjug, 8 May 1992, FBIS London LD0805121592) Given the bizarre and tragic free-for-all which was to ensue—with Muslims, Bosnian Serbs, Bosnian Croats, Krajina Serbs, and separatist Abdic forces all fighting in the area—Ninkovic's words appear in retrospect to be ironically far off the mark.

¹⁶⁵ O' Shea, Brendan, *Crisis at Bihać: Bosnia's Bloody Battlefield*, UK: Sutton Publishing, 1998. p. 3.

¹⁶⁶ Sarajevo Radio, 21 April 1992, FBIS Vienna AU2104182292.

¹⁶⁷ Sarajevo Radio, 22 April 1992, FBIS London LD2204124792.

¹⁶⁸ Sarajevo Radio, 22 April 1992, FBIS Vienna AU2204210992.

¹⁶⁹ Zagreb Radio, 30 April 1992, FBIS London LD3004083192.

¹⁷⁰ Belgrade Tanjug, 24 April 1992, FBIS London LD2504002192.

¹⁷¹ Nikola Zoric, "11th Krupa Light Infantry Brigade: Order on Krajina Chests," *Srpska Vojska* 15 July 1993, pp. 8-9, describes the fighting around Krupa from the perspective of the Serb Krupa TO—later the VRS 11th Krupa Light Infantry Brigade.

¹⁷² Belgrade Tanjug, 8 May 1992, FBIS London LD0805220392.

¹⁷³ Belgrade Tanjug, 9 May 1992, FBIS London LD0905224792.

¹⁷⁴ There may have been a shortage of pilots anyhow. Zagreb Radio claimed that 32 Air Force pilots from the Bihać garrison had declared their allegiance to the Bosnian Republic Government shortly after the outbreak of hostilities. Zagreb Radio, 10 April 1992, FBIS London LD1004095792.

¹⁷⁵ Sarajevo Radio, 16 May 1992, FBIS Vienna AU605143592.

¹⁷⁶ These were the "27 July" and "Grmec" Barracks. The "Grabež" Barracks, somewhat further away, remained in the hands of Serb Territorials.

¹⁷⁷ Sarajevo Radio, 19 May 1992, FBIS Vienna AU190592892.

¹⁷⁸ Sarajevo Radio, 19 May 1992, FBIS Vienna AU1905174892.

¹⁷⁹ Belgrad Radio, 12 May 1992, FBIS Vienna AU1205140592.

¹⁸⁰ Zagreb Radio, 12 May 1992, FBIS London LD1205153192.

¹⁸¹ Belgrade Radio, 31 May 1992, FBIS Vienna AU3105165292.

¹⁸² Sarajevo Radio, 12 June 1992, FBIS Vienna AU1206074192.

¹⁸³ Zagreb Radio, 27 September 1992, FBIS London LD2709151292.

¹⁸⁴ Sarajevo Radio, 13 June 1992, FBIS Vienna AU1306163192.

¹⁸⁵ Belgrade Radio, 14 July 1992, FBIS Vienna AU1407163292.

¹⁸⁶ Zagreb Radio 13 September 1992, FBIS London

LD1309141792 The 15th Bihać Light Infantry Brigade carried out the attack on Golubic.

¹⁸⁷ Zagreb Radio, 16 September 1992, FBIS London LD1609113492.

¹⁸⁸ Sarajevo Radio, 18 September 1992, FBIS Vienna AU1809134092.

¹⁸⁹ The Bosnian Army's 1st Cazin (later 503rd) Brigade took the towns of Novakovci and Trnjak. Sarajevo Radio, 16 September 1992, FBIS London LD1609215792.

¹⁹⁰ Zagreb Radio, 23 September 1992, FBIS London LD2309100992.

¹⁹¹ Sarajevo Radio, 25 September, FBIS Vienna AU2509124392.

¹⁹² Zagreb Radio, 7 November 1992, FBIS London LD0711235692.

¹⁹³ Zagreb Radio, 10 October 1992, FBIS London LD1010121192.

¹⁹⁴ The Bosnian Army's 105th (later 505th) Buzim Brigade advanced several kilometers east toward Bosanski Novi, capturing Banjani and Basta but was unable to completely force the Serbs out of the area north of Otoka. Zagreb Radio, 13 October 1992, FBIS London LD1310163492.

¹⁹⁵ Bosnian Army forces captured the Bosanska Bojna area 16 October 1992. Zagreb Radio, 16 October 1992, FBIS London LD1610115792.

¹⁹⁶ Zagreb Radio, 28 August 1992, FBIS London LD2808100192.

¹⁹⁷ Zagreb Radio, 9 September 1992, FBIS London LD0909195792.

¹⁹⁸ Zagreb Radio, 14 September 1992, FBIS London LD1409121492.

¹⁹⁹ Sarajevo Radio, 14 September 1992, FBIS Vienna AU1409123392.

²⁰⁰ Zagreb Radio, 22 September 1992, FBIS London LD2209113392.

²⁰¹ Sarajevo Radio, 22 September, FBIS Vienna AU2209180192.

²⁰² Ramiz Drekovic was the 5th Corps' first commander.

²⁰³ Zagreb Radio, 20 October 1992, FBIS London LD2010132392.

²⁰⁴ The 2nd Krajina Corps's initial objective were a series of much-disputed hills running from just south of Bihać north across the plateau to the Una. See Brendan O'Shea, *Crisis at Bihać: Bosnia's Bloody Battlefield*, Gloucestershire, Sutton Publishing Limited, 1998, pp. 8-9. Nikola Zoric, "11th Krupa Light Infantry Brigade: Order on Krajina Chests," *Srpska Vojska* 15 July 1993, pp. 8-9. For day-to-day reporting on the fighting, see Paris AFP 1 December 1992, Zagreb Radio 1 December 1992, 15 December 1992; Belgrade Radio 5 December 1992; Sarajevo Radio 6 December 1992, Sarajevo Radio 11 December 1992, 14 December 1992.

²⁰⁵ The 2nd Krajina Corps employed the bulk of the 1st Drvar, 15th Bihać, and 17th Kljuc Light Infantry brigades, plus the 3rd Battalion/11th Krupa Light Infantry Brigade and an engineer (pioneer) battalion, used as infantry. Predrag Malic, "Pioneer Battalion of Laniste—Future Overflow Chamber of the Klenovac-Laniste Pipe-line," *Mladi Inzinjerac* February 1993, p. 4.

²⁰⁶ The 5th Corps appears to have employed the 1st and 2nd Bihać Brigades, the 1st Cazin Brigade, and possibly elements of the 111th Bosanska Krupa Brigade.

²⁰⁷ These were the 1st Bihać (later 501st) Brigade, 2nd Bihać (later 502nd) Brigade, 1st Cazin (later 503rd) Brigade, 105th Buzim (later 505th) Brigade, 1st Velika Kladusa (later 521st) Brigade, 111th Bosanska Krupa (later 511th) Brigade, and the 101st HVO Brigade (later 101st Home Defense Regiment). Other brigades

were subsequently added to the 5th Corps order of battle, but these were the original units.

²⁰⁸ The 2nd Krajina Corps brigades—11th Krupa, 1st Drvar, 3rd Petrovac, 17th Kljuc, and 15th Bihać—were deployed between Bosanska Krupa and Bihać city, including the Grabež area. The 1st Novigrad Light Infantry Brigade from 1st Krajina Corps defended the area northeast of Krupa up to the Croatian border.

²⁰⁹ This does not mean that the Muslims were the only ones committing atrocities in the Drina valley fighting. On the contrary, the Serbs ethnically cleansed the Muslim population from all the areas that they captured. The atrocities committed by Orić's men have been highlighted in part because they appear to have been an exception to the conduct of Bosnian Government troops toward Serb civilians. Elsewhere, other than in isolated incidents, Bosnian Army units appear to have generally treated the Serb population appropriately, on the express orders of the Bosnian Government.

²¹⁰ 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.

²¹¹ By an unfortunate coincidence, the gun battles around the surrounded police academy were taking place at the same exact moment as a march by a large multiethnic crowd of thousands of unaffiliated Sarajevs calling for peaceful coexistence among all the factions. The crowd had first gathered near the national assembly building to protest the fighting and the breakup of the country. Unaware of the attack, the crowd then crossed the Miljacka River southward over the Vrbanja bridge in the city's Grbavica neighborhood. Unwittingly, they began to march straight toward the police academy grounds, where Serb forces were then attacking Vraca hill. The Serbs opened fire on the group, causing the crowd to panic and disperse. One man was injured, and then a 21-year-old Muslim medical student, Suada Dilberovic—a refugee from Dubrovnik, Croatia—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 1 April. See Silber and Little, p. 227.

²¹² Silber and Little, pp. 226-227.

²¹³ In the end, the several hundred surrounded police cadets were exchanged for the six Serb gunmen who had fired into the crowd from the Holiday Inn on 6 April 1992. Gjelten, Tom, *Sarajevo Daily: A City and its Newspaper Under Siege*. New York: Harper-Collins, 1995, pp. 41-42.

²¹⁴ Sarajevo Radio, 5 April 1992, FBIS Vienna AU0504200892.

²¹⁵ Less intense fighting occurred elsewhere in the city on 5 April. Muslim forces seized control of 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.)

²¹⁶ Zagreb Radio, 5 April 1992, FBIS London LD0504230692.

²¹⁷ Zagreb Radio, 5 April 1992, FBIS London LD0604000892.

²¹⁸ Few Sarajevs had any doubts that Radovan Karadžić 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 Karadžić bodyguard—but his role was never actually proved.

²¹⁹ Gjelten, pp. 2-3, 22-24.

- ²²⁰ Silber and Little, p. 231.
- ²²¹ Silber and A Little, p. 232, 235.
- ²²² Gjelten, pp. 98-99.
- ²²³ Ibid.
- ²²⁴ Silber and Little, p. 233.
- ²²⁵ Sarajevo Radio, 2 May 1992, FBIS Vienna AU0205191992.
- ²²⁶ Gjelten, p. 99.
- ²²⁷ 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
 - 4th "White Wolves" Reconnaissance-Sabotage Detachment
 - 4th Mixed Artillery Regiment
 - 4th Mixed Antitank Artillery Regiment
 - 4th Light Air Defense Artillery Regiment
 - *Ex-JNA brigade
- Four infantry battalions of the corps—the Trnovo, Pale, Praca, and Javorina 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. In addition, the 2nd Romanija Motorized Brigade, while 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.
- ²²⁸ 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 Treuresser, 1 December 1992) Other figures based on Patriotic League membership suggest that the actual number of weapons was probably somewhat, though not much, higher.
- ²²⁹ Sarajevo Radio, 8 June 1992, FBIS Vienna AU0806181392.
- ²³⁰ Sarajevo Radio, 9 June 1992, FBIS Vienna AU0906074492.
- ²³¹ Sarajevo Radio, 8 June 1992, FBIS London LD0906015192.
- ²³² Sarajevo Radio, 1 December 1992, FBIS London LD0212000992.
- ²³³ Sarajevo Radio, 2 December 1992, FBIS Vienna AU0212122092.
- ²³⁴ Sarajevo Radio, 6 December 1992, FBIS London LD0612172092.
- ²³⁵ Sarajevo Radio, 7 December 1992, FBIS Vienna AU0712161592.
- ²³⁶ Sarajevo Radio, 10 December 1992, FBIS Vienna AU1012121192.
- ²³⁷ Bobetko was a partisan veteran of World War II and had served in the postwar JNA, reaching general officer rank and serving on the staff of the Fifth Military District. Bobetko was drummed out of the Army in 1971 for pro-Croatian sympathies during Tito's crackdown on the "Croatian Spring" at the same time as Franjo Tudjman and future HV Main Staff chief Zvonimir Cervenko.
- ²³⁸ Belgrade Tanjug, 1 February 1992, FBIS London LD0102223992.
- ²³⁹ Zagreb Radio, 1 February 1992, FBIS London LD0102172192.
- ²⁴⁰ Belgrade Tanjug, 6 February 1992, FBIS London LD060294192.
- ²⁴¹ Belgrade Tanjug, 14 March 1992, FBIS London LD1403202192.
- ²⁴² Belgrade Tanjug, 15 March 1992, FBIS London LD1503214192.
- ²⁴³ Belgrade Tanjug, 17 March 1992, FBIS Vienna AU1703161492.
- ²⁴⁴ Belgrade Tanjug, 18 March 1992, FBIS Vienna AU1803161992.
- ²⁴⁵ Belgrade Radio, 1 April 1992, FBIS Vienna AU0104155992.
- ²⁴⁶ Belgrade Tanjug, 3 April 1992, FBIS London LD0304221192.
- ²⁴⁷ Also known as Listica.
- ²⁴⁸ Belgrade Tanjug, 7 April 1992, FBIS London LD0704184192.
- ²⁴⁹ Belgrade Tanjug, 8 April 1992, FBIS Vienna AU0804195992.
- ²⁵⁰ Zagreb Radio, 8 April 1992, FBIS London LD0804133993.
- ²⁵¹ Sarajevo Radio, 22 April 1992, FBIS Vienna AU2204201592.
- ²⁵² Belgrade Tanjug, 9 April 1992, FBIS London LD0904201192.
- ²⁵³ Belgrade Tanjug, 11 April 1992, FBIS London LD1104133292.
- ²⁵⁴ Belgrade Tanjug, 11 April 1992, FBIS London LD1204151392.
- ²⁵⁵ Zagreb Radio, 7 May 1992, FBIS London LD0705163192.
- ²⁵⁶ Zagreb Radio, 8 May 1992, FBIS London LD0805110692.
- ²⁵⁷ Sarajevo Radio, 10 May 1992, FBIS Vienna AU1005213292.
- ²⁵⁸ Janko Bobetko, *Sve Moje Bitke (All My Battles)*, Zagreb: Vlastita Naklada, 1996. pp. 200-270.
- ²⁵⁹ Ibid.
- ²⁶⁰ Sarajevo Radio, 23 May 1992, FBIS Vienna AU2305213192.
- ²⁶¹ Zagreb Radio, 11 June 1992, FBIS London LD1106113292.
- ²⁶² Sarajevo Radio, 11 June 1992, FBIS Vienna AU1106201092.
- ²⁶³ Zagreb Radio, 12 June 1992, FBIS London LD1206183292.
- ²⁶⁴ Zagreb Radio, 13 June 1992, FBIS London LD1306221192.
- ²⁶⁵ Zagreb Radio, 8 June 1992, FBIS London LD0806141692.
- ²⁶⁶ Zagreb Radio, 13 June 1992, FBIS London LD1306215492.
- ²⁶⁷ Zagreb Radio, 14 June 1992, FBIS London LD1406115392.
- ²⁶⁸ Zagreb Radio, 15 June 1992, FBIS London LD1506114892.
- ²⁶⁹ Zagreb Radio, 17 June 1992, FBIS London LD1706204792.
- ²⁷⁰ Zagreb Radio, 18 June 1992, FBIS London LD1806200592.
- ²⁷¹ Zagreb Radio, 21 June 1992, FBIS London LD2106163892.
- ²⁷² Zagreb Radio, 8 November 1992, FBIS London LD0811145492.
- ²⁷³ Sarajevo Radio, 19 September 1992, FBIS London LD1909195892.
- ²⁷⁴ A high-level, joint Croat-Muslim commission met in Mostar on 26 October 1992 in wake of the Novi Travnik, Vitez, and Prozor fighting, but there was little perceptible improvement in relations thereafter. Zagreb Radio, 26 October 1992, FBIS London LD2610233792.
- ²⁷⁵ The successor to the JNA was the Yugoslav Army (*Vojiske Jugoslavije*—VJ).
- ²⁷⁶ Belgrade Tanjug, 10 May 1992, FBIS London LD1005222292.
- ²⁷⁷ Novi Sad TV 24 May 1992, FBIS Vienna AU2405200392, 242003Z May 1992.
- ²⁷⁸ Belgrade Tanjug, 16 September 1992, FBIS London LD1609172592, 161725Z September 1995.
- ²⁷⁹ Sarajevo Radio 5 July 1992, FBIS Vienna AU0607122792, 061227Z July 1992.
- ²⁸⁰ Sarajevo Radio, 13 July 1992, FBIS Vienna AU1307203192, 132031Z July 1992.
- ²⁸¹ Sarajevo Radio 6 July 1992, FBIS London LD0607210692, 062106Z July 1992.

- ²⁸² Sarajevo Radio, 13 September 1992, FBIS London LD1309191392.
- ²⁸³ Reuters, "Croat-Muslim Clash Stops U.N. Convoys," 19 October 1992.
- ²⁸⁴ Reuters, "U.N. Staff Evacuated from Bosnian Town," by Kurt Schork, 21 October 1992.
- ²⁸⁵ Reuters, "EC Tells Serbia to Halt Raids, Ethnic Cleansing," by Kurt Schork, 21 October 1992
- ²⁸⁶ Reuters, "Bosnian President Calls for Talks to End Clashes," by Kurt Schork, 22 October 1992.
- ²⁸⁷ Reuters, "Military Talks in Sarajevo are Small Step for Peace," by Kurt Schork, 23 October 1992
- ²⁸⁸ Silber and Little, *Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation*, p. 294.
- ²⁸⁹ The latter version of the story appears to be corroborated by local news media at the time. According to Croatian radio, the Muslim Territorial Defense commander in nearby Jablanica threatened to surround all Croat inhabitants of the town unless the HVO stopped blocking a five-truck convoy. (Zagreb Radio, 23 October 1992, FBIS London LD2310164492) Of course, both versions could be true—the heavily armed local mafias most likely had competing claims on the contents of the supply convoy whether it was military or not.
- ²⁹⁰ Reuters, "Croats Drive Muslims from Bosnian Town of Prozor," by Andrej Gustinic, 27 October 1992.
- ²⁹¹ Vulliamy, Ed, *Seasons in Hell: Understanding Bosnia's War*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994. pp. 221-227.
- ²⁹² Reuters, "Serbs say Planes Could Join Clashes With Croats," by Kurt Schork, 25 October 1992.
- ²⁹³ Vulliamy, pp. 229-234.
- ²⁹⁴ Reuters, "Serbs Advance on Jajce as Moslem-Croat Alliance Breaks," by Kurt Schork, 27 October 1992.
- ²⁹⁵ Reuters, "Moslem Leader Urges Croats Not to Destroy Bosnia," by Kurt Schork, 29 October 1992.
- ²⁹⁶ At this same time, Mate Boban angrily denied claims by Western correspondents that they had seen destroyed houses in Prozor and thousands of Muslims fleeing toward Gornji Vakuf. Boban insisted that the Croats had documents proving the attacks had been instigated by Muslim ex-JNA officers who had committed war crimes in Croatia, that no houses had been destroyed in Prozor, and that no residents had fled the town. Reuters, "Bosnian Croat Chief Accuses Moslems of Assaults," 29 October 1992.
- ²⁹⁷ Reuters, "Moslem, Croat leaders Vow to Stop Fighting," 1 November 1992.
- ²⁹⁸ Belgrade Tanjug, 24 October 1992, FBIS London LD2410133692.
- ²⁹⁹ Reuters, "Rival Bosnian Gunmen Fight on as Commanders Meet," by Kurt Schork, 26 October 1992.

Bosnia 1992 and 1993



*A mountain road near
Kiseljak, central Bosnia,
as seen in early 1993.*

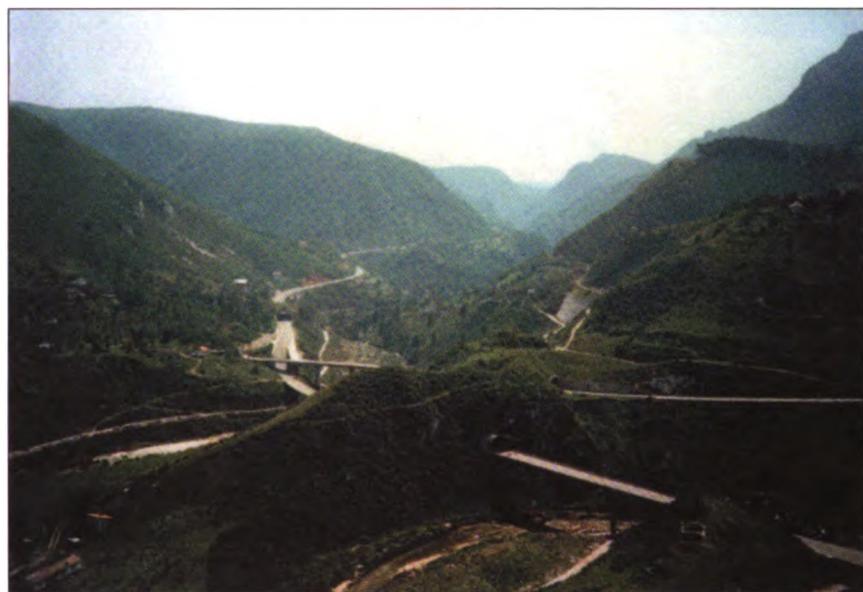


*Mountains in north-
central Bosnia, as seen
in early 1993.*



*The town of Gorazde, as
seen in 1992.*

Bosnia 1992 and 1993



Mountains east of Sarajevo, on the road toward the Drina Valley, as seen in 1996.



Bosnian Government soldiers from the Gorazde Territorial Defense, as seen in 1992.

Bosnia 1992 and 1993



A Bosnian Army
(ARBiH) soldier, May
1993.

© Reuters



A Bosnian Croat
Defense Council (HVO)
soldier in Mostar, May
1993.

© Reuters



Bosnian Croat Defense
Council (HVO) soldiers
in Ciluk, near Mostar,
rest outside their
trench, June 1993.

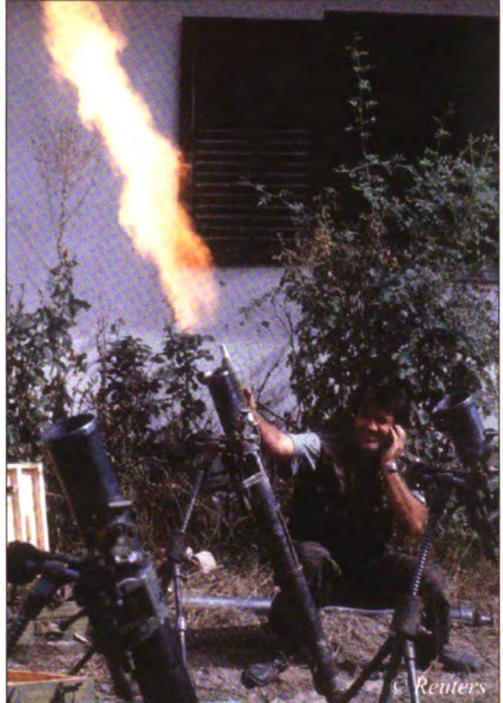
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Bosnia 1992 and 1993



Bosnian Army (ARBiH) soldiers on a hill in Sarajevo direct Bosnian Serb Army (VRS) soldiers through a minefield to recover VRS dead, June 1993.

A Bosnian Serb Army (VRS) soldier near Brcko fires an 82-mm mortar, August 1993.



A Bosnian Serb Army (VRS) soldier, probably from the 1st Sarajevo Mechanized Brigade or 1st Romanija Infantry Brigade, looks down on Sarajevo from Mount Trebevic, south of the city, August 1993.

Select Unit Insignia of the Bosnian Serb Army (VRS)



1st Guards Motorized Brigade



2nd Armored Brigade



16th Krajina Motorized Brigade



43rd Prijedor Motorized Brigade



1st Ozren Light Infantry Brigade



1st Krnjin Light Infantry Brigade



1st Bijeljina Light Infantry Brigade
(Serbian Guard-Panthers)



2nd Romanija Motorized Brigade



1st Bratunac Light Infantry Brigade

Select Unit Insignia of the Bosnian Army (ARBiH)



*120th Liberation Brigade
"Black Swans"*



*1st Light Air Defense
Artillery-Rocket Battalion*



*5th Dobrinja Motorized Brigade
(later 155th)*



*101st Motorized Brigade
(later 101st Mountain)*



2nd Corps



224th Doboj Mountain Brigade



7th Muslim Liberation Brigade



41st Motorized Brigade (later 441st)



502nd Mountain Brigade

Bosnian Croat Defense Council (HVO)



1st Guards Brigade (1994-95)



2nd Guards Brigade (1994-95)



"Ludvig Pavlovic" Special Purpose Unit (60th Guards Airborne Battalion, 1994-95)



Military Police Light Assault Brigade (1993)



1st Military Police Battalion (1994-95)



50th Home Defense Regiment "Knez Domagoj" (1994-95)



80th Home Defense Regiment (1994-95)



5th Brigade "Knez Branimir" (1992-93)



5th Brigade "Posusje" (1992-93)

Section IV

Bosnia 1993: Neighbor Versus Neighbor Versus Neighbor

Chapter 33

The Bosnian War in 1993:

Neighbor Versus Neighbor Versus Neighbor

The second year of the Bosnian War expanded the Muslim-Serb war, while the conflict between Serbs and Croats wound down. As the year opened, the Bosnian Army continued its attacks on the Bosnian Serbs in the Drina valley, prompting the Serbs to respond with a major counteroffensive. The Serbs' VRS forces nearly conquered Srebrenica, threatened Zepa, contracted the Gorazde enclave and eliminated its supply lines to central Bosnia, and then cut Sarajevo's last lifeline at Mount Igman. NATO threats forced the Serbs to withdraw from Igman, but the rest of their strategic gains in the Drina remained intact.

The Muslim-Serb war, however, was to be overshadowed by the start of a new conflict—Muslims versus Croats. In 1992 the two sides had come to blows when the frictions of local issues ignited a larger contest over the underlying nature of the Bosnian state. In 1993 the dispute boiled over into all-out war, devastating much of central Bosnia and setting in motion new waves of refugees. The Bosnian Croats threw the first punch in mid-April, with their brutal Lasva Valley offensive. The Bosnian Army rallied and scored some important victories against the Croats, seizing control of most of central Bosnia and leaving the Croats with a few isolated enclaves. By the fall, though, the fighting had settled down into vicious trench warfare.

Throughout the year, the Bosnian Serbs played their rivals off against each other, seeking to debilitate both by a prolonged conflict. All-out war between its two opponents was the best possible circumstance the already tiring Bosnian Serb Army could have hoped for. Content to remain on the sidelines for most of 1993, the VRS watched the Croats and Muslims kill each other and concentrated on retaining the battlefield gains that Serb forces had already won.

Bosnian Serb Military Strategy, January–October 1993

The Bosnian Serbs' military strategy during the first 10 months of 1993 focused on achieving those war aims that had eluded them in 1992, making the Drina valley their principal theater.* Bosnian Army gains in the Drina region during 1992 and early 1993 threatened to undermine Serb territorial claims in the area and thwart the larger war aim of extending the Serb lands to the Drina and the Serbian border. After absorbing the last ARBiH offensive toward Bratunac and Skelani on the Serbian border in early January, the VRS embarked on a strategic offensive to clear most of the Drina valley. This offensive, comprising a series of individual operations to reduce the Muslim enclaves of Srebrenica, Zepa, and Gorazde, would last until August.

Elsewhere, most of the actions conducted by the VRS until November 1993 (see footnote) were local operations to seize key terrain, towns, or roads. An exception was the July 1993 operation undertaken to widen the vital Posavina corridor at Brcko and free up an important power line route to Bosanska Krajina. The VRS also continued its siege of Sarajevo in the belief that this pressure might force the Bosnian Government to capitulate.

With the onset of the Croat-Muslim war in late spring of 1993, however, Serb military strategy took on an added dimension. Clearly it was in the interest of the Serb republic that its two enemies, the Croats and the Muslims, continue to fight each other as long as possible. The Bosnian Serbs therefore consciously set out

* Bosnian Serb strategy during the period November 1993–March 1994 is covered in Section V of this study. Serb war aims and military strategy were in flux during this period, as the Serb political and military leadership sought means to end the war on their terms. VRS offensive operations responded to these political-military considerations.

to provide military support to both sides, depending upon the military balance in a given sector, while increasing the flow of propaganda designed to inflame the Croats and Muslims against one another. VRS military assistance usually took the form of artillery or occasionally armored support for an individual HVO or ARBiH operation, most often to the side that was in the weaker military position, thus prolonging the fighting and increasing the costs to both sides. In at least two areas—Zepce and Konjic—VRS and HVO units fought side by side against Bosnian Army troops.

The Bosnian Army in 1993

There is a new testiness on the part of the Bosnians . . . They are not being pansies.

—Lt. Col. Bill Aikman, UNPROFOR spokesman in Sarajevo, December 1993¹

In 1993 the Bosnian Army was to be forged in fire. In a desperate, make-or-break situation, the ARBiH managed not only to defend the nation but even to take the offensive in some areas. The appointment of Rasim Delic as Army commander on 8 June 1993 was a crucial event; under Delic, the ARBiH made its initial transformation from a band of armed civilians into a true army.

During the first year of the war, Delic's predecessor, Sefer Halilovic, had assembled a Bosnian military with a basic organizational structure and a very large number of personnel. As early as August 1992 the ARBiH was able to field some 170,000 fighting men organized into 28 brigades, 16 independent battalions, 138 miscellaneous detachments, two artillery regiments, and one armored battalion.² By early 1993 the ARBiH had reached its peak strength of 261,500 troops. The great majority of these served in local defense units, but some were organized into specialized maneuver, reconnaissance, and sabotage forces. (These manpower figures would slowly decline in 1994 and 1995 due to combat losses, work deferments, and other causes.) With over a quarter of a million men in the field—over 90 percent of them volunteers—it was clear that Sarajevo's army did not

lack for manpower. It did lack virtually everything else, however, required of an army: training, command expertise, adequate firepower, and true offensive capability.³

Halilovic was not ignorant of the problems his Army faced. Indeed, he correctly identified most of the ARBiH's critical needs and had taken the first halting steps toward correcting them before he was replaced as operational commander. In late August 1993 (shortly after his replacement) Halilovic pointed the direction the Bosnian Army must move:

. . . in frontal clashes—whether in attack or defense—we cannot achieve more significant success. This leads to the conclusion that we must quickly find new forms of combat action . . . by rapidly creating a large number of mobile and reconnaissance-sabotage units and conducting massive reconnaissance-sabotage actions in the enemy's rear . . . For a start, each corps must form one such brigade, which should be given a new name: for example, "Bosnian" or "Liberation." In that way . . . we shall use our strong weapon: The numerical superiority and quality of our troops.

The question of military discipline is the question of our survival . . . Of course, it is urgently necessary to organize courses in the brigades for squad commanders, courses at the corps level for Army and company commanders, and a military officers' school at the main staff level for schooling junior officers and officer cadres, and all this for the purpose of strengthening military discipline, and therefore combat discipline.⁴

Rasim Delic's first critical move as the new Army commander would be to begin the disciplining and professionalization of the force. A crackdown in October against the mafiosi leaders of the 9th and 10th Mountain Brigades in Sarajevo was intended as a visible message to everyone inside (and outside) Bosnia: henceforth the ARBiH was going to be an army that would respond to orders at all echelons, even at the

expense of jailing some of its own people.⁵ The shooting or arrest of two gang leaders did not by itself transform the Bosnian Army into a trained and disciplined fighting force, but it did signal to all that the transformation had begun.

Equally critical was Delic's decision to take the offensive. At the time, this may have seemed a questionable or even unwise decision: Bosnian Army forces were virtually surrounded, cut off from supplies, and outgunned. A sound argument could have been made that the smart thing to do was to adopt the strategic defensive, forcing its enemies to expend resources against the ARBiH's prepared defenses while the Bosnian Army built up its own forces. But Delic's calculations went beyond the typical military "school solution": he recognized the vital human dimension and concluded that his Army needed to *win* in order to sustain itself. Without morale-boosting victories to convince the Army and its supporting population that Sarajevo's cause was not lost, Delic knew he would have no military to fight with and the war would be over.

Delic's decision to come out of the corner fighting had paid visible dividends by the end of 1993. Bosnian Army forces had captured—and, more important, held—at least six major towns during the year's fighting: Travnik, Bugojno, Gornji Vakuf, Fojnica, Kakanj, and Vares. The Bosnian Army had been forced into the smaller, eastern half of Mostar, but retaining even that much of the city and mounting occasional counterattacks against the HVO represented a significant accomplishment. The Zepce-Zavidovici-Maglaj area had become a minitheater of its own, with the Bosnian Army pressing the Bosnian Croats (the latter subsequently assisted by the Bosnian Serbs) while the tenacious town of Maglaj held out as a Muslim island within the besieged Bosnian Croat enclave.

The Bosnian Croat Army in 1993

The Bosnian Croat Army began 1993 largely as a de facto adjunct of the Croatian Army. It had fought successfully alongside the HV the previous year, especially during the July 1992 Operation "Jackal" campaign in Herzegovina, but the HV was the primary driver of events. HVO forces raised in central Bosnia

and western Herzegovina—far from the confrontation lines with the Serbs—contributed forces for campaigns elsewhere in Bosnia but had little to do in their hometowns other than keep a watchful eye on the Muslims who also lived there. The Bosnian Croats had been expelled from most of their formerly extensive holdings north of the Posavina corridor—Derventa, Modrica, Odzak, and Bosanski Samac—and were now confined to the defensive in the small pocket remaining around Orasje.

In April and May 1993, however, the HVO took the war in an entirely different direction, opening a new conflict against the Bosnian Muslims. In doing so, the HVO took on a new type of opponent, less capable than the Bosnian Serbs but much more numerous. Moreover, the scale of the conflict escalated dramatically for the HVO once it took on the Bosnian Army. Previously, the HVO had maintained a relatively short frontage against the VRS (especially considering that the HV had taken over the southernmost area near Dubrovnik) and required a comparatively small commitment to man static positions with generally little activity. Once the Croat-Muslim war began, though, HVO units found themselves fighting literally in their own backyards as entire towns went to war, sometimes in areas far from the confrontation lines. Overnight the Bosnian Croats' requirements for military manpower soared. For the smallest of the three combatant forces, this represented a serious problem indeed.

The HVO's shortage of fighting troops, combined with the strategic vulnerability of the central Bosnian enclaves and the sheer desperation of the Bosnian Muslims, had put the HVO in real trouble by late summer. The Bosnian Croats had suffered a series of military reverses in June and early July, and morale was falling fast. While it was unlikely that the Muslims could or would push on into the exclusively Croat heartland of eastern Herzegovina, there was a very real danger that the remaining enclaves of Vitez and Kiseljak might fall and the Croats would be forced out of border areas like Prozor.

At this point the HVO looked in two directions for allies. One choice was obvious: appeal directly to Zagreb for military assistance. After some deliberation, Tudjman did direct the HV to step into Bosnia, providing both military and moral support to the embattled HVO. The other choice seemed incongruous but made sense in the Kafkaesque world of the Bosnian conflict. The HVO in some of the enclaves turned to their Bosnian Serb opponents for assistance against the Muslims—and got it. Surrounded on three sides by Muslim adversaries, the HVO garrisons in Konjic, Kiseljak, and Zepce would secure help from the VRS. Necessity having made for strange bedfellows, the HVO was at least able to stabilize its military position and even take some modest initiatives toward the end of the year.

Chapter 34

Searching for Peace: The Vance-Owen and “Invincible” Plans, 1993⁶

In January 1993, the chief negotiators for the joint UN- EU International Conference on the Former Yugoslavia put forth a comprehensive peace settlement—the Vance-Owen Plan. The plan took its name from the two diplomats, former US Secretary of State Cyrus Vance and former British Foreign Secretary Lord David Owen. The two had worked for more than four months to craft a proposal they thought all three sides could accept and that would keep Bosnia in existence as a single state. As Silber and Little write,

It recognized Bosnia within its existing frontiers but granted substantially devolved powers to each of the ten provinces which were defined, primarily on ethnic grounds: three of the provinces would have a Serb majority, two a Croat majority, three a Muslim, and one mixed Croat-Muslim. The tenth province—Sarajevo—would retain power-sharing between all three ethnic groups. The republics would retain a central government, but its powers would be minimal.⁷

The Bosnian Croats immediately accepted the plan because it gave them autonomy, territorial compactness, and direct access to the Croatian border.⁸ The leaders of the Bosnian Serbs rejected the plan because it would have required the Serbs to withdraw from

more than 20 percent of the 65 to 70 percent of Bosnia that the Serbs then controlled, leaving them only 43 percent of the country. Moreover, the plan would have broken up their single, contiguous state—a key Serb war aim. The Bosnian Muslim leaders also rejected the plan because of their emotional attachment to the concept of a strong unitary state and because it ratified Serb ethnic cleansing. President Izetbegovic was finally pressured into signing in March by international opinion and the Croats and in the belief that the Serbs would not sign anyhow.

Meanwhile, the Bosnian Serbs were still holding out. Lord Owen and Cyrus Vance, squeezing Serbian President Milosevic with continued international strictures and new financial sanctions, persuaded him to back the plan and pressure Bosnian Serb President Karadzic and his deputies to accept it. Milosevic was willing to swallow the unpalatable details of the plan as a way to get a cease-fire that would lock in recognition of Serb autonomy and a de facto Serb state. Even though the administrative boundaries spelled out in “Vance-Owen” differed from his own concepts, he did not think they would ever be implemented on the ground. The Bosnian Serbs thought otherwise. Karadzic rebuffed Milosevic’s personal overtures, and the Bosnian Serb Assembly rejected a letter signed by Federal President Cosic, Milosevic, and Montenegrin President Bulatovic in late April. In a scheme to bully Karadzic and his deputies, Vice President Koljevic and Assembly President Krajisnik, into accepting the plan, a conference sponsored by Greek Prime Minister Mitsotakis convened at the beginning of May. There Milosevic subjected Karadzic to nonstop haranguing behind closed doors. Karadzic finally signed the plan for himself but insisted on ratification by the Bosnian Serb Assembly.

The Assembly, which everyone knew was opposed to the terms of Vance-Owen, met on 5 May in the presence of the entire senior Federal Yugoslav leadership and Prime Minister Mitsotakis. Milosevic and Cosic’s opening arguments were rejected, but they persisted, and the debate raged on into the night. The decisive speaker was VRS commander General Mladic, who

was no friend of Karadzic and usually deferred to Milosevic. The military man knew the plan would be a strategic disaster for the Bosnian Serbs, and his pungent rhetoric and an array of dramatic maps showing the territory the Serbs would lose swayed much of his audience. Eventually, they voted 51 to 2, not in opposition to the plan but in favor of a popular referendum they knew would reject it—and promptly did.

The next international effort, dubbed the “Invincible” plan after the British aircraft carrier where the talks were held, began during the summer of 1993 after the Croat-Muslim war had erupted in full force. Implicitly recognizing the failure of the Vance-Owen Plan and the dissolution of the Croat-Muslim alliance, the Invincible proposition offered a thinly veiled partition of the country into three ethnic minirepublics with a nominal central government. All three sides, even the Muslims, seemed ready to negotiate—the latter only because they saw themselves abandoned by the United States, isolated in the middle of Bosnia, and at war with the Croats. As Izetbegovic stated,

This division will give Muslims a Bosnian state. For the moment the idea of a multiethnic Bosnia is dead. Future generations can hope for such a state. But only after they have sobered up from their state of drunkenness.⁹

Izetbegovic was famous for his about-faces. In September, under pressure from virtually his entire constituency to reject an agreement he was unenthusiastic about in any case, he turned his back on the plan. The peace brokers went back to the drawing board again as all the deals for territorial boundaries and access routes came unraveled.¹⁰

Chapter 35 Widening the Serb Corridor: Brcko, January-July 1993¹¹

Toward the end of 1992, the focus of the fighting in the Posavina corridor had shifted to its narrowest sector at Brcko.¹² ARBiH and HVO forces, including units from Orasje, had launched several attacks that temporarily severed the corridor northwest of Brcko.

* See Annex 35: Widening the Corridor: Brcko Operations, January-July 1993, for a more detailed account of the fighting.

The VRS fought back with two attacks to widen the corridor, succeeding on the second try. The seesaw fighting around Brcko persisted into early in 1993, achieving nothing but casualties. On 2 January, HVO and ARBiH troops again attacked and cut the corridor northwest of Brcko. VRS 1st Krajina Corps and East Bosnian Corps forces fought back against local HVO and ARBiH 2nd Corps troops for over 10 days along this line before the VRS completely restored its positions.

The battle lines congealed into a profitless exchange of vicious shelling and small-arms fire that made Brcko one of the most dangerous sectors in Bosnia, even when it was the most stagnant. The arrival of spring in mid-May brought another attack by the VRS East Bosnian Corps directed at widening the corridor just southwest of Brcko. Again the Serbs managed to penetrate Muslim-Croat defenses, but over the next week ARBiH and HVO units clawed back what they had lost. Repeated Serb attempts to pierce the Muslim-Croat positions all failed.

VRS determination to widen the corridor produced preparations in July for Operation “Sadejstvo” (Joint Action) 93.¹³ The Serbs needed the space not just to safeguard traffic in the corridor but to lay and protect an electrical line to provide needed power to the Krajina region. Major General Novica Simic’s East Bosnian Corps, reinforced by two 1st Krajina Corps brigades and an armored battalion, began the operation on 20 July. Serb troops broke through ARBiH defenses southwest of Brcko town on 23 July, pushing Muslim forces back into their reserve positions. By the end of 24 July, the village of Brod had fallen, unhinging Muslim defenses to the west and opening the way for VRS units to continue the advance. By 26 July they had seized some additional territory, including the village of Donja Brka, but Muslim defenses elsewhere stiffened and blunted the attack. Nevertheless, the VRS had finally achieved its main objective, widening the corridor by 5 kilometers and securing the route of the powerline.

The VRS success demonstrated Serb capabilities to attack and capture some of the strongest ARBiH positions through the professional application of thorough organization and preparation and expert use of superior firepower. But the Muslim and Croat forces showed that the elemental tactics of strong trench and bunker defenses could slow and eventually halt a strong Serb attack. As the war progressed, the Serbs' ability to penetrate, seize, and hold such positions would decline.

Chapter 36

Battles on the Drina, Round Two, December 1992 to August 1993*

The 1992 war in the Drina valley spilled over into January 1993 when the Bosnian Army's offensive around Srebrenica began in late December. Coming on top of extensive victories throughout the valley in 1992, the offensive impelled the Bosnian Serbs to plan for 1993 a strategic offensive to secure the Drina valley up to the border with Serbia. If successful, the campaign would fulfill the Serb republic's war aim of joining its border with that of Serbia proper. The strategic offensive plan laid out a series of individual operations against the three main enclaves, culminating in an operation to cut the supply line to Gorazde and link Serb-held Herzegovina directly to the rest of the Serb republic.¹⁴ The campaign expanded into an effort to sever the Muslims' only supply route into Sarajevo across Mount Igman. This last attack proved too much for the international community, and the threat of NATO airstrikes forced the Bosnian Serb political leadership to order General Mladic to remove his forces from the mountain.

For Naser Oric—commander of Bosnian Army forces in the Srebrenica enclave—his December 1992 offensive was the climax of a successful year of operations that had played havoc with the Bosnian Serb Drina Corps and the Serb-populated villages throughout the Srebrenica area. His last successful attack cut the tenuous road connection between Serb-held Bratunac and the Zvornik area while linking his own forces to the Muslim-held Cerska-Kamenica pocket south of

Zvornik. Oric's troops thrust along the Drina River to where it touches Serbia to the northeast and almost captured the Serbian border village of Skelani, some 25 kilometers to the southeast of Srebrenica. For good measure, Oric's men fired mortar rounds into Serbia itself.

This push toward the Serbian border and the mortar incidents sparked a response from the Yugoslav Army (VJ), which quickly dispatched more units to reinforce the border, along with artillery, and sent some of its own troops across into Skelani to reinforce the VRS. The VRS Main Staff also got down to business and sent reinforcements to the Bratunac area—via Serbia—to hold the town and initiate some local counter-attacks while it planned a major operation, Operation "Cerska 93," to reduce and eliminate the Srebrenica-Cerska enclave.

The VRS launched the first move in its counterstrike in mid-February, lopping off half of the enclave's Cerska-Kamenica section. Two weeks later VRS troops stormed the rest of the Cerska area, overrunning it even as US air transports dropped food to the beleaguered residents. After a pause while UN representatives tried to negotiate a halt to the Serb offensive and rescue refugees from Cerska, the VRS advance resumed in mid-March. With the backing of a regular Yugoslav Army armored battalion, the VRS broke through Bosnian Army defenses east of Cerska at Konjevic Polje and reopened the road to Bratunac.

The VRS Main Staff then shifted the focus of its operation to the southeast, near Skelani, where it sent crack units reinforced with VJ paratroopers and Serbian RDB special operations troops. General Mladic himself led the Serb forces that in three days of intense fighting punched through ARBiH lines almost 15 kilometers to the industrial zone of Zeleni Jadra at the gates of Srebrenica town. Oric's men launched a desperate counterattack, blunting the thin Serb spearhead and forcing it back almost 5 kilometers. Both sides then yielded to a UN-negotiated a cease-fire.

* See Annex 36: Battles on the Drina, Round Two: December 1992 to August 1993, for a more detailed account of the fighting.

The VRS, however, wanted nothing less than a Muslim surrender, and when this was refused it quickly restarted its attack, opening what would become the final phase of the operation on 3-4 April. Over the next 12 days, VRS troops bludgeoned their way toward the town from the northeast and southeast, seizing key hilltops and villages. ARBiH troops on 7 February managed to push VRS units out of Zeleni Jadar, source of Srebrenica's water supply, three days after the Serbs had seized it. By 15-16 April, however, the VRS had fought back into the village while other units closed in on the rest of the town from the northeast. Serb troops now stood only 2 or 3 kilometers from Srebrenica and controlled nearly all the key positions overlooking the town. As the media and relief workers publicized the desperate plight of the encircled refugee population, on 16 April the UN Security Council vainly tried to protect Srebrenica by declaring it a "UN safe area." Oric had realized two days earlier, however, that his troops were finished, and he had smuggled out an appeal for a UN-supervised halt to the fighting. On 17 April the two sides agreed to a cease-fire in place. The Serbs were to halt their offensive while the Muslim forces in the enclave turned over their arms to Canadian UN soldiers, the collection to be supervised by Serb officers. The Canadian UN troops quickly arrived, but Oric and his men somehow kept their small arms while a trickle of their most badly wounded found safe passage out on UN helicopters. Protected only by a paper declaration, the Srebrenica safe area also proved illusory: two years later Serb troops would overrun it and slaughter its male population.*

Less than a month after its Srebrenica operation neutralized the armed Muslim enclave there, VRS troops attacked the nearby Muslim-held Zepa enclave. Three days of fighting penetrated the Bosnian Army defenses without gaining much useful ground, and the VRS halted its offensive on 8 May to allow peacekeeping troops and UN observers to be stationed in Gorazde and Zepa. The Serbs appear to have decided that taking Zepa was not worth the effort—yet.

Bosnian Army forces in the Gorazde enclave had followed up their 1992 successes with new attacks toward Visegrad and Rudo during January. One Muslim sabotage unit even wormed its way into

Serbia late in the month, but Yugoslav Army troops closed in and eliminated it. The VRS defenses held, however, and the Serbs mounted strong counter-attacks. In April local VRS units pressed a stronger attack to eliminate the Muslim salient pointed at Visegrad and the hydroelectric dam there but were repulsed. The VRS Drina Corps attacked again late in May and crushed Muslim forces in the salient, driving them back some 15 kilometers to the Praca River and eliminating the threat to Visegrad. Follow-on attacks from Cajnice in the southeast toward Gorazde itself, however, gained little ground.

Throughout June the VRS Herzegovina Corps and ARBiH 6th Corps clashed along the Muslim supply corridor running between Trnovo and Gorazde. Small units of Muslim troops scored a few temporary successes in attacks to widen portions of the corridor, but the VRS Main Staff was planning something bigger. On 4 July, reinforced by an elite brigade, the Herzegovina Corps attacked 6th Corps positions south of Trnovo. A week of fighting broke through Muslim defenses, and the VRS seized the town, finally linking Herzegovina to the rest of the Serb republic and severing the Bosnian logistics line to Gorazde at its base. Serb troops then rolled up to the foot of the Muslim strongholds of Mounts Igman and Bjelasnica, across which ran the only Muslim supply route into Sarajevo—through a tunnel under the airport. After inconclusive clashes near the mountains and a diversionary attack near Sarajevo, Mladic led a surprise attack on Igman and Bjelasnica that may have included a helicopter assault and captured the 2,000-meter summit of Bjelasnica on 1 August. Over the next three days, the surprise offensive also seized and held key positions on Mount Igman.

Mladic's successful operation against Igman violently shifted the focus away from the Drina valley, the primary focus of the 1993 strategic offensive, and onto Sarajevo. For the rest of the war, the Western world and its ubiquitous media would devote most of their attention to the Serb siege of the former Olympic city. Fears that the VRS advances would collapse the city's defenses or at least starve its population energized the UN, and more important NATO, to apply sustained

* See Annex 37: UN Peacekeeping Operations in 1993 for details.

pressure on Bosnian Serb President Karadzic—then attending fruitless peace talks in Geneva—to order Serb forces off the mountains. With hints of airstrikes looming, the Serbs agreed on 5 August to pull out their troops if UN forces would take over their positions and prevent Bosnian Army units from occupying the vacated terrain. To keep the Serbs honest, NATO on 9 August agreed on a program of phased airstrikes to guard the UN “safe areas” and force the Serbs to withdraw from Igman if they should cheat on the agreement. By 19 August, virtually all the VRS troops had pulled back to their 30-31 July positions. A few remained on the mountain, probably for observation and reconnaissance.

The Bosnian Serbs had nevertheless achieved most of their 1993 objectives in the Drina valley. The Muslims’ 1992 territorial gains had been drastically thinned, Serb towns secured, Herzegovina directly linked to the rest of the republic, and the Muslim supply route to Gorazde eliminated. The VRS was able to achieve these victories despite strong Muslim resistance because of the Main Staff’s effective planning and coordination of the strategic offensive followed by professional execution at the operational and tactical levels. The VRS’s superiority in firepower and—especially at Srebrenica—its employment of elite special operations troops from the Yugoslav Army and the Serbian State Security Department, as well as several imported armored and artillery units, made a critical difference in equalizing the traditional advantages of a strong defense. This time Muslim bravery alone was not enough to prevail against the stronger, better organized and better led Serb troops.

Chapter 37 **The Siege Continues, Sarajevo 1993***

By 1993 the Bosnian Army and the Bosnian Serb Army forces around Sarajevo had settled deep into the grim routine of trench warfare. Intermittent but persistent shelling and exchanges of small-arms fire, punctuated by the occasional battle for a key suburb, terrain feature, or defensive position, became the daily routine for the soldiers of both sides. The better armed VRS used its artillery to harass residential and

business areas of the city, exacting a steady toll of civilian casualties that kept Sarajevo in the world headlines day after day. The biggest *military* event of the siege, noted earlier, occurred in August to the south of the city when the VRS had captured Mount Igman and cut the city’s last supply line. The prospect of a modern European city starving under a medieval siege generated international pressure that eventually forced the Serbs to vacate the mountaintop.

There were other important clashes in 1993, including battles for the suburbs of Azici and Stup in February and March, which continued the successful operation the VRS had launched in December against Otes to further isolate Sarajevo. Had the Serbs seized these suburbs, and particularly if they then captured Dobrinja, they would have left Bosnian Army troops even farther from the UN-controlled airport and the ARBiH troops in Hrasnica-Butmir-Mount Igman and made useless the new supply tunnel the ARBiH was digging under the airport to Hrasnica. The Bosnian Army’s victory at Stup, even after it had lost 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 and the Jewish cemetery. The year ended with a spate of bloody shelling incidents in the city center that killed a number of civilians.¹⁵

The Bosnian Army took on a battle inside Sarajevo itself when, in late October 1993, it 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, which had begun the war as armed criminal gangs who proved ready and able to defend the city with their own illegal guns. These patriotic criminals soon became a problem themselves, extorting money and coercing labor from the neighborhoods they were supposed to defend. In mid-October, Topalovic’s 10th Brigade overstepped the line when it publicly embarrassed the government by

* See Annex 38: Sarajevo 1993: The Siege Continues, for a more detailed account.

stealing two UN armored personnel carriers. The authorities responded by mounting Operation “Trebevic-1” on 26 October, a joint Army/police action to round up and arrest Caco, Celo, and their most notorious associates. The operation turned nasty when Caco took several MUP special policemen hostage, torturing them to death before government forces could capture him. Celo had meanwhile kidnapped 25 civilian hostages but eventually released them and gave himself up. About 20 people, including six civilians, were killed in shootouts during the operation. Of more than local importance, the “Trebevic-1” operation was the first and most dramatic step in Bosnian Army commander Delic’s campaign to regularize and professionalize the Bosnian Army.¹⁶

Chapter 38

“The Man Who Would Be King”: Fikret Abdic and the Autonomous Province of Western Bosnia*

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 had gained attention as one of Yugoslavia’s most charismatic and controversial figures even before the breakup of the country. In the twilight days of socialist Yugoslavia’s massive state-owned industries, Abdic was the director of the “Agrokomerc” food-processing consortium—the Bihać area’s single-largest employer. In 1987 it emerged that Abdic’s company had essentially been printing its own money by issuing roughly half a billion dollars in unbacked promissory notes. The ensuing scandal rocked the entire Yugoslav Government and its banking system. Abdic was found guilty of fraud and briefly imprisoned.^{17 18}

Surviving the scandal and conviction, Abdic by 1990 had become one of the most prominent Muslim political leaders in Bosnia and, campaigning for the SDA in the first multiparty elections, won the most votes of any Muslim candidate. Although this entitled him to become the first president of Bosnia, Abdic stepped

aside to allow Izetbegovic—the SDA’s second-biggest votegetter—to assume the office. Abdic’s political self-sacrifice has never been adequately explained.¹⁹

As Izetbegovic’s grasp of power appeared to wane in 1993, Fikret Abdic reemerged as a major challenger. The first public signs of division within the Muslim camp appeared on 21 June in the runup to another round of EC-sponsored peace talks in Geneva, when Izetbegovic indicated he would not attend the meeting. He termed the new peace plan “genocidal,” charging that it codified the gains of Serb ethnic cleansing and amounted to the de facto partition of the country into Serb-, Croat-, and Muslim-controlled areas.²⁰ Abdic publicly criticized Izetbegovic’s refusal to attend, prompting turmoil within Bosnia’s nine-member collective Presidency.²¹ One day later, the Presidency announced that it had met without Izetbegovic and voted to participate in the peace talks with or without the President.²² Many saw in this a signal that Abdic was seeking to displace Izetbegovic, although he denied the claims.²³ Nevertheless, Abdic appeared to be a serious contender for the future leadership of Bosnia.

Only days later, however, the story took another turn. The Bosnian Interior Ministry announced on 26 June that Abdic was wanted by the Austrian Government on charges of defrauding Bosnians resident in Austria who had contributed refugee relief money funneled through the Agrokomerc company’s Vienna-based subsidiary.²⁴ Despite the charges, Abdic remained the Bosnian Presidency’s Muslim representative at the Owen-Stoltenberg peace negotiations in Geneva.

By mid-September, Abdic was openly defying not only Izetbegovic but the Presidency itself, calling a parliamentary assembly to meet in his home city of Velika Kladusa to vote on the creation of an “autonomous province” within Bosnia-Herzegovina. Abdic stopped short of declaring that this would mean the secession of all or part of the Bihać region, but the distinction seemed purely academic. Even before the assembly vote on 27 September proclaimed him the head of the “Autonomous Province of Western

* For a more detailed account, see Annex 39: The Man Who Would Be King: Fikret Abdic and the Autonomous Province of Western Bosnia in 1993.

Bosnia,” Abdic had already established a privately raised military force and used his money and influence to create a mini-nation in the northwestern corner of the country.²⁵ Sarajevo responded by ejecting Abdic from the Bosnian collective Presidency on 2 October.

With now two rival claimants for control of the besieged Bihac 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 urged 5th Corps brigades to defect to his new flag, while Izetbegovic called for the Army to remain loyal and stamp out this new insurrection. Abdic rapidly established his authority in Velika Kladusa, a municipality that had long been his power base. Abdic loyalists initially declared their control in the Bihac enclave’s central town of Cazin, but a flying column of 500 Bosnian Army troops from Bihac (ironically, driving in “Agrokomerc” vehicles) arrived in Cazin on 20 September and eventually secured it for the ARBiH 5th Corps.^{26 27} Abdic’s support was weakest in Bihac itself, which generally sided with the Izetbegovic government.

When the decision was forced, two Bosnian Army brigades—the 521st and 527th, both 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.) 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 personnel to defections. These units were to provide the equivalent manpower of three to four brigades to the rebel forces.

Open violence between the rival forces began in the early days of October, as for the first time Muslims fought not only Serbs and Croats but other Muslims. UNPROFOR attempted to negotiate a truce between the two Muslim factions before the violence escalated out of control, but the Abdic representatives refused to attend the talks.²⁸ Meanwhile, the Bosnian Serbs welcomed the opportunity to stand down and let their Muslim opponents beat each other up.

Bosnian Army forces initially 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 and regained control over Cazin without a firing a shot, but the following day Bosnian Army troops pulled from the surrounding area drove them back out.^{29 30} (Government sources claimed—credibly—that the Bosnian Serbs assisted the Abdic rebels by mounting simultaneous attacks in several areas to tie down ARBiH forces during the APWB capture of Cazin.) The Bosnian Army mounted a counterattack on 18 October, shelling Velika Kladusa, but was unable to eliminate the APWB as a military threat.³¹

With the Bihac situation still hanging in the balance, the Belgrade media announced that Abdic had met with Bosnian Serb leader Karadzic and Serbian President Milosevic on 22 October.³² Ever the consummate opportunist, Abdic had thrown in his lot with his former Serb opponents to gain backers for his break-away empire. 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.³³

Abdic’s forces regained the initiative when fighting resumed in November, after Krajina Serb forces allowed his troops to travel through Serb-held territory in Croatia to mount a flanking attack from the western side of the Bihac pocket. Advancing from this unexpected direction, a tidy force of APWB troops (perhaps 1,000 to 1,500) gained significant ground in the western Bihac enclave, occupying a strip of territory several kilometers deep along the Croatian border and advancing as close as 10 km 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, in addition to

allowing the rebel forces to transit their territory, the Serbs supported the APWB attack with artillery and tank fire.^{34 35 36 37}

As 1993 drew to a close, Abdic's APWB empire remained a very tiny one—roughly the northwestern third of the surrounded Bihać enclave—but still too powerful for the Bosnian Army 5th Corps to eliminate or even reduce. Abdic had built himself a small army of six brigades—perhaps 5,000 to 10,000 fighters—out of his own supporters and major elements of the two defecting Bosnian Army brigades. The Bosnian Serbs, and Milosević back in Belgrade, welcomed the Muslim renegades as a proxy force for diverting 5th Corps fighters, and they made sure that Abdic's forces were adequately outfitted with small arms and mortars but prevented from obtaining heavy artillery or armor.³⁸ When actively supported by the Krajina or Bosnian Serbs—as they were in November and December—the APWB army could advance and take territory but lacked an independent offensive potential. At least for the time, Abdic's rebel forces and the Bosnian Army had reached a standoff.

Chapter 39 **Neighbor Fighting Neighbor:** **The Croat-Muslim Descent Into War**

A variety of factors contributed to the strains and frictions in the Croat-Muslim relationship that had now flared into open warfare, all stemming in some way from competing interests and mutually exclusive concepts of the future of the Bosnian state. Who exercised control on the ground in each canton and municipality was the proximate source of hostility, but the larger underlying issue was the philosophical one of what sort of state postwar Bosnia-Herzegovina would be. From these differences followed different conclusions about Croat-Muslim war aims and what sort of peace should be agreed to how quickly. On the one hand, the advocates of a unitary Bosnian state (mostly, but not exclusively, Muslims) were trying to keep alive the idea of a single undivided nation with all three ethnic groups living together in a multiethnic, pluralistic society. This was the original concept behind the free multiparty elections held in the Bosnian Republic in 1990, but even then the rise of the ethnically based political parties had all but fatally undermined this

ideal. This group was still represented by Alija Izetbegović, but it was beginning to dwindle in the face of ethnic cleansing and the seeming impossibility of multiethnic coexistence. This group also advocated a continuation of the war until all (or at least more) of Bosnia had been brought under the control of the central government. On the other hand were those who favored the *de facto* or *de jure* partition of the country into Serb, Croat, and Muslim regions, delimited by map boundaries and giving one ethnic group clear authority over a particular section of the country. This group generally advocated a rapid conclusion to the war so that the calculated division of the country could proceed. In early 1993 this group, perhaps best exemplified by Bosnian Croat leader Mate Boban, had the dominant hand.

Perhaps the greatest tragedy of the Croat-Muslim civil war is that it was in large measure sparked by an international peace proposal that was intended to end the interethnic bloodshed—the Vance-Owen-Stoltenberg plan. When the outlines of the proposed ethnically based cantons were published, it was obvious to all which ethnic faction would be accorded majority rule over each section of the country. This was not a serious problem where the map awarded control to the faction that was already in control of a given area, such as the Muslim-majority Bihać enclave or the ethnically cleansed Serb-majority areas of western Bosnia. It was bound to provoke trouble, however, in areas that were to be turned over to a different faction—or in areas where there was no single dominant ethnic group. It was in this crucial detail that the tragedy of the mixed Croat-Muslim areas would be played out.

In much of ethnically mixed northern Herzegovina and central Bosnia, either Croats or Muslims might predominate in a given city or region, but the majority was rarely overwhelming, and power was usually shared (or, more accurately, competed over) by the two ethnic groups. Both factions had military forces collocated in many of the major urban areas—Mostar most famous among them—tenuously allied, but responding to different chains of command and only

sometimes supporting each other in combat. When the Vance-Owen map was published, it appeared to the ethnic factions to clearly delineate which ethnic group would be in control in each town on each side of each cantonal border. The intricately crafted nuances of the proposed power-sharing arrangements and multiethnic cantonal administrations were lost to the competing political and military leaders on the ground in Bosnia. In particular, the map emboldened local Bosnian Croat leaders who wished to assert their undisputed authority over areas of central Bosnia and Herzegovina that had been designated as Croat-majority cantons. In effect, the peace plan offered the semblance of an international imprimatur to naked power grabs. A tenuous alliance based on a common enemy had turned into a direct competition for title to the same land.

It would be grossly unfair to imply that the Vance-Owen peace plan caused the Croat-Muslim war of 1993-94. While the plan set the parameters for discussion, the underlying issue of ethnic control of territory predicated and would outlast the peace negotiations. Nevertheless, the Vance-Owen Plan and its associated maps brought the issues of ethnic territorial control to the fore and in large measure served as the catalysts for the war to come.

Given the supercharged interethnic atmosphere of central Bosnia in 1993, a sudden influx of tens of thousands of refugees into the area was just about the worst thing that could possibly happen—and happen it did. From the very beginnings of the war, the conflict had created—indeed, in many ways had been intended to create—massive waves of displaced civilians, the detritus of their ethnically cleansed hometowns and regions. Entire communities of Muslims, Croats, and Serbs—though mostly Muslims—had been driven out of different areas by the advancing armies. Forced from their homes at gunpoint, Muslim and Croat refugees streamed into central Bosnia from places like the Krajina and the Drina valley. Central Bosnia's small Serb population was in turn pushed out, but the housing they vacated was not nearly enough for the hordes of displaced citizens. Relations between Croats and Muslims worsened in each municipality as both groups competed for limited resources—a competition sharpened when the refugee influx altered the

ethnic balance in a given area. The patterns and passions of interethnic conflict began to gather like thunderclouds over central Bosnia at the beginning of 1993.

The new year opened inauspiciously for the strained Croat-Muslim alliance. After a week of rising interethnic tensions across the entire central Bosnian area, the two ostensible allies clashed openly on 12 January 1993 in Gornji Vakuf—a predominantly Muslim town in what had been designated a Croat-majority canton. HVO forces firing from commanding positions in the hills to the southeast began a drive to force the Muslim defenders out of most of the town.^{39 40 41}

On 15 January, three days after the opening shots were fired in Gornji Vakuf, the HVO publicly and formally demanded the submission to HVO authority of the Muslim units in the three cantons designated as Croat-majority under the proposed peace plan; Bosnian Army units that did not accept the HVO's conditions were to be disarmed or disbanded.⁴² Izetbegovic rejected the Croat demands, objecting partially to the resubordination of Bosnian Army units but more fundamentally to the concept of ethnic partition of the country that the Croat demand implied. Bosnian Army commander Halilovic also rejected the HVO's orders, instructing the Army units in the disputed cantons to respond only to the ARBiH command. His orders were countermanded, however, when Bosnian Defense Minister Bozo Rajic (a Croat) acceded to the HVO's demands on 17 January.⁴³

Fighting nevertheless continued unabated in Gornji Vakuf, despite the country-wide military agreement, a 20 January truce brokered by the Vance-Owen team just in advance of the peace talks in Geneva, and a series of local cease-fires arranged by the UN British battalion. The Bosnian Croats demanded the unconditional surrender of all Muslim forces in the town and began using their heavy weapons advantage to systematically demolish surrounding Muslim-majority towns like Bistrica. In Gornji Vakuf itself, HVO tanks advanced up the road from the south, destroying houses one at a time. Gornji Vakuf's Muslim

defenders had no heavy weapons and only a few mortars but nonetheless managed to hang on in the town. HVO forces pressed their attacks repeatedly until an order from Bosnian Croat President Mate Boban finally brought the offensive to a halt.^{44 45}

No sooner had the situation calmed in Gornji Vakuf, than violence flared in Busovaca, along the road southeast of Vitez. Bosnian Army forces ambushed and killed two HVO soldiers outside the town on 24 January, and the Bosnian Croats responded on 27 January by blocking all traffic along the roads into central Bosnia, cutting off the flow of weapons to the Muslims.⁴⁶ Intense fighting began in and around Busovaca immediately after the Croat blockade was announced. Yet another truce was signed on 30 January in which both sides agreed to separate their combatant forces and reopen the roads.^{47 48 49}

Sporadic Croat-Muslim fighting spluttered on into mid-February,⁵⁰ and another crisis had to be defused when the Bosnian Croats again closed the supply routes into central Bosnia on 28 February.⁵¹ After this, relative calm descended in March. It was to prove the last calm before the storm.

In what would soon prove to be one of the more ironic twists of the war's history, Bosnian President Izetbegovic and Croatian President Tudjman announced on 28 March their agreement to the establishment of a joint Croat-Muslim military in Bosnia. After months of wrangling and debate, the Bosnian Army and the HVO finally were to be placed under a single joint command, although the exact terms of the arrangement were left unstated.⁵² It hardly mattered. Within three weeks the newly allied armies of the Croat-Muslim joint command would be at each others' throats in a full-scale, no-holds-barred war.

Chapter 40 Central Bosnia Afire: The HVO's Lasva Valley Offensive, April 1993

Having twice come to the brink of war—after Prozor in October 1992 and Gornji Vakuf in January 1993—the Croats and Muslims finally plunged over the edge in mid-April. The Croat-Muslim showdown had been a long time coming, and the reasons behind it were

manifold. In the end, it was the lethal combination of the Vance-Owen peace plan, refugee-fueled ethnic tensions, and disputes on the ground over who had military suzerainty that was to produce yet another civil war and some of the most vicious battles of the entire Bosnian conflict.

In the unstable environment of central Bosnia, a bad situation was made worse by the Muslim defeat at Srebrenica in early April. With the Muslim defenders on the verge of being overrun and forced out of the besieged enclave, the rumor spread that the tens of thousands of Muslim refugees thronging Srebrenica would be evacuated and resettled in mixed-ethnic regions of central Bosnia. Behind the clouds of rumor the UN actually arranged a face-saving halt to the Serb assault and declared the town a "safe area." Hardly any Srebrenica refugees actually left for central Bosnia or anywhere else, but by that point fact had lost out to fear. With central Bosnia already on edge, tensions had gone up yet another notch.

The thin ties of the Croat-Muslim alliance finally snapped under the force of the Croats' 15 April ultimatum to the Bosnian Army. Reiterating its earlier demand, the HVO insisted that all Bosnian Army troops in Croat-majority areas must either give up their arms or leave for a Muslim-majority canton. Predictably, the Muslims again refused, and many on both sides began girding themselves for a fight as the deadline set the stage for ethnic violence. The day after the HVO's ultimatum expired, the Croat-Muslim war began.

In north-central Bosnia, problems first spiraled out of control in the Zenica area. Whether in response to the HVO's ultimatum to disarm or simply by coincidence, an unknown but very expert group of kidnappers abducted Zivko Totic—the senior HVO commander in Muslim-majority Zenica—on 15 April. The abductors ambushed Totic's car in broad daylight and shot three of his bodyguards dead. The Bosnian Croats immediately and logically accused the Bosnian Muslims of the outrage. The Bosnian Army denied all responsibility but was unable to produce either Totic

or a credible suspect.⁵³ By the next morning inflamed tempers crossed over into violence, and shooting broke out between Zenica's Croats and Muslims. Seriously outnumbered, the HVO's understrength "Jure Francetic" Brigade was forced out of the city almost immediately. The HVO made a fighting retreat a few kilometers west to the village of Cajdras, but most of the brigade surrendered later in the day.⁵⁴

The HVO had long ago planned an offensive to secure control of the Lasva Valley, and, as Croat-Muslim fighting flared across most of Bosnia on 16 April, it put the drive in motion. The Lasva is a very small river running west to east from Travnik through Vitez until it feeds into the larger Bosna river northeast of Busovaca. The river is paralleled by a primary road—one of the most important in Bosnia—connecting Travnik with Vitez, Busovaca, Kiseljak and ultimately Sarajevo. In planning its campaign, the HVO counted on ejecting the non-Croat population from the valley and assumed that this cleansing would be a relatively simple task. If successful, the campaign would not only improve the HVO's military position by securing control of Bosnia's main east-west highway but also would create an exclusively Croat corridor across central Bosnia. Because its military force was small relative to the sizable Muslim population in the area, the HVO's objective was to terrorize the Muslim civilians into evacuating the Lasva Valley of their own volition and thereby possibly even avoid having to fight at all for the cities and towns.

The Ahmici Massacre*

The horrific centerpiece of the HVO's ethnic cleansing strategy for the Lasva Valley was the "Ahmici massacre" of 16 April 1993. When British UN peacekeepers arrived in the village on 19 April to investigate Bosnian charges of a massacre, they found that the entire village had been systematically destroyed. The main mosque had been burned and its minaret felled by explosives detonated at the base. The majority of the houses had also been put to the torch, their roofs collapsed by the flames. Only Croat-owned buildings remained intact. Burned-out cars blackened

private driveways, and livestock lay dead in the streets and gardens. An entire family of seven was found dead in one house, including at least two young children who had almost certainly burned to death. The images from this small central Bosnian town—the Guernica of the Bosnian conflict—would shock and outrage the world.^{55 56 57}

Investigations by the UN and others indicate that the village was taken by surprise early in the morning, shortly after 0500 hours, 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. When everyone in the town was dead, many of the bodies were dragged into their former homes, and the buildings were set aflame with gasoline—probably in an effort to conceal or destroy as much evidence as possible.^{58 59 60} All told, at least 103 people (including 33 women and children) were killed at Ahmici, according to the UN, and the actual number could be considerably higher. In all, some 176 buildings including two mosques were destroyed.^{61 62 63 64 65 66 67}

All the evidence suggests that the Ahmici operation was preplanned and executed by a picked assault group. (There have been persistent but unsubstantiated rumors that a group of senior Bosnian Croat leaders met on 15 April, the night before the attack, to make the final decision on the operation, allegedly dubbing it "48 hours of blood and ashes."⁶⁸) The Ahmici attack was not a military offensive, but rather a deliberate massacre of unarmed, unwarned civilians: the Bosnian Croats systematically set out to find and execute the entire population, positioning the HVO troops so they could catch anyone who tried to flee the town in preset fields of fire. Once they had killed everybody, they immediately set about disguising what they had done in a coverup operation that a purely military operation would hardly have required.

Ahmici remains the most famous victim of the HVO's infamous Lasva Valley offensive, but it was only one of the towns attacked in a coordinated HVO strike

* For a more detailed account, see Annex 40: The Ahmici Massacre of 16 April 1993: A Military Analysis.

against the valley's resident Muslims. While Ahmici burned, troops of the HVO's Central Bosnia Operational Zone were also attacking the numerous Muslim-majority villages surrounding the Croat-majority towns of Vitez and Kiseljak.

The Vitez Region*

During the HVO's Lasva Valley offensive, the Vitez area was to see some of the bloodiest and most violent Croat-Muslim clashes of the war. The harbinger of violence in the area was the detonation of a huge truck bomb outside a mosque in Stari Vitez on 16 April (the same day as the Ahmici massacre). The bomb killed or injured dozens of people and completely devastated most of the old town's Muslim center.⁶⁹

The HVO's lightning offensive in the Lasva Valley allowed the Bosnian Croats to capture or destroy many of the villages in the immediate area around Vitez in a couple of days. After these initial gains, though, limited resources kept the HVO Central Bosnian Operation Zone from pressing its attack strongly after the first several days of fighting. The command appears to have tried to link the Vitez enclave to the HVO-held Kiseljak area some 10 km to the east with an attack along the main highway on 25 April, but it was blocked by significantly superior Bosnian Army forces, leaving the two Croat-held areas still separate.⁷⁰ The advantage of a surprise attack against negligible or disorganized opposition had enabled the Bosnian Croats to seize territory easily, but when they came up against determined Muslim opposition they were stymied. After a Croat-Muslim cease-fire was signed in late April, and observed with only occasional breaches, the HVO assumed a largely defensive posture while the ARBiH 3rd Corps took the opportunity to build its forces for a counterstroke.^{71 72}

The Kiseljak Area**

Full-scale war came to the Kiseljak area when the HVO struck first northwest of the town on 18 April, shelling the Muslim-majority town of Bilalovac and

* See Annex 41: The Croat-Held Vitez Enclave: Vitez, Busovaca, and Novi Travnik, June-December 1993, for a more detailed account.

** See Annex 42: The Kiseljak Enclave in 1993: The Battle for Kiseljak, Kresevo, and Fojnica, for a more detailed account.

destroying parts of Svinjarevo, Gomionica, and Rotilj after forcing their residents to flee.⁷³ Muslim civilians in Kiseljak proper were rounded up and either detained or forced to leave the town.⁷⁴ Battles continued for an arc of villages several kilometers west of Kiseljak until the HVO gained effective control over Svinjarevo, Jehovac, Gromiljak, Visnjica, and Rotilj by the end of April.^{75 76 77}

Heavy fighting resumed north and west of Kiseljak at the very end of May around the villages of Lisovo and Kazagici.⁷⁸ On 1 June, according to UN observers, the HVO launched a preemptive attack against a Muslim-held ridge overlooking the road running northwest from Kiseljak.⁷⁹ The fighting sputtered out the following week when Bosnian Army commander Delic and HVO commander Petkovic met in Kiseljak and agreed to a country-wide truce on 10 June.⁸⁰

The Bugojno to Jablanica Road

Although the Lasva Valley corridor was the HVO's most significant offensive objective in central Bosnia, the Bosnian Croats launched simultaneous attacks in other mixed Croat-Muslim areas. In several areas south of the Lasva Valley—including Gornji Vakuf, Prozor, and Jablanica—HVO forces attempted to rapidly stake out exclusively Croat areas and then consolidate their gains.⁸¹ There was heavy fighting outside Busovaca as HVO forces expelled Muslims from several nearby villages.⁸² A few kilometers away, Muslim forces advanced against the HVO east of Prozor.⁸³

Aftermath: The End of April

The mid-April round of Croat-Muslim fighting burned itself out over a week or so, leaving hundreds of soldiers and civilians dead on each side. The HVO alone counted 145 soldiers and 270 civilians killed in combat by 24 April,⁸⁴ and Muslim casualties were probably at least as high.

Bosnian Army Commander Halilovic and HVO Commander Petkovic attempted to patch up interethnic military relations at the end of April, signing a

cease-fire agreement (at a time when the international community was strongly pressuring the Bosnian Serbs to accept the Vance-Owen peace settlement) and promising to activate the ARBiH-HVO Joint Command to enforce the truce.⁸⁵ A week of relative peace ensued, but the agreement was not to last.

Chapter 41 The Alliance Shattered: The Mostar and Herzegovina Battles, May 1993

After the Lasva Valley fighting subsided in late April, the nexus of conflict shifted for a time to the Mostar area, where a delicate balance had been maintained in the ethnically mixed region. The Croat-Muslim violence touched off by the HVO in mid-April produced several deaths from sniper fire in Mostar, but the city was spared the widespread violence that left hundreds dead in central Bosnia. On 24 April a shaky truce was arranged for the Mostar area, and the two forces returned uneasily to their former alliance.⁸⁶ The agreement seems not to have dissuaded the HVO from repeating its demand that Bosnian Army troops in the city hand over their weapons in exchange for safety guarantees. Again the great majority of Muslims refused to give up their weapons. A collision was inevitable and imminent.

On 8 May, Muslim-held military and civilian concentrations throughout Mostar came under what UNPROFOR commander Lt. Gen. Wahlgren confirmed was “a major Croat attack.” Bosnian Croat forces set fire to the Bosnian Army headquarters and a cluster of important buildings at the very outset of the attack, after which HVO troops rounded up Muslim civilians en masse and evicted over 1,300 of them from two formerly Muslim-majority sections of the city. The defending Bosnian Army forces of the city’s 41st “Mostar” Brigade responded by attacking the HVO-held Tihomir Misic army barracks on the east side of the river. Fierce house-to-house street battles raged throughout the city for the next few days.^{87 88 89 90} At the same time, HVO forces launched attacks in the Jablanica and Drenica areas.⁹¹

As they had in the Lasva Valley the month before, ARBiH and HVO commanders Halilovic and Petkovic signed a cease-fire agreement covering Mostar on 13 May stipulating that soldiers of both sides would return to their barracks, prisoners would

be released, and free mobility of civilians would be guaranteed.⁹² The cease-fire had little visible effect on the ground, and battles in the city continued.⁹³ Then the Mostar HVO—reinforced by units brought in from Ljubuski, Citluk, and Capljina—on 16 May made a determined and successful attack to seize the small strip of territory still held by the Muslims on the right bank of the Neretva.⁹⁴ Calm of a sort finally came on 21 May, though both sides remained deployed along the confrontation line that had sawed Mostar city in half.^{95 96}

Chapter 42 The Bosnian Army Fights Back: The Lasva Valley Counteroffensive, June-July 1993

For they have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind.

—Hosea 8:7

In early June 1993, the Bosnian Army literally had no place to go. With their former HVO allies now adversaries, the government forces were surrounded, cut off from all military supplies, and fighting the Bosnian Serbs and the Bosnian Croats simultaneously. At this point in time—from Sarajevo’s standpoint, probably the darkest hour of the Bosnian conflict—the Army received a new commander, General Rasim Delic, who set out immediately to make changes in the composition and the strategy of his forces. First and foremost, the Bosnian Army began to hit back.

The opening salvo of the Bosnian Army’s counteroffensive was to come at Travnik, almost exactly in the geographic and demographic center of Bosnia-Herzegovina. With a prewar population of over 70,000 (45 percent Muslim, 37 percent Croat, 11 percent Serb) it was (after Zenica) the second-largest town in central Bosnia. It was also the location of the Pucarevo “Bratsvo” Weapons Plant, which had manufactured, assembled, and repaired artillery pieces for the Yugoslav Army.⁹⁷ A few kilometers south of Travnik was the smaller town of Novi Travnik, with some 30,000 residents and a slightly higher percentage of Croats than Muslims.

The home of central Bosnia's largest Muslim population, the Travnik-Zenica urban area was also becoming the center of a new, more assertive Bosnian Muslim identity. More radical and much more religious than the Bosnian Muslim population as a whole, the "new" Travnik Muslims were starting to attract a dedicated following. The new, hardline attitude was most visible in the large refugee population that had been expelled from Jajce, Donji Vakuf, and large swaths of western Bosnia. Their radicalization had begun with the atrocities they suffered at Serb hands during the ethnic cleansing of 1992, and attitudes became all the more extreme after Bosnia's Muslims were attacked by the Croats in April-May 1993.

From a military standpoint, there were two visible products of the hardening Bosnian attitude in the Travnik area: the 7th Muslimski and 17th Krajina Brigades. Destined to become two of the most feared, famous, and accomplished units in the Bosnian Army, the 7th Muslimski Brigade from Zenica and 17th Krajina Brigade from Travnik were zealous shock troops of Bosnia's displaced Muslims. Composed largely of Muslims "cleansed" out of other parts of Bosnia—young men with no place to go—the soldiers of these brigades made up in fierceness and enthusiasm what they lacked in training and discipline. The Bosnian Army did not quite know how it felt about them or the increasing number of foreign Islamic volunteers who came to join their ranks. On the one hand, they could be unruly and problematic, harassing local Bosnian Croats and even insufficiently religious Bosnian Muslims.⁹⁸ On the other hand, there was no question that these troops were highly motivated and effective fighters. Sorely in need of willing and able assault troops, the Bosnian Army began in June 1993 to use these units as spearheads for its attacks.⁹⁹

At the outset, both the Bosnian Government and the Bosnian Croats had substantial forces available for combat in the Travnik-Novи Travnik area. Although the Croats may have had a slight edge in terms of organization and equipment, the two forces were on the whole comparably armed. Other factors being about equal, the Bosnian Army's local advantage in manpower was to prove decisive.

All of the Bosnian Government's forces in the area belonged to the ARBiH 3rd Corps and its Bosanska Krajina Operational Group under the command of

Enver Hadzhihasanovic and Mehmed Alagic, respectively. The core would be the 17th Krajina Brigade, commanded by Fikret Cusic and headquartered in Travnik itself.¹⁰⁰ In addition to the 17th Krajina, the ARBiH could call upon the 306th Mountain Brigade,¹⁰¹ headquartered in the nearby Travnik suburb of Han Bila, and if necessary the 7th Muslimski, 303rd, and 314th Brigades from Zenica. When the Bosnian Muslims launched their attack, they probably had the equivalent of at least four full brigades to commit to the fight.¹⁰²

HVO forces in the area comprised most of the Central Bosnian Operation Zone's First Operational Group. Two HVO brigades were from Travnik, the "Travnička" Brigade and the "Frankopan" Brigade.¹⁰³ Another, the "Stjepan Tomasević" Brigade, had a battalion in nearby Novi Travnik. Although the First Operational Group's (OG's) other assets—the "Vitez" Brigade, the other battalion of the "Stjepan Tomasević" Brigade, and the remnants of the defeated "Jure Francetic" Brigade, all located in Vitez—could in theory have reinforced the Travnik HVO, as events unfolded the HVO's other resources proved too far away and too preoccupied with events in the Vitez area to be of any assistance. The HVO, therefore, had roughly two brigades available for the defense of Travnik.

The Croat-Muslim frontline with the Bosnian Serbs ran 2 or 3 kilometers to the northwest of Travnik. The Serbs were in an excellent geographical position, having occupied the massive Mt. Vlasic feature situated just north of Travnik and overlooking the entire town and its environs. During the Croat-Muslim conflict in this area, however, the Serbs were content to watch their opponents fight it out and did not involve themselves beyond occasional shelling.

The Bosnian Muslims kicked off their attack on 4 June with fierce infantry clashes inside Travnik town. Street battles were accompanied by mortar and artillery fire, while leveled antiaircraft guns were used to clear out houses.¹⁰⁴ By 5 June the HVO had largely vacated Travnik itself but continued to shell the area from Croat-held villages in the suburbs overlooking the town center.¹⁰⁵ Two cease-fire agreements were announced on 5 and 6 June, but fighting continued unabated.^{106 107}

By the end of the day on 6 June, the Bosnian Croats were unquestionably on the run. Bosnian Serb military spokesmen stated on 7 June that about 5,000 Bosnian Croats—including over 1,000 HVO troops—had surrendered to Bosnian Serb forces west of Travnik to escape the Croat-Muslim fighting of the previous few days.^{108 109} The Bosnian Croats initially dismissed the claim as propaganda but later admitted that the HVO troops had indeed disobeyed orders to fight their way through to other Croat-held positions and had instead given themselves up to the Serbs.¹¹⁰ Thousands more Bosnian Croat civilians fled up the slopes of Serb-held Mt. Vlasic (in dreadful weather) to surrender to the Serbs over the next few days, after Muslim forces cut off all other escape routes.^{111 112 113 114}

A barely perceptible lull occurred 8 June when the Bosnian Army's new commander in chief, Gen. Rasim Delic, called for a halt in the fighting and accepted a Croat-Muslim cease-fire agreement effective for the whole country.¹¹⁵ Having gained the initiative, however, the Bosnian Army pressed its advantage as far as it could in all directions and on 8 and 9 June continued its offensive to the southeast, attacking the nearby village of Senkovci and pushing the remaining HVO forces south and east toward Croat-held Novi Travnik and Vitez.¹¹⁶ Government forces also made important gains to the west, seizing the key road junction at Turbe.¹¹⁷ Lastly, the ARBiH opened a new offensive axis to the east, successfully clearing a government-controlled corridor all the way from Travnik to Zenica, some 20 km away.¹¹⁸

The capture of Travnik and its successful linkage to nearby Zenica was a military victory of major significance. Travnik's wider and more lasting importance was psychological rather than tactical or strategic, however. At a desperate moment in the fighting the Bosnian Army had not only held its own but had achieved a clear victory. The significance for morale was incalculable.

The ARBiH lost no time in following up its success in Travnik and on 16 June won the second major victory of its two-week-old offensive by capturing the large Muslim-majority town of Kakanj east of Vitez and north of Kiseljak.¹¹⁹ The battle had begun several days earlier on 9 June with an attack on the towns of

Bjelavici and Obrovici, 3 kilometers to the south-east.¹²⁰ The following day fighting had advanced to Catici, 2 kilometers south of the town. After several more days of fighting in the surrounding villages, Bosnian Croat residents began to flee Kakanj on 13 June, and soon thousands of them were headed east toward Vares, some 20 km away.¹²¹ HVO forces apparently established a blocking position at Kraljevska Sutjeska along the road to Vares on 14 June, probably trying to keep the escape route open.¹²² The besieged villages of Catici and Kraljevska Sutjeska surrendered the following day, along with major elements of the HVO's defending "Kotromanic" Brigade,¹²³ leaving the way clear for the Bosnian Army's occupation of Kakanj itself on the 16th^{124 125}—a triumph quickly marred by rampant looting.^{126 127}

With the consecutive defeats at Travnik and Kakanj, Bosnian Croat losses in men and territory were becoming acute, and the Herceg-Bosna leadership's concerns deepened as June wore on. The military tide had already turned far enough as early as 9 June for Bosnian Croat leader Mate Boban to appeal publicly to Croatian President Tudjman for help.¹²⁸ On 18 June, Boban's deputy, Dario Kordic, admitted that the Bosnian Croats had lost more than 2,000 killed and wounded in the Bosnian Army offensive and that a further 60,000 had been driven from their homes during the fighting. (UN authorities could not confirm Kordic's figures but agreed that they appeared credible.)¹²⁹ By 30 June the outnumbered HVO was clearly hard pressed, especially in central Bosnia, prompting its political head, Jadranko Prlic, to issue an "appeal and order" for all Bosnian Croats between 18 and 60 to report for military service under a general mobilization.

Chapter 43 The Three-Sided War: Zepce, Zavidovici, and Maglaj, June-July 1993

For months, Zepce had been an island of Croat-Muslim coexistence, a town of about 20,000 residents almost equally divided between Croats and Muslims.

An unnatural peace had been maintained in Zepce by an eerie form of ethnic apartheid: two parallel governments—one Croat, one Muslim—operated simultaneously in the same town. Croat children would attend the central school in the morning; Muslim children would have classes in the same building in the afternoon. The local Bosnian Army and HVO headquarters, a kilometer apart, directed brigades fighting the Bosnian Serbs along adjacent frontages. It was a delicate balance, but it kept the peace for a time.¹³⁰

This fragile arrangement broke down on 24 June. The Croats claim the Bosnian Army first attacked several Croat-majority villages outside Zepce and touched off street fighting in the ethnically mixed town itself.¹³¹ Bosnian Army commander Delic maintained that it was the Croats and Serbs who began the fighting with a joint attack on Zavidovici in violation of the most recent cease-fire.¹³² Whoever started it, by the following day the Croat-Muslim fighting had engulfed not only Zepce but also adjacent Zavidovici and the larger town of Maglaj to the north.¹³³ The outnumbered HVO forces chose to withdraw most of the Bosnian Croat civilians from the three towns on 25 June and began a very heavy bombardment of the urban centers the following day, causing numerous casualties and extensive material damage.¹³⁴ Muslim forces claimed some gains by 27 June, capturing Zavidovici and holding a small foothold in the southern end of Zepce despite the heavy HVO shelling.¹³⁵

The Zepce-Zavidovici area saw an undisguised Croat-Serb alliance against the Bosnian Muslims. UN officials confirmed in late June that Bosnian Serb tanks were actively assisting HVO forces during the fighting.¹³⁶ Bosnian Serb Army assistance from Colonel Slavko Lisica's "Doboj" Operational Group was to frequently prove decisive, as at the fiercely contested Maglaj suburb of Novi Seher. Bosnian Serb armor finally overran the town after HVO artillery and infantry efforts had failed to dislodge the Muslim defenders.¹³⁷

Largely as a result of the Bosnian Serb assistance, the HVO began to get the upper hand in the fighting by early July. UN military officials confirmed that Maglaj had been completely surrounded by 2 July, and its defenders were clearly in trouble. Even worse, the

Bosnian Croats had secured almost complete control of Zepce, blocking any possible Bosnian Army reinforcements from Zenica. Not only was Maglaj itself surrounded, but the entire "Maglaj finger" to the north—the Muslim-held area around Tesanj, south of Doboj and west of the Serb-held Ozren mountains—was also cut off from resupply. Bosnian forces had secure control over only Zavidovici at this point.^{138 139}

By the end of the summer, the Zepce-Maglaj-Tesanj area had turned into a crazy quilt world of sieges within sieges and allies joining with enemies to fight allies. In the Zepce-Zavidovici area, the VRS had stepped in to assist the HVO against the Muslims. To the north, Muslim-held Maglaj was surrounded by Croats on three sides and Serbs on one. Just north of that, the Muslim-held Tesanj area had become an island with its link through Maglaj cut off. Within that Tesanj area, Bosnian Croat soldiers of the HVO's 110th Brigade were fighting side by side with the Bosnian Muslims against the Bosnian Serbs—no more than 20 km from other HVO troops of the 111th Brigade who were accompanied by VRS armor in assaults against the ARBiH. In this three-cornered war, it seemed, all things were possible.

Chapter 44

Zagreb Intervenes To Stem the Tide, July 1993

By mid-July 1993, the leadership in Zagreb was deeply concerned, not only over the HVO's battlefield reverses but also about the military prospects for Herceg-Bosna as a whole. Tudjman and his advisers, however, had a delicate game to play. Convinced that they had to intervene directly to shore up their Bosnian Croat allies and prevent the further loss of territory to the Muslims, they also had to somehow mask the visibility of the HV's involvement to minimize international criticism and the risk of sanctions.

In May, Tudjman—under a near-ultimatum from the EC to rein in the Bosnian Croats or face possible sanctions—had made a public plea to the Bosnian Croats to break off their offensive, which could only help their common enemy, the Serbs. The Croat leaders in

Bosnia were just as public in their rejection of Tudjman's argument, claiming that they had to defend their right to live in Bosnia against Muslims who "want to expel all other peoples and create an Islamic, 100-percent Moslem state."¹⁴⁰ Herceg-Bosna leader Mate Boban's will prevailed, and the war had continued through July—only to put the HVO on the losing end of the conflict.

The competing factors of international pressure and Croat national interests hung in the balance for a time, but eventually Tudjman ordered his own army into Bosnia. On 22 July, UN spokesman Barry Frewer reported that UN military observers had observed "heavy movements" of HV soldiers in Bosnia near Ljubuski and Mostar.¹⁴¹ With the commitment of weapons and special units to the Croat-Muslim conflict, the HV essentially assumed responsibility for the entire southern Herzegovina confrontation line with the Bosnian Serbs, freeing the Bosnian HVO to concentrate its full attention on the conflict with the Muslims.¹⁴² Direct and indirect assistance was to prove crucial to the survival of the Bosnian Croats' hard-pressed Herceg-Bosna statelet in the latter half of 1993.

Chapter 45 The Contest for the Southern Road: Bugojno, Gornji Vakuf, and Prozor, July-December 1993

Just as the Croatian Army was intervening to stiffen the HVO's defense, the Bosnian Army began its second major offensive. Having reduced—though not eliminated—the HVO presence in the Lasva Valley through its capture of Travnik and Kakanj in June, the ARBiH turned its attention along the road to the south. This highway—one of Bosnia's major arteries—ran from Serb-held Jajce and Donji Vakuf through disputed Bugojno and Gornji Vakuf to Croat-held Prozor, reached Muslim-held Jablanica, and continued south to Mostar. Control of this road, which would also define the border between Croat-held Herzegovina and Muslim-controlled central Bosnia, drew the primary attention of the Muslims and Croats for the remainder of their war in Bosnia.

The ARBiH Captures Bugojno, 18-25 July*

Bugojno's strategic location and its damaged but still-functioning "Slavko Rodic" munitions factory made it one of the most heavily contested towns during the summer 1993 fighting between Croat and Muslim forces in central Bosnia. Before the war, Bugojno was a large town of 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 quickly changed after the war began, however. Most of Bugojno's Serbs left almost immediately for Serb-controlled areas, while 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 refugee influx had probably increased the proportion of Bosnian Muslims by mid-1993. Until then, the town was jointly defended from the Bosnian Serbs by the HVO's "Eugen Kvaternik" Brigade and the Bosnian Army's 307th "Bugojno" Mountain Brigade. Interethnic relations remained relatively good until the first Croat-Muslim fighting in Gornji Vakuf in January 1993, after which they became extremely tense.

In theory, the HVO's Eugen Kvaternik Brigade had a strength of perhaps 1,000 to 1,200 troops, in three battalions, a military police company, and a small mixed artillery battery. The force was not as strong as it looked, however. A substantial number of mostly Muslim soldiers deserted before or during the July fighting, and most of the brigade's troops were on leave or deployed outside the town when the ARBiH attacked. The Croat brigade's effective fighting strength was probably only 200 to 400 at the time and place of the Bosnian Army attack.

The ARBiH's own brigade from Bugojno—the 307th Brigade of the 3rd Corps' "Operational Group West"—spearheaded the government attack.^{143 144} Like most Bosnian Army brigades, the 307th had many troops but relatively few weapons: at the time, the

* For a more detailed account, see Annex 43: The Bosnian Army Capture of Bugojno, July 1993.

307th Brigade could probably field 3,000 to 3,500 troops when fully mobilized, with as many as three to four dozen mortars but no field artillery or armor.

The Bosnian Army forces began their assault on Bugojno early in the morning on 18 July 1993, and street battles continued in and around the town for the next several days as the numerically superior Muslims progressively forced the Croats back. After particularly heavy fighting in the town center on 21 July, the Bosnian Army took control of most of the key facilities—including the Eugen Kvaternik Brigade's barracks—the following day.¹⁴⁵ The last large pocket of Bosnian Croat resistance—the surrounded military police company—surrendered on 25 July.¹⁴⁶ The last fighting in the area, in which Croat and Muslim forces contested several Muslim villages on the road to the southeast, was over by about 29 July. The intense fighting produced high casualties on both sides. Each brigade lost at least dozens killed, and probably about 350 Bosnian Croat soldiers were captured.¹⁴⁷

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 its officers were consistently described as inexperienced and disorganized. The Bosnian Army's advantages were further magnified by the factor of surprise: the HVO troops were caught stunned, undermanned, and ill-positioned. With its forces separated, the HVO in Bugojno effectively fought three separate battalion-sized battles rather than one brigade-sized one. Outnumbered and surrounded, the battalions were defeated in detail. Although battling against an opponent that may have been unimpressive, the Bosnian Army was at least beginning to display some professional proficiency.

The Contest for Gornji Vakuf: 1 August

While it executed its successful attack on Bugojno, the Bosnian Army was contemplating an assault on Gornji Vakuf (some 20 km to the southeast) as the next step in its offensive campaign, massing forces in

the area late in July before launching the offensive on 1 August. When the time came, the ARBiH's local 317th "Gornji Vakuf" Mountain Brigade, commanded by Fahrudin "Pajo" Agic (probably supported by a battalion of the elite 7th Muslimski Brigade) launched attacks on the town from the northwest, north, and east.¹⁴⁸ The HVO's defending "Dr. Ante Starcevic" Brigade was in for a hard fight.

Battling throughout the night, government forces had won control over most of the town by the following day. UN peacekeepers and Western press correspondents confirmed that the Bosnian Muslims had secured control over "95 percent" of Gornji Vakuf, with a small number of disorganized Croats maintaining a toehold in the Croat-majority neighborhood in the southwest. (The Bosnian Croats changed the name of their section of the Turkish-named Gornji Vakuf to Uskoplje.) The HVO troops there were badly shaken by the assault, but did not collapse entirely.¹⁴⁹¹⁵⁰ With most of the town in hand, the Bosnian Army proved unable or unwilling to consolidate it fully by wiping out the remaining Croat pockets. (Apparently, the ARBiH was unable to send substantial reinforcements to the area at this time, and the 317th Brigade, only slightly augmented, was forced to slug it out one-on-one with its HVO opponent.) A small Croat enclave remained to the north in the little area of Trnovaca. More important, the HVO retained the Podovi Ridge just southwest of the town, from which they could direct artillery and machinegun fire into the town center.¹⁵¹ After pulling themselves together, the Bosnian Croats attempted to counterattack from these positions on 5 August with mortar rounds and small-arms fire.¹⁵² The HVO was similarly unable to dislodge its opponents from the town, and it failed to advance.

HVO reinforcements—including tanks and heavy artillery—were brought in to support another attack on Gornji Vakuf on 15-16 September, but this attack was likewise unsuccessful. The Bosnian Croats shelled the town intensely at intervals—on 21 October and 15 November in particular—but, although the shelling caused extensive destruction, it won no ground. A stalemate had been reached in Gornji Vakuf, with the confrontation line running through the town itself.¹⁵³¹⁵⁴¹⁵⁵

By late September, the frontlines had pretty well been established north of Herzegovina and would remain essentially unchanged for the rest of the war. At the same time the lines around Prozor were being drawn, however, similar battles were deciding Croat-Muslim areas of control within Herzegovina itself.

Chapter 46

The Croat-Muslim War in Herzegovina, June-July 1993

What we are witnessing in Mostar right now is only the semi-final. We are still awaiting the winner.

—A senior Bosnian Serb Army commander, on the HVO-ARBiH duel for Mostar¹⁵⁶

By the late summer of 1993, Mostar had become the most divided city in divided Bosnia-Herzegovina. Before the war the greater Mostar metropolitan area's population of some 120,000 citizens showed a very marginal Muslim plurality: 35 percent Muslims, 34 percent Croats, and 19 percent Serbs. Within urban Mostar itself, there was a higher fraction of Muslims—52 percent. When the ethnic violence cut through the city center, Mostar's roughly 55,000 Muslim townspeople found themselves squeezed into the smaller and besieged East Mostar section, forced off the western bank of the river and with only a medieval footbridge, the famed *Stari Most*, still linking the two halves of the city.¹⁵⁷

East Mostar was by now the headquarters of the ARBiH's 4th Corps, under the direction of Arif Pasalic, a former JNA colonel charged with the defense of what remained of Muslim-held Herzegovina. Although Pasalic could direct units as far north as Konjic and as far south as Blagaj, the forces he could actually reach personally were limited to the city's defending hometown unit, the 41st "Mostar" Brigade and another brigade nearby in Blagaj.¹⁵⁸ All other forces had to be directed by radio from the surrounded Muslim corps headquarters.¹⁵⁹ These limitations notwithstanding, Pasalic undertook a series of operations that would leave the Croats in peril of losing their entire strategic position in the area.

On 30 June, the Bosnian Army achieved a sweeping, crucial victory, capturing the Croat-held Tihomir Misic Barracks on the east bank of the Neretva, one of the hydroelectric dams on the river, and the main northern approaches to the city. Muslim forces also captured the Vrapcici neighborhood in northeastern Mostar and were contesting the adjacent Bijelo Polje district.¹⁶⁰ The capture of the HVO military base essentially secured the entire eastern half of the city for the government.¹⁶¹ Further gains north of the city on the next day raised serious HVO concerns that the Bosnian Army would eventually link up to Muslim forces from Jablanica, 30 km to the north.^{162 163}

Government forces mounted another major drive to the south beginning on 13 July—possibly aiming to cut the Croat-held road from Capljina to Stolac—and captured the towns of Buna and Blagaj about 10 km south of the city.^{164 165} The offensive widened on 15 July, and fighting raged across a long front for control of the city's northern and southern approaches. Shooting extended as far south as Capljina—20 km south of Mostar—as well as across the city itself, according to UNPROFOR spokesmen.¹⁶⁶

It was at this stage that the UN started reporting signs that the Croatian Army had been brought in to backstop the faltering HVO.¹⁶⁷ At the same time, UNPROFOR confirmed that HVO counterattacks against Buna and Blagaj had been supported by Bosnian Serb artillery.¹⁶⁸ The HVO recaptured Buna after a fierce counterattack, although the Bosnian Army retained its hold on nearby Blagaj. The ARBiH's advance south of Mostar had been blunted.^{169 170 171}

By late 1993 the only link left between the Croat-controlled western part of Mostar and the Muslim-held eastern section was the city's namesake: the centuries-old *Stari Most*. All of the modern bridges connecting the city's two halves had been destroyed, largely to isolate the tiny, Muslim-held foothold that still clung tenaciously alongside the river in Croat-majority western Mostar. Snipers, mortars, and artillery all targeted the bridge the Ottomans had built,

but those brave and cautious enough could dash across from one side of the city to the other to get water, food, or ammunition. Holes had been blasted in the sides, a ramshackle wooden roof covered most of the bridge, and automobile tires and sandbags had been piled alongside in a forlorn effort to shield the structure from shelling. Underneath it all, the single stone arch was still as graceful as ever, and the battered walkway remained both a physical and a symbolic link holding together the war-shattered halves of the city and its population.

It was not to last. As four and a quarter centuries had come and gone, the *Stari Most* had borne the feet of Ottomans and Austrians, Serbs and Croats, Albanians, Montenegrins, Jews, Bogomils, and Muslims. The bridge had seen empires rise and fall, and it had survived earthquakes, floods, and two world wars. In the end, Mostar's own citizenry destroyed what invaders and the forces of nature had spared. The Bosnian Croat leaders in West Mostar, self-proclaimed capital of the self-proclaimed state of Herceg-Bosna, wanted to ensure that their portion of Herzegovina was set completely apart from that of Mostar's Muslims—and also to destroy what many viewed as a visible reminder of the city's Ottoman past. On the morning of 9 November 1993, HVO T-55 tanks blasted the ancient stone bridge with high-explosive shells, and the *Stari Most* crumbled into the Neretva river.

Chapter 47

The Conflict That Wasn't: The Croat-Muslim Alliance Holds in Parts of Bosnia

A notable feature of the Croat-Muslim conflict in Bosnia is that it was widespread but not universal. While most of Bosnia was seared with emotional and actual flames, there were some areas in which Croat-Muslim relations stretched taut but never broke into violence, and even a few where Croat-Muslim relations remained good and the two factions continued to fight side by side against the Serbs.

In Sarajevo, the HVO's "King Tvrtko" Brigade chronicled a long and rocky relationship with the Bosnian Army. The HVO contributed about 1,500 troops to the defense of Sarajevo, manning a 2-kilometer strip of the confrontation line along the north bank of the

Miljacka River.¹⁷² At the end of September, the Bosnian Army ordered the brigade to turn over its weapons, return to barracks, and subordinate itself to the ARBiH 1st Corps. When the brigade's commander, Salko Zelic, refused, President Izetbegovic intervened and rescinded the order.¹⁷³ A month later, however, the Bosnian Army followed up its crackdown on renegade ARBiH units in Sarajevo (Operation "Trebevic-1") with a less extensive operation to bring the King Tvrtko Brigade under its authority (Operation "Trebevic-2"). The HVO military leaders in Sarajevo were rounded up and detained, and their brigade was disbanded and reconstituted under a new commander, Nedeljko Veraja. On 6 November, the Bosnian Army command announced that the King Tvrtko Brigade would retain its name but would henceforth serve under the ARBiH 1st Corps. The "Croatian King Tvrtko Brigade" remained a Bosnian Army unit for the remainder of the war¹⁷⁴ but with less than half its original personnel.¹⁷⁵

In the Bihać area, the tiny Bosnian Croat community officially had its own separate "Bihać Regional Command" consisting of the 101st HVO Brigade. In practice, this consisted of a semiautonomous, battalion-sized unit functioning as part of the ARBiH 5th Corps. With a few hundred Bosnian Croats dependent on the Bosnian 5th Corps and the entire Bihać enclave looking to Croatia for its survival, mutual self-interest—if nothing else—kept Croat-Muslim relations in the Bihać area reasonably good throughout the war.

Three HVO brigades in the southern Posavina corridor (the 107th "Gradacac," 108th "Brcko" and 115th "Zrinski" Brigades) functioned for all practical purposes as Bosnian Army units throughout 1992 and 1993. They were nominally assigned to the HVO's 4th (Orasje) Operational Zone but had no physical and little administrative connection to the rest of Croat-held Bosnia. All three brigades were raised from the multi-ethnic, cosmopolitan Tuzla metropolitan area—as distinct from the hardline Croat strongholds of Herzegovina and central Bosnia—and generally maintained good relations with the Bosnian Army throughout the Croat-Muslim conflict.¹⁷⁶¹⁷⁷ Like the three HVO brigades in the nearby southern

Posavina—but unlike the 111th HVO brigade in Zepce just to the south—the 110th “Usora” HVO Brigade in the Tesanj area remained loyal to the Bosnian Government and effectively functioned as part of the ARBiH 2nd Corps’ Operational Group “7-South,” which later became the 37th Division.¹⁷⁸

Chapter 48 Seesaw and Stasis: The Croat-Muslim War, August-December 1993

As the Bosnian Army’s second offensive began to wind down around Bugojno and Gornji Vakuf, the Croat-Muslim war settled into a largely static confrontation in which little ground changed hands. Sometimes intense battles would be fought for small towns or key facilities around the various enclaves, but, as summer stretched into autumn, there would be few noteworthy victories.

In the Kisieljak area, the HVO held three sizable towns: Kisieljak itself and the smaller towns of Fojnica and Kresevo to the west and south. After unsuccessfully pressing the southern edge of the Kisieljak enclave during the latter half of June, the Bosnian Army shifted its emphasis to the west, attacking Fojnica—a quiet lumber town of some 15,000 residents in the mountains west of Kisieljak—at the beginning of July.¹⁷⁹ Bosnian Army heavy weapons units, apparently brought up from the south after the failed attacks on Kresevo, supported the infantry with a rare barrage of artillery and mortar fire for two days. In a series of battles through the streets of Fojnica, the Bosnian Army took control of the town on 3 July, removing one point of the Fojnica-Kisieljak-Kresevo triangle that had previously defined the Croat-held enclave.¹⁸⁰

Around Vitez, the Bosnian Army forces had pressed the Bosnian Croats into an irregular area extending from just east of Novi Travnik to just west of Busovaca, all along the main highway adjacent to the Lasva river. But at the same time the Muslims were surrounding the Vitez enclave, the Croats were laying siege to the neighborhood of Stari Vitez within the city itself, where about 1,300 Muslims defended a tiny enclave of perhaps a kilometer on each side.¹⁸¹

The Bosnian Army Strikes: 14 September 1993*

After the Bosnian Army’s capture of most of Gornji Vakuf in August 1993, the ARBiH again took a break to consolidate its gains and plan its next effort. The next obvious objective was Prozor—not just for the town itself, but in order to gain control of the road linking newly captured Gornji Vakuf to Muslim-majority Jablanica. After most of the Muslim population fled Prozor itself, local Croat and Muslim forces had spent the May-July months battling over villages a few kilometers west of the town, destroying a number of these villages in the process.^{182 183 184}

Beginning in August, the emphasis of fighting shifted to the north, where Muslim and Croat forces vied for control of the commanding heights of Crni Vrh. A rocky mass over 1,300 meters high at points, Crni Vrh was just north of the equally high Makljen Ridge, which in turn looked straight down over Prozor town just 2 kilometers south. Both sides occupied portions of the Crni Vrh heights, but neither had firm control, so August and September were punctuated with battles along the hills and ridges.

On 14 September 1993, the Bosnian Government again took up the offensive, mounting Operation “Neretva 93,” one of the largest military campaigns of the year.¹⁸⁵ In its most complex effort to date, the ARBiH launched coordinated attacks against the Croat-held enclaves of the Lasva Valley, as well as the entire confrontation line running south from Gornji Vakuf around Prozor to Jablanica, through Vrdi and Mostar and as far south as Buna. Even by the later standards of the war, the ARBiH’s September 1993 effort was a sizable operation.

Government attacks on several towns around Vitez were a centerpiece of the broader offensive. Bosnian Army forces attacked the Vitez area simultaneously from the north and south, pinching the enclave near its narrowest point east of Vitez. Bosnian Army troops broke through HVO lines at one point and reached up

* For more details, see Annex 44: Northern Herzegovina: Konjic, Jablanica, and Vrdi in 1993.

to the edge of Vitez itself but were ultimately forced back with no net gains. The Bosnian Army also attacked from the southwest in the direction of the Croat-held explosives factory, whereupon the Croats threatened to blow up the factory rather than let the Muslims capture it. The “doomsday bomb” threat apparently had the desired effect, for the Muslims never took the factory.¹⁸⁶¹⁸⁷

At the same time Vitez was being pressed in central Bosnia, fighting was raging at points all along a nearly 200-km-long front that tore diagonally from Gornji Vakuf all the way to south of Mostar. Just outside Gornji Vakuf, ARBiH and HVO forces battled for control of strategic Karaulica Hill.¹⁸⁸

The Uzdol Massacre

After months of bloody but inconclusive fighting, the Bosnian Army mounted a sizable offensive east of Prozor on 14 September. It was during this effort that the “Uzdol massacre” occurred in the Croat-held village of Uzdol, 7 kilometers east of Prozor. The outrage appears to have evolved from a successful military operation, in which a company-sized unit of 70 to 100 ARBiH military police infiltrated past Croat defense lines and wiped out an HVO command post in the village. The Bosnian troops then went on a killing spree, murdering the civilians 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.¹⁸⁹¹⁹⁰

Between Prozor and Jablanica, the ARBiH 44th “Neretva” Brigade pushed the confrontation line slightly to the west and, after several days of fighting, had advanced south from Jablanica and Dresnica toward Mostar, capturing a band of territory along a 20-km segment of the highway.¹⁹¹¹⁹²

A focus of the government attack was Vrdi, a small town on the Neretva River halfway between Jablanica and Mostar to the south. After an artillery bombardment, Bosnian infantry attacked the town

unsuccessfully on the morning of 19 September, while also trying to seize nearby Medvjed hill and Mt. Cabulja to the west.¹⁹³ Shortly after the failed attack, UN observers reported seeing government reinforcements being brought in from the north.¹⁹⁴ A second Bosnian Army attempt 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.¹⁹⁵¹⁹⁶

The situation between Vrdi and Mostar was violently but chaotically contested. For a time there simply was no fixed frontline, as units from both sides roamed up and down the hills and battles erupted wherever the two armies met.¹⁹⁷ Still further to the south, the Bosnian Army tried again to break the siege of east Mostar beginning on 17 September. ARBiH and HVO troops grappled in Mostar city and its Bijelo Polje and Rastani suburbs,¹⁹⁸¹⁹⁹ while ARBiH forces attacking outward from the city in three directions made some limited gains.²⁰⁰ The HVO responded by blocking aid convoys into east Mostar and leveling an intense artillery barrage against the city on 23 September, followed by an ineffective infantry counterattack the next day.²⁰¹²⁰² Artillery duels further smashed the already battered 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.²⁰³) After several days of negotiations, fighting wound down and yet another Mostar cease-fire took effect on 3 October.²⁰⁴

When the Bosnian Army offensive petered out with the last push into Vrdi, ARBiH commanders could still be justly satisfied with a moderately successful execution of a very ambitious plan. The strategic concept had been very sound: utilize the ARBiH’s manpower advantage to mount simultaneous attacks, in the hopes of overtaxing the HVO and gaining control over the entire road segment between Gornji Vakuf and Mostar. In the event, the Army was not yet up to such a task, and the HVO—backstopped by key Croatian Army reinforcements—was able to retain

control over the area around Prozor. The ARBiH did secure a large swath of ground between Jablanica and Vrdi, however, and managed to take tenuous control over the highway from Grabovica through Potoci and Vrapcici into northeast Mostar.

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 village²⁰⁵

Vares is a small mining town that at the outset of the war registered a slight Croat majority among its population of about 12,000 residents. It lies roughly 50 km northwest of Sarajevo at the end of a primary road running north from the capital through Breza, and connected thereafter by secondary roads to Tuzla.²⁰⁶ The Vares area had been more or less free of interethnic tensions even through the summer of 1993, despite the Croat-Muslim violence that had ripped through central Bosnia only 20 or 30 km away. The leaders of the Croat and Muslim communities preserved much of their prewar moderation and their people continued to coexist while the rest of Bosnia collapsed around them.²⁰⁷

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 20 km to the west. Some 12,000 to 15,000 Croat refugees streamed into Vares from Kakanj and its surrounding villages, roughly doubling the population of

Vares itself.²⁰⁸ The Bosnian Croats, with more people than housing, responded by forcing the Muslim residents out of three villages outside Kakanj on 23 June.²⁰⁹ The 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.²¹⁰

While the residents of Vares were coping with a refugee influx that substantially altered their ethnic balance, the Muslim and the Croat military commanders were trying to sort out overall military control in the region. The Bosnian Croats exerted military authority 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 2nd (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's, regardless of their ethnic composition, to acknowledge Sarajevo's political and military authority over the region. The Vares Croats tried hard to balance their relations with the Bosnian Muslims who surrounded them with the demands of the Bosnian Croat ministate of which they were also part, but the odds were against them, and their efforts proved futile.²¹¹

At this delicate juncture in mid-October 1993, the situation in the Vares enclave changed dramatically with the arrival of Ivica Rajic²¹²—commander of the HVO Central Bosnian Operational Zone's Second Operational Group, hailing from the hardline Bosnian Croat Kiseljak enclave to the south.²¹³ In what could best be described as a local coup, Rajic and a group of armed Croat extremists took political control of the Vares enclave on 23 October, ousting and jailing the mayor and police chief and replacing them with supporters from outside. Rajic put Krešimir Božić, one of his allies from Kiseljak, in charge of the HVO's local Bobovac Brigade. Spared until now the fate of minorities elsewhere, the Vares enclave's substantial Muslim population was harassed, robbed, and systematically dispossessed. Within days most of the

* See Annex 45: The Vares Enclave and the Stupni Do Massacre: October-November 1993, for a more detailed account.

enclave's Muslims had fled to the village of Dabravina well to the south.²¹⁴²¹⁵

At roughly the same time that Ivica Rajic arrived to impose his hardline Bosnian Croat government on 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. Whether or not Rajic's arrival spurred the ARBiH into action, by late October, the Bosnian Government had transferred all or part of at least three brigades into the area and was poised to attack.

Although the Bosnian Croats may have instigated the violence that shattered the peace of Vares when they drove the Muslims from their homes, it was the Bosnian Army that began military operations in the area. The earliest ARBiH attack appears to have struck the town of Ratanj, halfway between Kakanj and Vares, on 19 October. Government forces went on 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 incited him to look for a Muslim village to hit in response. Possibly Rajic and the Vares Croats had already concluded that the Croat enclave was indefensible and were planning to evacuate their people to Serb-held territory to the east. If so, the HVO may have concluded that it had to clear the tiny town of Stupni Do to secure the escape, since it lay along the road to the south. For whatever reason, Rajic visited his anger on the 260-odd Muslim villagers clinging to one side of a mountain about 4 km south of Vares itself.²¹⁶²¹⁷

HVO infantry attacked Stupni Do early in the morning of 23 October, probably supported with mortars and some artillery.²¹⁸ Unlike Ahmici, Stupni Do had some defenders: 39 Bosnian Army soldiers quartered in the town with their small arms. Their resistance was virtually nil; in all likelihood the few armed Muslim residents of Stupni Do were asleep, scattered, and taken by surprise before they could organize. In a few hours the attacking HVO soldiers had completely destroyed the town, leveling every single building with direct fire or dynamite and killing every resident unable to flee in time.²¹⁹

When UN peacekeepers approached Stupni Do to investigate the Bosnian Government's claims of Croat atrocities there, the Croat commanders barred them from entering the village. 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, enough remained to verify the essentials of the attack, if not its details and magnitude. An investigation conducted by UNPROFOR military police found that an absolute minimum of 23 residents were confirmed killed, with another 13 unaccounted for, but the actual figure is probably higher.²²⁰ It was clear that dozens had been killed, but most of the bodies were never found, and an exact count of the dead may never be possible. All 52 houses in the village had been burnt to the ground.²²¹²²²

The UNPROFOR Chief of Staff, Brig. Angus Ramsay, took the 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."²²³ It is not that certain, however, that the Vares-based Bobovac Brigade was in fact the main unit responsible or, indeed, if it even participated in the massacre.²²⁴ There is circumstantial but persuasive evidence that the attack was at least spearheaded and perhaps executed entirely by the "Maturice," an entirely different unit brought in by Ivica Rajic from outside the Vares pocket shortly before the attack.²²⁵²²⁶²²⁷

Starting in the last week of October, anarchy bred pandemonium in Vares—now cleansed of all Muslims except for 110 terrified civilians clustered for safety around the Swedish UN contingent's vehicles while former Croat neighbors looted the abandoned Muslim homes and businesses. Suddenly word came that the Bosnian Army was on its way. In the dark early hours of 3 November, the town's remaining Croat residents gathered their own possessions and their loot and fled the town.²²⁸²²⁹ Then, at dawn, coming from two directions, ARBiH units entered Vares without firing a shot

to find it an eerily silent ghost town. The 3rd Corps' 7th Muslimski Brigade occupied Vares from the west, while 2nd Corps forces entered from the north.^{230 231} (Elements of the ARBiH 6th Corps were apparently also involved.)²³² For several days thereafter, drunk and disorderly Muslim soldiers roamed the streets of Vares, carrying off whatever the Bosnian Croats had left behind. Eventually, order was restored, and Vares' ejected Muslims returned to their violated homes.²³³

Most of the thousands of Bosnian Croats who had once coexisted in Vares fled for Kiseljak, leaving a minuscule Croat-controlled island—barely 2 square km—around the little town of Dastansko 4 km southeast of Vares. Within a few weeks, Vares itself had gone from a thriving, ethnically mixed town to an exclusively Croat one and then to a majority Muslim one. When Ivica Rajic began expelling Muslims from their homes in late October, his intention was to force the Muslims out and claim the entire Vares region for the Bosnian Croats. Less than a month later, his initiative had produced exactly the opposite result.

The HVO Counterstrike, 12 November 1993

As the advent of Rasim Delic in June had marked a milestone in the ARBiH's development, so was the performance of the HVO to be improved by the arrival of a new commander, Ante Roso, on 9 November 1993—the same day that HVO tank fire knocked the *Stari Most* into the Neretva. Zagreb, it seems, had been unhappy with the lackluster performance of the previous two HVO commanders: the HVO's first head, Brigadier Milivoj Petkovic, was superseded on 24 July after the ARBiH's successful June offensive (although he remained as chief of staff); and its second commander, Maj. Gen. Slobodan Praljak, was replaced after less than four months in command. Roso, the HVO's third commander in chief, was Zagreb's next attempt to find someone who could turn the military situation around and, ideally, allow the Croatian HV units sent in to backstop the HVO to be withdrawn. Within a week, Roso set out to regain the initiative for the Croatians in central Bosnia.

Roso's opening shot came on 12 November, as the Bosnian Army effort against nearby Vitez was grinding to a halt, with the HVO's most substantial

counterattack of late 1993. 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—pushed Bosnian Government forces back about 5 km on 12 and 13 November.^{234 235} HVO troops reached right up to the edge of Fojnica, but failed to occupy it.²³⁶ Government forces appeared ready to yield Fojnica—which would have returned the Croat-held enclave to its original borders—but managed to reoccupy their commanding positions in the town when the HVO offensive stalled.^{237 238}

On 15 November the HVO expanded its offensive, assaulting government positions in Gornji Vakuf with artillery and rocket fire from the Makljen ridge to the south, supported by probably a platoon of armor. The HVO seemed unwilling or unable to commit any infantry forces to the assault on the town. With the HVO unable to take any ground with firepower alone and the Bosnian Army spent after its massive September-October offensive, the two sides were set for an impasse as winter began to set in.^{239 240 241 242}

Stalemate: December 1993

Although the Muslim-Croat confrontation lines had essentially stabilized by late September, serious fighting continued in the Prozor-Gornji Vakuf area through the end of November, highlighted by a series of contests for secondary locations along the road, including Pidris in the direction of Gornji Vakuf and Slatina toward Jablanica.²⁴³ The Bosnian Army could shell Prozor from the heights to the north, but the HVO retained control of the town itself. The Muslims held the highway north of Gornji Vakuf, anchored to the northwest by Muslim-held Bugojno. The Bosnian Croats controlled the road south of Gornji Vakuf, through Prozor and southwest to HVO-held Doljani, slightly northwest of Muslim-held Jablanica. Each faction could travel relatively safely along its respective section of the road, as the Bosnian Government held territory south of its section of the highway and the Bosnian Croats controlled a strip several kilometers to the north.

Having stabilized the situation around Fojnica after the HVO's November counterstrike, the Bosnian Army went on to mass more forces there in preparation for one last winter counterattack. The elite 7th Muslimski Brigade—having just helped to capture Vares—was brought into the Fojnica area as a reinforcement, supported by at least two other brigades. Western military observers estimated that the Bosnian Army had brought in 3,000 to 4,000 additional troops by the beginning of December and speculated that the Kiseljak enclave might be the next target after Vares.²⁴⁴ When the blow came, though, it would fall elsewhere.

Moving just ahead of a Christmas–New Year truce between the Croats and Muslims, the Bosnian Army launched a well-coordinated offensive against the Lasva Valley on 22 December. Government forces attacked the Croat-held valley from six directions, capturing the village of Krizancevo outside Vitez. Forces attacking east of Travnik advanced some 300 meters and took important high ground overlooking the road running west out of the city.²⁴⁵ As 1993 turned to 1994, a Croat-Muslim peace still seemed distant.

Chapter 49 Conclusion: The End of 1993

The Bosnian Army at the close of 1993 had not yet become a mature fighting force, but it had achieved a renewed sense of confidence despite a situation that could fairly be called desperate. The force still showed serious deficiencies in equipment and skills, lacking both armor and artillery and, in some units, even basic infantry weapons and ammunition. It had improved its fighting skills—both individually and as an organization—but it was still learning staff work, tactics, and logistics through the painful and expensive school of trial and error. Nonetheless, most Bosnian Army soldiers felt that the darkest days had passed. Already battling the VRS, the ARBiH had taken on a second opponent, the HVO, and more often than not emerged victorious. Bosnian soldiers and civilians could see that their path to ultimate victory would unquestionably be long and arduous, but at least they were confident that it was leading in that direction.

By contrast, in 1993 the Bosnian Croat Army had clearly taken on more than it could handle. The HVO launched its military and ethnic-cleansing campaign in the spring without anticipating the fierce resistance the Bosnian Muslims would put up. Having begun the conflict, the HVO rapidly found itself on the defensive on almost every front and would have been in even worse shape had it not been for the direct and indirect assistance of the Croatian Army. A measure of how bad things were for the Croats was the open letter Mate Boban sent to the UN after the failure of his offensive, in which he protested the Muslim “aggression.” By Boban’s own account the HVO had lost in the seven weeks since the beginning of June the towns of Konjic, Jablanica, Fojnica, Travnik, Kakanj, Zenica, and Bugojno, as well as over 150 smaller villages. The total loss was stated at about 3,700 square km—about 7 percent of Bosnia’s land area and over a quarter of the Bosnian Croats’ territorial holdings at the start of the summer.²⁴⁶ By the end of 1993, the HVO—with significant direct assistance from Zagreb and under the leadership of a new commander—had at least stabilized its military position, and managed to regain some ground during the mid-November counterattacks. Disaster had been averted, but the HVO was still worse off than it had been at the beginning of the year.

The VRS had achieved most of the objectives it had set for itself during 1993, securing most of the Drina valley and eliminating the Muslim military threat to the Serb position along the Bosnian-Serbian border. The Serb political and military leaders in Bosnia were further encouraged by the Muslim-Croat war and did whatever they could to exacerbate it. They failed, however, to fully exploit the situation with a direct attempt to destroy the Bosnian Army. The VRS ignored opportunities to crush the Tuzla and Zenica areas—the heart of Muslim-held Bosnia—with the major operations needed, and the operations the VRS launched late in the year (see the 1994 section) failed to achieve their objectives. The Serbs in 1993 had had a last chance to win the war for Bosnia outright, and they failed to take advantage of it.

Endnotes, Section IV

¹ Reuters, "Purges Renew Morale in Bosnian Army" by Maggie Fox, 12 December 1993.

² Halilovic, Sefer, *Lukava Strategija* ("Clever Strategy"), chapter 17.

³ Halilovic, chapter 17.

⁴ Halilovic, reprinted document from an address by Halilovic to a military conference in Zenica, 21-22 August 1993.

⁵ Delic's predecessor Halilovic later claimed that he had wanted to discipline renegade commanders but lacked the legal basis to do so, as the Bosnian Government had not yet passed a law on defense. Halilovic, Sefer, chapter 18.

⁶ This account is drawn almost exclusively from Silber and Little, chapters 21-23. For a personal account and analysis of the negotiations, see David Owen, *Balkan Odyssey*. New York: Harcourt Brace & Jovanovich, 1995.

⁷ Silber and Little, p. 276. For a more comprehensive listing of the plan's main points, see David Owen, *Balkan Odyssey*, pp. 89-90.

⁸ Bosnian Croat enthusiasm for the plan contributed to the growing bad temper between the Croats and the Muslims and helped spark the Croat-Muslim war, when the Croats demanded that the Bosnian Army turn over its weapons or withdraw from the Travnik area in April 1993. Oddly, Travnik was not in one of the Croat-dominated Vance-Owen provinces, but in what would have been the mixed Croat-Muslim one.

⁹ Silber and Little, p. 304.

¹⁰ See David Owen, *Balkan Odyssey*, pp. 219-222, for a discussion of the circumstances surrounding Izetbegovic's rejection of the agreement.

¹¹ In addition to their operations around Brcko, the VRS carried out an operation southwest of Doboj in an effort to seize the Doboj-Tesanj-Teslic road during March 1993. The "Doboj" Operational Group, under the command of Colonel Slavko Lisica, began the attack on 19 March 1993, led by elements of the 2nd Armored Brigade, together with major elements of the OG's many infantry/light infantry brigades. The VRS, however, was only able to penetrate about 1 kilometer against stiff resistance from the 203rd Motorized Brigade/Operational Group 7 "South." During four days of fighting, the 203rd, reinforced with additional units from OG-7 and the HVO 110th Brigade, drove VRS forces back to their start line. For a detailed account of the battle from the ARBiH perspective, see "Battle in the Karuse," *Prva Linija*, March/April 1998, pp. 43-45.

¹² The Belgrade magazine *Nin* described the corridor in a 22 January 1993 article,

The Muslim lines are 1.5 km from the center [of Brcko], away from the Sava, in the suburb known as Suljagica Sokak. Thus, the corridor linking Serbia and Bosanska Krajina, the largest territory of the Serbian Republic in B-H, is less than 2 km wide in the very center of Brcko.

... This strip of territory, about 200 km long and often very narrow, which on the map is so twisted that it reminds one of an umbilical cord, looks still stranger in the field.

Lengthy detours connect country roads to the highways, muddy and broad paths cut recently through the forest lead straight to pontoon bridges. However, this does not stop the numerous trucks in both directions from continuing on their way . . .

Dragan Cicic, "Do Not Lean Out the Window," Belgrade *Nin* 22 January 1993, p. 15.

¹³ "Sadejstvo" is also translated as "Cooperation."

¹⁴ Mladic has stated that,

... we were forced to carry out a complex operation, so that we could protect the people in Podrinje . . . we planned a series of operations in Podrinje . . . I would mention the battles around Srebrenica and for Srebrenica, as well as the battle around Gorazde, the battles for Trnovo . . . and for many other places.

Jovan Janjic, *Srpski General Ratko Mladic*, Novi Sad: Matica Srpska Press, 1996, chapter 10.

Each operation had a different cover name, although only two of the names Mladic lists below have been positively identified with an attack in a given area:

Cerska 93 was the beginning of all operations, of which there were several, in continuity, such as Mac 1 [Sword 1], Mac 2, Podrinje, and so on. Lukavac 93 was the finale of all operations. . . . All these operations were the fruit of a very thorough analysis by the Main Staff and its first level of leadership and command . . .

Jovan Janjic, chapter 11.

¹⁵ Reuters, 2 January 1994.

¹⁶ Musan "Caco" Topalovic was killed (under highly suspicious circumstances) while allegedly trying to escape. Ramiz "Celo" Delalic was arrested and sentenced but subsequently freed with a reduced sentence. He eventually became a restaurant owner in Sarajevo, with rumored ties to organized crime.

¹⁷ Vulliamy, Ed, *Seasons in Hell: Understanding Bosnia's War*, New York, St. Martin's Press, 1994, pp. 301-302.

¹⁸ Malcom, Noel, *Bosnia: A Short History (2nd Edition)*. Macmillan (Papermac), 1996, p. 209.

¹⁹ Laura Silber and Allan Little, *Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation*. Penguin USA. pp. 210-211.

²⁰ Reuters, "Izetbegovic Says Not Going to Geneva Talks" by Steve Pagani, 22 June 1993.

²¹ Reuters, "Bosnian Presidency Meets Without Izetbegovic" by Steve Pagani, 21 June 1993.

²² Reuters, "Bosnians To Attend Peace Talks Without Izetbegovic" by Giles Ellwood, 22 June 1993.

²³ Reuters, "Bosnian Moslem Leader Denies Presidency Ambitions," 22 June 1993

²⁴ Reuters, "Bosnia's Abdic Wanted in Austria on Fraud Charges," 26 June 1993.

²⁵ Reuters "Moslems Declare Autonomous Province in Maverick Enclave," 27 September 1993.

²⁶ Reuters, "Bosnian Troops Swoop on Rebel Moslem Town" by Paul Holmes, 30 September 1993.

²⁷ Bosnian Government security forces sprayed the ground in front of a crowd of Adbic supporters in Cazin with gunfire but do not appear to have killed or injured anyone while dispersing the crowd. Reuters, "Bosnian Enclave's 'Father' Tries To Do It Alone" by Paul Holmes, 1 October 1993.

²⁸ Reuters, "UN Fails to Stop Intra-Muslim Battles in Bosnia" by Paul Holmes, 5 October 1993.

- ²⁹ Reuters, "Rebel Moslems Seize Bosnian Town" by Giles Elgood, 15 October 1993.
- ³⁰ Reuters, "Bosnian Army Takes Back Town From Rebel Moslems," 16 October 1993.
- ³¹ Reuters "Moslem Rebels Say Bosnian Troops Launch Attack," 18 October 1993.
- ³² Reuters, "Bosnian Moslem Dissident Meets Karadzic, Milosevic," 22 October 1993.
- ³³ Reuters, "Rebel Moslems Sign Peace Deal With Bosnian Serbs," 22 October 1993.
- ³⁴ Reuters, "Rebel Forces Say They Advance in Bosnia Pocket," 11 November 1993.
- ³⁵ Reuters, "Rebel Moslems Gain Ground Against Bosnian Army" by Maggie Fox, 6 December 1993.
- ³⁶ Reuters, "Rebel Moslems Get Serb Help for Assault on Bosnian Army" by Maggie Fox, 6 December 1993.
- ³⁷ Reuters, "Serbs Shell Bosnians To Support Rebel Moslems," 15 December 1993.
- ³⁸ Reuters, "Bosnian Army at Standoff With Rebel Moslem Enclave" by Maggie Fox, 8 November 1993.
- ³⁹ Gornji Vakuf, with a population of about 20,000 to 25,000, had about 50 percent Muslims, 45 percent Croats, and a small number of Serbs and others.
- ⁴⁰ Reuters, "Moslem, Croat Allies Fight in Central Bosnia" by Mark Heinrich, 12 January 1993.
- ⁴¹ Stewart, Col. Robert, *Broken Lives: A Personal View of the Bosnian Conflict*. London: Harper Collins, 1994. pp. 200-211.
- ⁴² At the same time, the HVO made a corresponding statement about Bosnian Croat units in the three proposed Muslim-majority cantons. Reuters, "Bosnian Croats Demand Control of Moslem Units," 15 January 1993.
- ⁴³ Reuters "Bosnian Minister Orders Army Units Under Croat Control" by Kurt Schork, 17 January 1993.
- ⁴⁴ Reuters, "Croats Report Taking Key Town From Moslem Allies" by Mark Heinrich, 19 January 1993.
- ⁴⁵ Stewart, pp. 200-211
- ⁴⁶ Reuters, "Croats Seal Bosnian Roads After Fighting With Moslems" by Mark Heinrich, 27 January 1993.
- ⁴⁷ Zagreb HTV, 1 February 1993. FBIS London LD0102202393, 012023Z February 1993.
- ⁴⁸ The Bosnian Croats claimed that Muslim forces attacked Travnik on 30 January, but UN peacekeepers in the town called the story a complete fabrication.
- ⁴⁹ Reuters, "Moslems and Croats Sign Cease-Fire Accord in Central Bosnia," 30 January 1993.
- ⁵⁰ Reuters, "Bosnian Rivals Fight on Despite Peace Talks" by Mark Heinrich, 6 February 1993.
- ⁵¹ Reuters, "Moslems Denounce Border Blockade by Croats" by Mark Heinrich, 28 February 1993.
- ⁵² Reuters, "Bosnia, Croatia Agree Plan for Joint Bosnian Army" by Steve Pagani, 28 March 1993.
- ⁵³ Stewart, *Broken Lives*, pp. 278-299.
- ⁵⁴ The few remaining members of the Jure Francetic Brigade eventually retreated to Vitez, where they later formed the 44th "Jure Francetic" Independent Home Guard Battalion.
- ⁵⁵ Stewart, pp. 278-299.
- ⁵⁶ *White Warrior: The Cheshires in Bosnia*, 1st Battalion the 22nd (Cheshire) Regiment, Regimental HQ, Chester, 1994. pp. 57-60.
- ⁵⁷ Bell, Martin, *In Harm's Way: Reflections of a War-Zone Thug*. London: Penguin Books, 1996. pp. 152-155.
- ⁵⁸ Stewart, pp. 278-299.
- ⁵⁹ *White Warrior*, pp. 57-60.
- ⁶⁰ Bell, pp. 152-155.
- ⁶¹ Stewart, pp. 278-299.
- ⁶² *White Warrior*, pp. 57-60.
- ⁶³ According to the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) indictment, Ahmici had a population of 356 Muslims out of a total population of 466. The town's population on the morning of the attack may have been as high as 800, however, because of an influx of refugees from Jajce, Foca, and Visegrad. (The figures of 800 residents during the attack and 500 before the war are taken from UNHCR estimates.) 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 UN intervention and international attention after the massacre's discovery. British peacekeepers, seeing HVO soldiers escorting least 150 Muslim prisoners away from Ahmici after the assault, demanded to know what was going on, whereupon the HVO captors changed direction and eventually released the prisoners to the UNHCR. The prisoners, at least, firmly believe they were about to be executed and that UNPROFOR's intervention saved their lives. Stewart, pp. 278-299.
- ⁶⁴ Reuters, "UN Tribunal Turns Attention to Croat War Crimes" by Andrew Kelley, 9 May 1995
- ⁶⁵ *White Warrior*, pp. 57-60.
- ⁶⁶ Reuters, "Croatian Was Crime Suspects Surrender to UN" by Andrew Kelley, 6 October 1997.
- ⁶⁷ The figure of 176 destroyed buildings of all types is from the ICTY's "Kupreskic et al." indictment, apparently derived from the Bosnian authorities' preliminary investigation by a Zenica court.
- ⁶⁸ Split *Feral Tribune*, interview with Ivan Santic, Former President of Vitez Opcina, "There are 200 Who Are Worse!" 20 November 1995.
- ⁶⁹ Reuters, "UN Tries To End Moslem-Croat Clashes in Bosnia" by Steve Pagani, 20 April 1993.
- ⁷⁰ Zagreb Radio, 25 April 1993. FBIS London LD2504122693, 251226Z April 1993.
- ⁷¹ Paris AFP, 28 April 1993. FBIS Vienna AU2804110393, 281103Z April 1993.
- ⁷² Zagreb HTV, 12 May 1993. FBIS London LD1205180493, 121804Z May 1993.
- ⁷³ Sarajevo Radio, 19 April 1993. FBIS Vienna AU1904124493, 191244Z April 1993.
- ⁷⁴ Sarajevo Radio, 21 April 1993. FBIS Vienna AU2104161893, 211618Z April 1993.
- ⁷⁵ Zagreb Radio, 24 April 1993. FBIS London LD2404161993, 241619Z April 1993.
- ⁷⁶ 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 1993. FBIS Vienna AU3004114393, 301143Z April 1993.
- ⁷⁷ 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 war crimes and/or property in Rotilj, Visnjica, Svinjarevo, Komionica, Gromiljak, Mihovac, Mehrici Mahala, Rudnik, and Kazagici. Sarajevo Radio, 25 May 1993. FBIS London LD2505211093, 252110Z May 1993.
- ⁷⁸ Zagreb HTV, 30 May 1993. FBIS London LD3005221693, 302216Z May 1993.
- ⁷⁹ Reuters, "Bosnia's Black Market Town Braces for War" by John Fullerton, 3 June 1993.

- ⁸⁰ Sarajevo Radio, 10 June 1993. FBIS Vienna AU1006120793, 101207Z June 1993.
- ⁸¹ Sarajevo Radio, 18 April 1993. FBIS London LD1804122493, 181224Z April 1993.
- ⁸² Reuters, "Gunfire Traps British Troops on Bosnia Atrocity Hunt" by Douglas Hamilton, 28 April 1993.
- ⁸³ Reuters, "British UN Troops Collect Massacre Victims" by Douglas Hamilton, 27 April 1993.
- ⁸⁴ Reuters, "Croat Commander Promises Inquiry Into Family's Death" by Corinne Dufka, 24 April 1993.
- ⁸⁵ Reuters, "Croats and Moslems Activate Joint Command To Keep Peace" by Mark Heinrich, 30 April 1993.
- ⁸⁶ Reuters, "Shaken Croat-Moslem Alliance Restored in Mostar" by Douglas Hamilton, 24 April 1993.
- ⁸⁷ Reuters, "Bosnia's Croats and Muslims Battle in Mostar" by Mark Heinrich, 9 May 1993.
- ⁸⁸ Reuters, "Croats and Moslems Battle as New Bosnia Truce Declared" by Kurt Schork, 9 May 1993.
- ⁸⁹ Reuters, "Croat Troops Detain 1,300 Moslem Civilians in Camp" by Mark Heinrich, 12 May 1993.
- ⁹⁰ Sarajevo Prva Linija "Bridges of Defense and Friendship" by Edin Logo, June 1997 pp. 37-38.
- ⁹¹ Reuters, "UN Council Tells Moslems and Croats To Stop Fighting" by Evelyn Leopold, 10 May 1993.
- ⁹² Reuters, "Mostar Fighting Rages On, French Helicopter Hit" by Kurt Schork, 13 May 1993.
- ⁹³ Reuters, "Moslems and Croats Fight On Despite Mostar Truce" by Kurt Schork, 13 May 1993.
- ⁹⁴ Reuters, "Croats Keep Attacking, Displacing Moslem Civilians—UN" by Laura Pitter, 16 May 1993.
- ⁹⁵ Reuters, "Snipers Active in Mostar Despite Cease-Fire Pact" by Laura Pitter, 20 May 1993.
- ⁹⁶ Reuters, "Croat-Moslem Panel Breaks Up in Mostar" by Laura Pitter, 24 May 1993.
- ⁹⁷ The plant had been damaged by Serb shelling but was mostly operational at the time of the Muslim counteroffensive in June 1993. Subsequent Bosnian Serb air attacks in late August 1993 and late February 1994 severely damaged portions of the factory, but it was nevertheless able to remain at least partially operational for the duration of the war.
- ⁹⁸ Reuters, "Music School a Place of Fear for Zenica Croats" by John Fullerton, 31 May 1993.
- ⁹⁹ London Al-hayah, "Central Bosnia's Muslim Military Commanders Reject Partition Option That Is Imposed on Them" by As'ad Taha, 28 August 1993.
- ¹⁰⁰ Reuters, "Croats, Muslims Eyeball to Eyeball in Travnik" by John Fullerton, 30 May 1993.
- ¹⁰¹ Later redesignated the 706th Mountain Brigade.
- ¹⁰² Zagreb Radio, 24 April 1993. FBIS London LD24004222093, 242220Z April 1993.
- ¹⁰³ The two brigades were later combined to form the 91st Home Defense Regiment.
- ¹⁰⁴ Reuters, "Bosnian Croats, Moslems Call Truce in Travnik" by John Fullerton, 5 June 1993.
- ¹⁰⁵ Sarajevo Radio, 5 June 1993. FBIS London LD0506211993, 052119Z June 1993.
- ¹⁰⁶ Reuters, "Bosnian Croats, Moslems Call Truce in Travnik" by John Fullerton, 5 June 1993.
- ¹⁰⁷ Zagreb Radio, 6 June 1993. FBIS London LD0606194093, 061940Z June 1993.
- ¹⁰⁸ Belgrade Tanjug, 7 June 1993. FBIS London LD0706171893, 071718Z June 1993.
- ¹⁰⁹ Here, as elsewhere in Bosnia during this period, the HVO appears to have actively supported the forced emigration of its own Bosnian Croat population out of a government-captured area. The Bosnian authorities in Travnik pleaded with Croats and Serbs not to vacate their homes and indicated they would cooperate with the UN in order to guarantee their safety and property. The HVO, however, was spreading the word that anyone who remained behind would be in danger and strongly encouraged a mass exodus. Virtually the entire Bosnian Croat population voted with its feet, electing to surrender to the Serbs rather than remain in their homes under Muslim-majority rule. Sarajevo Radio, 7 June 1993. FBIS London LD0706215193, 072151Z June 1993.
- ¹¹⁰ As one HVO soldier put it, "We could have tried a breakthrough to Vitez but the terrain was difficult and we were outnumbered. We didn't have a choice [but to surrender]." Reuters, "Bosnian Croat Refugees From Moslem Offensive Reach Croatia" by Davor Huic, 10 June 1993.
- ¹¹¹ Reuters, "Bosnian Serbs Claim 1,000 Croat Soldiers Surrender," 7 June 1993.
- ¹¹² Reuters, "Fighting in Travnik Prompts Croat Refugee Exodus" by John Fullerton, 8 June 1993.
- ¹¹³ Reuters, "Thousands of Croats Stuck on Rain-Lashed Serb Mountain" by Adrian Hartley, 8 June 1993.
- ¹¹⁴ The Bosnian Croat refugee exodus appears to have continued beyond 7 June. On 16 June the Serbs claimed that another 2,000 Bosnian Croat civilians and some 400 more HVO soldiers had crossed over to surrender to the Serbs west of Novi Travnik. Another HVO unit was reportedly remaining behind to screen the mass exodus. Reuters, "Serbs Claim New Croat Refugee Influx," 16 June 1993.
- ¹¹⁵ Reuters, "Moslems, Croats Ready for Another Battle" by John Fullerton, 10 June 1993.
- ¹¹⁶ Reuters, "Moslem-Croat Fighting Grows in Central Bosnia" by John Fullerton, 9 June 1993.
- ¹¹⁷ Paris AFP, 9 June 1993. FBIS Vienna AU0906134793, 091347Z June 1993.
- ¹¹⁸ Paris AFP, 9 June 1993. FBIS Vienna AU0906134793, 091347Z June 1993.
- ¹¹⁹ According to the 1991 census, Kakanj had a population of about 59,000, slightly over half of which were Muslims. About a quarter were Bosnian Croats, and about 10 percent were Bosnian Serbs.
- ¹²⁰ Sarajevo Radio, 10 June 1993. FBIS London LD1006085593, 100855Z June 1993.
- ¹²¹ Zagreb HTV Television, 13 June 1993. FBIS London LD1306220593, 132205Z June 1993.
- ¹²² Zagreb HTV Television, 14 June 1993. FBIS London LD1406183493, 141834Z June 1993.
- ¹²³ Paris AFP, 16 June 1993. FBIS Vienna AU1606162393, 161623Z June 1993.
- ¹²⁴ Sarajevo Radio, 15 June 1993. FBIS Vienna AU1506153993, 151539Z June 1993.
- ¹²⁵ Zagreb Radio, 15 June 1993. FBIS London LD1506180593, 151805Z June 1993.
- ¹²⁶ Sarajevo Radio, 10 June 1993. FBIS Vienna AU1006120793, 101207Z June 1993.
- ¹²⁷ Reuters, "Moslems Said To Capture Key Central Town" by Mark Heinrich, 16 June 1993.
- ¹²⁸ Reuters, "Bosnian Croats Ask Croatia for Protection Against Muslims" by Mark Heinrich, 9 June 1993.

- ¹²⁹ Reuters, "Croats Say 2,000 Dead, Wounded in Moslem Offensive" by Mark Heinrich, 18 June 1993.
- ¹³⁰ Reuters, "Moslems, Croats Govern Separately in Bosnian Town" by John Fullerton, 3 June 1993.
- ¹³¹ Reuters, "Bosnian Croats and Moslems Fight for New Town" by Giles Ellgood, 24 June 1993.
- ¹³² Reuters, "Moslem Commander Warns Over Central Bosnia Fighting," 27 June 1993.
- ¹³³ Reuters, "Croats, Moslems Fight on New Bosnian Battlefront" by Gilles Treuresser, 25 June 1993.
- ¹³⁴ Reuters, "Fierce Fighting in Northern Tip of Central Bosnia," 26 June 1993.
- ¹³⁵ Reuters, "Serbs, Croats, Close in on Moslem Town" by Gilles Treuresser, 27 June 1993.
- ¹³⁶ Reuters, "Croats Mobilize as Central Bosnia Fighting Rages" by Giles Ellgood, 30 June 1993.
- ¹³⁷ Ibid.
- ¹³⁸ Reuters, "Fighting Rages in Central Bosnia," 2 July 1993.
- ¹³⁹ Reuters, "Serb and Croat Forces Slice Moslem Salient" by Gilles Treuresser, 2 July 1993.
- ¹⁴⁰ Reuters, "Bosnian Moslems and Croats Continue Fighting After Truce" by Mark Heinrich, 10 May 1993.
- ¹⁴¹ Reuters, "UN Says Croatian Troops Pouring Into Bosnia" 22 July 1993.
- ¹⁴² Reuters, "Bosnian Croat Commander Prefers Fighting to Talks" by Pedja Kojovic, 18 November 1993.
- ¹⁴³ Like other Bosnian Army Operational Groups, OG West was a semipermanent, division-level headquarters established to coordinate the operations of several brigades.
- ¹⁴⁴ 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.
- ¹⁴⁵ Sarajevo Radio, 21 July 1993. FBIS Vienna AU2107191193.
- ¹⁴⁶ Sarajevo Radio, 25 July 1993. FBIS London LD2507151293.
- ¹⁴⁷ The Eugen Kvaternik Brigade was effectively destroyed in this operation. Its remnants were regrouped into a single battalion and eventually combined with two other destroyed shattered and exiled HVO units—the former "Kupres" and "Jajce" brigades—to form the 55th Home Defense Regiment.
- ¹⁴⁸ The previous day, 30 July 1993, another UNPROFOR-brokered country-wide cease-fire had been signed by Bosnian Army commander Delic and HVO commander Petkovic. Obviously, the agreement failed to hold. Reuters, "Text of Latest Bosnia General Cease-Fire Accords," 30 July 1993.
- ¹⁴⁹ Reuters, "Moslems Said To Have Won Strategic Bosnian Town" by Kurt Schork, 2 August 1993.
- ¹⁵⁰ Reuters, "British Commander Confirms Moslems Have Gornji Vakuf," 2 August 1993.
- ¹⁵¹ Reuters, "Croats Counter-Attack in Central Bosnia" by Kurt Schork, 5 August 1993.
- ¹⁵² Ibid.
- ¹⁵³ Reuters, "Fighting Erupts in Central Bosnia" by Kurt Schork, 16 September 1993.
- ¹⁵⁴ Reuters, "UN Reports Bosnian Croat Attack on Moslems" by Kurt Schork, 21 October 1993.
- ¹⁵⁵ Reuters, "Croats Pound Central Bosnian Town" by John Fullerton, 15 November 1993.
- ¹⁵⁶ Husum, Soren Bo, *At War Without Weapons: A Peace-Keeper in the Bosnian Conflict*. UK: Airlife Publishing, 1998. p. 44
- ¹⁵⁷ Reuters, "Croats Keep Attacking, Displacing Moslem Civilians—UN" by Laura Pitter, 16 May 1993.
- ¹⁵⁸ At least until the formation of the Konjic-based ARBiH 6th Corps temporarily removed some of the more northern forces from Fourth Corps command in June 1993.
- ¹⁵⁹ Husum, Soren Bo, *At War Without Weapons: A Peace-Keeper in the Bosnian Conflict*. UK: Airlife Publishing, 1998, p. 39.
- ¹⁶⁰ Reuters, "Bosnian Moslem Seize Croat Barracks in Mostar," 30 June 1993.
- ¹⁶¹ Reuters, "Fierce Fighting Erupts in Mostar" by Giles Ellgood, 20 June 1993.
- ¹⁶² Reuters, "Fierce Fighting in Mostar, Aid in Jeopardy" by Giles Ellgood, 30 June 1993.
- ¹⁶³ Reuters, "Bosnian Moslems Advance on Croats Around Mostar," 1 July 1993.
- ¹⁶⁴ Reuters, "Bosnian Croats Report Big Moslem Offensive," 13 July 1993.
- ¹⁶⁵ Reuters, "Bosnian Serbs Said To Be Moving Towards Bosnian Capita" by Mark Heinrich, 26 July 1993.
- ¹⁶⁶ Reuters, "Moslems Reported To Launch All-Out Attack on Mostar," 15 July 1993.
- ¹⁶⁷ Ibid.
- ¹⁶⁸ Reuters, "Bosnian Serbs Said To Be Moving Towards Bosnian Capital" by Mark Heinrich, 26 July 1993.
- ¹⁶⁹ Paris AFP, 15 July 1993. FBIS Vienna AU1507094093, 150940Z July 93.
- ¹⁷⁰ Reuters, "Fighting in Mostar, Still No Aid for Trapped Moslems" by Giles Ellgood, 20 August 1993.
- ¹⁷¹ Zagreb Radio, 25 October 1993. FBIS London LD2510173393, 251733Z October 1993.
- ¹⁷² Split Slobodna Dalmacija, Interview with Slavko Zelic, Commander of the 'King Tvrko' brigade of the Croatian Defense Council from Sarajevo, by Zeljko Garmaz, "Croats Sacrificed Because of Zuc," FBIS Reston 93BA0928D, 042346Z May 1993.
- ¹⁷³ Paris AFP, 25 September 1993. FBIS Vienna AU2509130293, 251302Z September 1993.
- ¹⁷⁴ Eventually redesignated the 124th Brigade of the ARBiH 1st Corps' 12th Division.
- ¹⁷⁵ Paris AFP, 6 November 1993. FBIS Vienna AU0652493, 061524Z November 1993.
- ¹⁷⁶ Zagreb Radio, 18 January 1993. FBIS London LD1801150593, 181505Z January 1993.
- ¹⁷⁷ The 107th "Gradacac" and 108th "Brcko" Brigades fell under the operational control of the ARBiH 2nd Corps' 1st Operational Group (later the 21st Division). The HVO's 115th "Zrinski" Brigade, raised from Tuzla's Bosnian Croat community, functioned smoothly as part of the ARBiH 2nd Corps' 5th Operational Group (later the 25th Division) through all of 1992 and 1993. In early January 1994, however, the local Tuzla Bosnian Croat leadership ordered the 115th Brigade to disband—over the objections of most of the unit's soldiers—rather than continue serving under Muslim command. Split *Nedjeljna Dalmacija*, 14 April 1993. FBIS Vienna AU2404094095, 240940Z April 1995.
- ¹⁷⁸ The 110th Usora Brigade functioned as part of the 2nd Corps' Operational Group "Seven South" (later the 3rd Corps 37th Division) for the war's duration.
- ¹⁷⁹ Fojnica was one of the last places where Croat-Muslim violence would erupt. Indeed, UNPROFOR Bosnia Commander Morillon had cited the ethnically mixed town as an "island of peace" only days before it was to become yet another central Bosnian battleground.
- ¹⁸⁰ Reuters, "Bosnian Town's Dream of Peace Blown to Pieces" by Gilles Treuresser, 3 July 1993.
- ¹⁸¹ Reuters, "Siege Within a Siege Strands Bosnian Moslems" by Kurt Schork, 16 July 1993.

- ¹⁸² Sarajevo *Javnost*, "NATO in Ambush" by Dragoljub Jeknic, 22 May 1993. FBIS Vienna AU2605100493.
- ¹⁸³ Zagreb Radio, 20 June 1993. FBIS London LD2006191593, 201915Z June 1993.
- ¹⁸⁴ Zagreb Radio, 3 July 1993. FBIS London LD0307142493, 031424Z July 1993.
- ¹⁸⁵ Zagreb Radio, 14 September 1993. FBIS London LD1409141793 141417Z September 1993.
- ¹⁸⁶ Reuters, "No-Surrender Croats Say Moslems Plan New Attack" by Kurt Schork, 20 September 1993.
- ¹⁸⁷ Reuters, "Croats Left With No Escape in Central Bosnia" by Kurt Schork, 21 September 1993.
- ¹⁸⁸ Zagreb Radio, 18 September 1993. FBIS London LD1809152293, 181522Z September 1993.
- ¹⁸⁹ Reuters, "Croats Say Civilians Massacred in Central Bosnia" by Kurt Schork, 15 September 1993.
- ¹⁹⁰ Reuters, "UN Urges Punishment After Village Massacred," 16 September 1993.
- ¹⁹¹ Sarajevo Radio, 18 September 1993. FBIS London LD1909023793, 190237Z September 1993.
- ¹⁹² Sarajevo Radio, 20 September 1993. FBIS Vienna AU2009161893, 201618Z September 1993.
- ¹⁹³ Zagreb Radio, 19 September 1993. FBIS London LD1909123793, 191237Z September 1993.
- ¹⁹⁴ Paris AFP, 21 September 1993. FBIS Vienna AU2109105993, 211102Z September 1993.
- ¹⁹⁵ Sarajevo Radio, 4 October 1993. FBIS London LD0410225493, 042254Z October 1993.
- ¹⁹⁶ Reuters, "Overnight Fighting Reported in Bosnia," 5 October 1993.
- ¹⁹⁷ Paris AFP, 21 September 1993. FBIS Vienna AU2109105993, 211059Z September 1993.
- ¹⁹⁸ Zagreb Radio, 17 September 1993. FBIS London LD1709134693, 171346Z September 1993.
- ¹⁹⁹ Zagreb Radio, 20 September 1993. FBIS London LD2009073593, 200735Z September 1993.
- ²⁰⁰ Reuters, "Mostar Moslems Launch Three-Pronged Attack on Croats," 20 September 1993.
- ²⁰¹ Reuters, "Croats Shell Moslem City of Mostar" 23 September 1993.
- ²⁰² Reuters, "Croat and Moslem Fighters Battle in Mostar" by Giles Ellgood, 24 September 1993.
- ²⁰³ Paris AFP, 21 September 1993. FBIS Vienna AU2109105993, 211059Z September 1993.
- ²⁰⁴ Reuters, "UN Confirms Cease-Fire in South Bosnian Town," 3 October 1993.
- ²⁰⁵ At one point, the HVO issued an official communique claiming that the massacre victims were in fact Serbs from the town that the Muslims had used as human shields during a Bosnian attack on the HVO defense lines. Paris AFP, 31 October 1993. FBIS Vienna AU3110153193, 311531Z October 1993.
- ²⁰⁶ Reuters, "Huge New Refugee Problem in Central Bosnia" by Gilles Trequier, 23 June 1993.
- ²⁰⁷ Silber and Little, pp. 300-302.
- ²⁰⁸ Reuters, "Moslems Said To Capture Key Central Town" by Mark Heinrich, 16 June 1993.
- ²⁰⁹ Reuters, "New Wave of Ethnic Cleansing in Bosnia" by Giles Ellgood, 23 June 1993.
- ²¹⁰ Paris AFP, 18 June 1993. FBIS Vienna AU1806082693, 180826Z June 1993.
- ²¹¹ Sarajevo Radio, 1 September 1993. FBIS Vienna AU0109202093 012020Z September 1993.
- ²¹² Also known as Viktor Andric.

²¹³ 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 Tvrkto" 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.

²¹⁴ Sarajevo Radio, 26 October 1993. FBIS Vienna AU2610095593, 260955Z October 1993.

²¹⁵ Silber and Little, pp. 300-302.

²¹⁶ 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.

²¹⁷ Reuters, "New Showdown Looms Between Croats and Muslims in Bosnia" by Kurt Schork, 30 October 1993.

²¹⁸ UN peacekeepers reported hearing mortars and artillery fired in the area into the night of 23 October but 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.

²¹⁹ Reuters, "Evidence Mounts of Massacre in Central Bosnia" by Kurt Schork, 25 October 1993.

²²⁰ The Bosnians claimed at the time that the HVO had killed 60 of the village's 260 residents. Reuters, "UN Aid Convoys Caught in Bosnian Crossfire" by Mark Heinrich, 24 October 1993.

²²¹ Reuters, "Charred Bodies, Smouldering Ruins in Bosnian Hamlet" by Kurt Schork, 27 October 1993.

²²² Reuters, "UN Identifies Croat Extremists as Massacre Suspects" by Anthony Goodman, 14 February 1994.

²²³ Reuters, "Croat Attack in Bosnia a War Crime—UN Official" by Sean Maguire, 27 October 1993.

²²⁴ It is true that Bobovac Brigade elements in Vares consistently obstructed UNPROFOR efforts in the area before and after the Stupni Do attack (for example, 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). There is no conclusive evidence, however, that the Bobovac Brigade was necessarily involved, the strongest evidence being the numerous reports of heavy weapons use during the day on 23 October. If mortars and especially artillery were used, they most likely came from the Bobovac Brigade, the only mortar or artillery-equipped unit within the Croat-held enclave.

²²⁵ Ivica Rajic reportedly founded the Maturice special forces unit with troops from the Kiseljak area in early 1993. The unit reportedly was composed of extreme Croatian nationalists and may have included a substantial percentage of Bosnian Croat refugees. The Maturice reputedly were used for "special missions," including the secret executions of Muslims in the Kiseljak area. (The Maturice also most likely indulged in war profiteering—Kiseljak being the gateway to besieged Sarajevo and the capital of the black-market trade.)

²²⁶ Rijeka *Novi List*, "Officer Ivica Rajic Arrested for Massacre of Muslims," 12 July 1995.

²²⁷ Sarajevo *Ljiljan*, "The Croatian List of Bosnian Officers To Be Killed" by Aziz Handzic, 6-13 March 1996. FBIS Vienna AU1203091296.

²²⁸ Silber and Little, pp. 300-302.

²²⁹ Reuters, "Moslems Tell of Rape, Murder in Central Bosnia" by Kurt Schork, 2 November 1993.

²³⁰ Reuters, "Izetbegovic Says Bosnian Forces Entering Croat Bas-tion," 4 November 1993.

²³¹ Reuters, "Looting Continues in Moslem-Captures Bosnian Town" by Kurt Schork, 5 November 1993.

²³² Reuters, "Looting Continues in Moslem-Captured Bosnian Town" by Kurt Schork, 5 November 1993.

²³³ Formerly Croat residences were occupied by thousands of Mus-lims cleansed out of other areas of Bosnia during the Croat-Muslim war. Reuters, "Looting Continues in Moslem-Captures Bosnian Town" by Kurt Schork, 5 November 1993.

²³⁴ Reuters, "Moslems Attack UN Headquarters Town in Bosnia" by Mark Heinrich, 12 November 1993.

²³⁵ Reuters, "Bosnian Leaders Press for Truce but Troops Fight On" by Mark Heinrich, 13 November 1993.

²³⁶ 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 when the hospital staffs fled. Reuters, "UN Troops Guard Front-Line Hospitals in Central Bosnia" by Kurt Schork, 14 November 1993.

²³⁷ Reuters, "Croats, Moslems Step Up Peace Talks" by Mark Heinrich, 12 November 1993.

²³⁸ Reuters, "Moslems and Croats Fight, Leaders Call for Truce" by Mark Heinrich, 12 November 1993.

²³⁹ Reuters, "Croats Launch Attack in Central Bosnia" by Kurt Schork, 15 November 1993.

²⁴⁰ Reuters, "Croats Launch Tank Attack, Moslems Back in Fojnica" by Kurt Schork, 15 November 1993.

²⁴¹ Reuters, "Croats Pound Central Bosnian Town" by John Fuller-ton, 15 November 1993.

²⁴² Paris AFP, 15 November 1993. FBIS Vienna AU1511113893, 151138Z November 1993

²⁴³ Zagreb Radio, 19 September 1993. FBIS London LD19091593 190915Z September 1993.

²⁴⁴ Paris AFP, 3 December 1993. FBIS Vienna AU0312134493, 031344Z December 1993.

²⁴⁵ Reuters, "Moslems Attack Croats in Central Bosnia," 22 December 1993.

²⁴⁶ Zagreb Radio, Text of a Letter from Croatian Community of Herzeg-Bosna President Mate Boban to the UN Security Council, 26 July 1993 FBIS London LD2607131093.

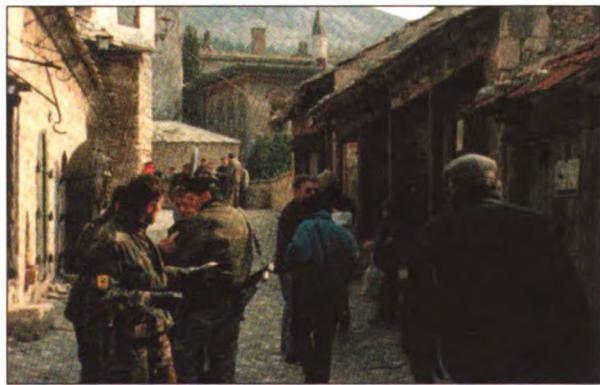
Bosnia 1993 (continued)



A Canadian UN Protection Force (UNPROFOR) M-113 armored personnel carrier in Srebrenica, early 1993.



Bosnian Serb Army (VRS) troops from the 1st Bijeljina Light Infantry Brigade—“Panthers”—withdraw from Mount Igman, August 1993.



Bosnian Army (ARBiH) troops and civilians in Mostar, spring 1993.



A Bosnian Croat Defense Council (HVO) soldier with makeshift 120-mm rocket launcher in the Vitez enclave, central Bosnia, September 1993.

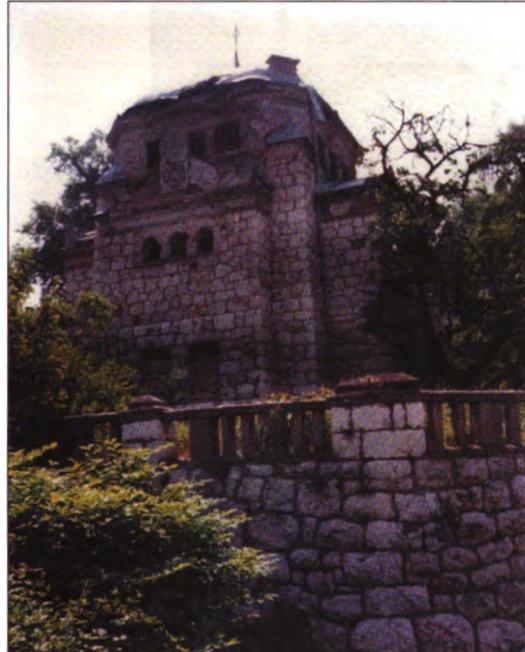


British UN Protection Force (UNPROFOR) troops with a Scimitar-armored reconnaissance vehicle in north-central Bosnia, spring 1993.



A Bosnian Army (ARBiH) soldier in the Sarajevo suburbs, June 1993.

Bosnia 1993 (continued)



*The Jewish Cemetery (left and above)
in central Sarajevo, as seen in 1996.*



Mostar and the Old Bridge, spring 1993.

Bosnia 1993 (continued)



A Bosnian Serb Army (VRS) T-55 tank, probably from the 2nd Armored Brigade, near Doboj, June 1993.



British UN Protection Force (UNPROFOR) soldiers recover Muslim bodies from a destroyed house, April 1993.

Section V

Bosnia 1994: The Turning Point

Chapter 50

The Bosnian War in 1994: The Turning Point

The Bosnian Serb Army's failure to exploit the Muslim-Croat war and knock out the Bosnian Army in 1993 would haunt the Serbs for the remainder of the war. As 1994 dawned, the Croat-Muslim war slowed, and US negotiators tacked together a framework peace accord between the two sides—the Washington Agreement, which would be the basis for diplomatic efforts to patch up the division of Bosnia-Herzegovina. The strategic implication of a newly improved Bosnian Army able to focus its undivided attention on the Bosnian Serbs was to make 1994 the turning point in the three-and-a-half-year war, however. The ARBiH's victories during the Croat-Muslim conflict had given the force a new sense of confidence, bolstered by the experience many officers and men had gained in conducting small-scale offensive operations. The Muslims had also developed more sophisticated infantry tactics, and the Muslim-Croat rapprochement allowed the reopening of the arms pipeline through Croatia to the ARBiH. Bosnian Army commander Delic exploited these improvements to devise a new strategy that would carry the war to the Serbs. Delic placed his hopes on a war of attrition across the country that would employ small to medium-sized attacks in an effort to wear down the Serbs and gain back key bits of territory. He believed his bigger army could absorb more easily than the VRS the manpower losses this strategy would require. When he put it into effect, the tempo of fighting reached new levels, surpassing those of 1992, as battle after battle raged day after day for obscure villages, mountains, and roads throughout Bosnia.

Delic's hold-and-hit strategy appears to have surprised the Serbs. The VRS began the year with a strategic offensive plan designed to knock out the Bosnian Army through a series of operations to seize key portions of territory that would consolidate the "borders" of the Republika Srpska, sever the Tuzla region from central Bosnia, and perhaps even force the

capitulation of the Bosnian Government. The ARBiH's staunch defense stopped this offensive in its tracks, and then its new-found brazenness pushed the Serbs onto the defensive to such an extent that they would never regain the strategic initiative. The political and military leaders of the Bosnian Serbs were never able to reach agreement on how to end the war successfully, and the growing Muslim military capability widened the splits between the two groups. These splits would in time cause a more profound disagreement between Serbian President Milosevic and Bosnian Serb President Karadzic over acceptance of the Western "Contact Group" peace plan, culminating in the imposition of political and economic sanctions on the Republika Srpska by Federal Yugoslavia.

While these political divisions widened, the military capability of the VRS began to wane. Its bold strategic offensive in January-March 1994 failed to secure any permanent gains, for two years of war had begun to wear on the VRS, and Delic's offensives would degrade it further. Of the offensives launched by the VRS in 1994, only the attack on Gorazde met with more than temporary success. Attacking Bosnian Army trenches and bunkers would at last prove too costly for the manpower-poor VRS.

Nevertheless, for most of the year the VRS retained its ability to strike successfully against isolated ARBiH enclaves, such as Gorazde, or against overextended ARBiH units conducting offensive operations. In its defensive operations at Ozren, Treskavica, and Bihac, the VRS was still able to orchestrate professionally a large-scale operation, move hundreds or thousands of troops into position, and then counterattack, skillfully employing its superior weaponry and elite units to regain lost positions. By the end of the year, however, when the VRS was relying on defensive successes to punish the Muslims in hopes of ending the conflict, they simply could not afford the heavy manpower

losses that the ARBiH operations were causing, even if each attack was defeated. It was clear by then that the Serbs were beginning to lose the war.

The year ended with even more ominous harbingers for the Serbs. In the midst of their successful counter-offensive at Bihac in December 1994, they found themselves once again facing Croatian Army troops as the Zagreb government ordered its forces into the Livno Valley (*Livanjsko Polje*), ostensibly to help the ARBiH at Bihac, but more directly to outflank the Krajina Serb Army's defenses around Knin in Croatia. It was the VRS, however, that had to come up with most of the troops to hold this vulnerable cross-border sector, troops which the strained VRS had difficulty finding. The deployment of Zagreb's elite Guards Brigades and the victories they began to rack up foreshadowed the decisive turn of events that would come in 1995.

The Bosnian Political Landscape in 1994

By the beginning of 1994, what had been the single state of Yugoslavia was now fragmented into a bewildering jigsaw of states, substates, and self-proclaimed ministates. With the signing of the Washington Agreement in March, there were no fewer than 12 "presidents" of one kind or another on the territory of the former Yugoslavia—five of these within Bosnia alone.¹ It seemed at times as if Yugoslavia was suffering from a multiple-personality disorder, with each of its successor states representing different characteristics and attitudes.

Two years into the war, and with all of the combatants battered and weary, everyone hoped that peace was just around the corner—but nobody could seem to find the corner. Peace hopes at this time centered on the diplomatic efforts of the five-nation "Contact Group" formed in April 1994 by the United States, Great Britain, France, Germany, and Russia.

The signing of the Washington Agreement and the creation of the Croat-Muslim Federation made possible the Contact Group's new proposal, which was essentially a territorial division of Bosnia-Herzegovina into two halves, one of which would go to the

newly created Federation and one of which would go to the Bosnian Serbs. The Contact Group plan replaced the cantonally based Vance-Owen Plan, a concept that had been effectively dead for months. A central concept of the Contact Group's proposal was the allocation of 51 percent of Bosnia's land area to the Federation and the remaining 49 percent to the Republika Srpska. The hard part, of course, was getting the parties to agree not only to the plan itself but also to the map. Exactly which 51 percent or 49 percent each side got was a hugely contentious issue, as some of Bosnia's land area was far more valuable than others. The bargaining sessions over the postwar map were conducted by diplomats in Geneva, but all sides knew that in the end the map would be decided on the battlefield by force of arms.

Chapter 51 Bosnian Serb War Aims, Military Strategy, and Political-Military Relations, 1994

The Bosnian Serbs were remarkably steadfast through 1993 and into 1994 in their pursuit of the war aims laid down in late 1992 and early 1993. They had achieved virtually all of their territorial objectives at acceptable costs. This very success posed a problem within the leadership, however, for the political leaders generally spoke and acted as if the war was over, and they seemed reluctant to deal with their generals' conviction that the conflict had to be brought to a decisive close with a signal military victory over the Muslims. Undeterred, General Mladic and the VRS moved forward with military planning to achieve such a victory, ignoring the apparent reluctance of Karadzic and the SDS, who continued—with Milosevic's backing—to look for Serb advantages in the Owen-Stoltenberg process that sought a negotiated settlement.

The VRS strategic offensive—initially codenamed "Drina 93"—was conceived as a series of separate but coordinated operations running from Bihac to Olovo. The biggest operation of this series occurred during November 1993–January 1994 around Olovo where VRS troops attempted to sever the lines of communication between Tuzla and Zenica. Follow-on

operations would then destroy ARBiH 2nd Corps forces around Tuzla. The Main Staff apparently believed that the destruction of a major ARBiH formation and the loss of such a key region would force Sarajevo to surrender. Most of the other operations were designed to seize key territory and nail down the “borders” of the Republika Serpska. This included an operation in November-December 1993 at Teocak to sever the Sapna salient and seize a key hydroelectric dam, and at Maglaj to capture important lines of communication. The VRS launched additional attacks during February-March 1994 at Bihac and Maglaj-Tesanj to secure key terrain and road/rail networks. (NATO’s ultimatum to the Serbs at Sarajevo in February, after the “marketplace massacre,” that forced them to remove VRS heavy weapons from around the city, appears to have had little impact on VRS strategy anywhere else.) These attacks were initially successful, but—ominously—the VRS failed to hold any of its battlefield gains against the Bosnian Army.

In March, after the Washington Agreement ended the Croat-Muslim war, the Bosnian Army began its new attrition strategy against the Serbs, launching attacks all across the country. Fearing they would lose the strategic initiative, the Bosnian Serb Supreme Command and the VRS launched their own offensive against the isolated Gorazde enclave in April 1994. By this move they hoped to pressure Sarajevo into signing a nationwide cease-fire that would lock in Serb territorial gains in exchange for halting the Gorazde offensive. If this failed, the VRS could proceed to destroy the enclave, almost completely finishing the work it had started in the Drina valley in 1993. In the event, when the Bosnian Government refused to take the Gorazde bait, the VRS bore down on the enclave with considerable success before punitive NATO air-strikes and strong pressure from Milosevic forced them to call off the offensive.

Having finessed the Serbs’ Gorazde operation, the Bosnian Army continued its strategic offensive across the country with repeated small and medium-sized attacks that kept the VRS everywhere on the defensive. Still struggling to regain the initiative and extend the boundaries of their republic, the VRS Main Staff ordered attacks against the Nisici Plateau in May and October to secure a key road route northwest of

Sarajevo, and against the Mostar-Sarajevo highway concurrently with the second Nisici attack in October. The biggest VRS effort during this period, however, was Operation “Breza 94,” a joint offensive with the Krajina Serb Army (SVK) against the Bihac enclave to punish and pin down the Bosnian Army 5th Corps. All of these attacks made some headway, but each time the Bosnians held their ground and drove the Serbs back while the ARBiH’s own operations continued unabated.

Even when the Main Staff was not conducting its own offensive operations, it sought to use the Muslims’ attacks to the Serbs’ advantage. The VRS became adept as the year went on in “punishing” the Bosnian Army for its attacks, inflicting maximum casualties, turning initial victories into defeats, and feeding the Serbs’ superiority complex. Their spectacular defeat of the near-victorious Muslims in the Ozren was a big boost to VRS pride, but their biggest and most surprising counteroffensive victory in 1994 came at Bihac in November-December. For a time the rapid advance of the ARBiH 5th Corps and the collapse of the VRS 2nd Krajina Corps forces shocked even the Serbs and drew predictions from the international community of the VRS’s imminent demise. The Main Staff snapped back, however, and engineered the recapture of all the lost territory, handing the 5th Corps a near-total defeat. It was a valuable tonic for the Serbs in a year beset with strategic downers.

Karadzic’s order to halt the operation against Bihac, when, rightly or wrongly, the VRS believed it was on the verge of eliminating the 5th Corps, had exacerbated the fraying of the political-military triangle connecting Karadzic, Mladic, and Milosevic. The pulling and hauling between political and military leaders spun out a long skein of problems dating back to the end of 1993.

Karadzic appears to have been the least bold of the three, supporting negotiations throughout the war and always willing to sacrifice what Mladic would perceive as military necessities in order to score a political point in the West. He and the SDS also opposed

the idea of a “war-winning offensive,” believing that the Serbs had already achieved their war aims. Nevertheless, Karadzic regularly held fast on key negotiating points, making it impossible compose a settlement palatable to the Muslims.

When Karadzic and the SDS rejected the Contact Group peace plan in August, following Milosevic’s grudging acceptance of it, Milosevic coldly applied political and economic sanctions against the leaders and territories of the Republika Srpska. Milosevic was more pragmatic and decisive than Karadzic and, seeking relief from the sanctions imposed on Federal Yugoslavia, he was willing to compromise over the nature and borders of whatever Serb entity was to exist in Bosnia as long as key Serb interests remained intact. By exempting the VRS from any of the sanctions applied to the republic, Milosevic made plain his support for and reliance on the future of the Bosnian Serb Republic.

The most enigmatic of this triumvirate was General Mladic, whose mixed motivations made him an unpredictable wild card. Mladic had tirelessly insisted during 1993 and 1994 that he be allowed to “win the war” by decisively defeating the Bosnian Army, complaining that the politicians were hindering military operations with what he called their “Stop-Go” strategy. (Whether the VRS could actually have won such a decisive victory is an open question.) Mladic also stubbornly opposed returning territory to the Muslims or Croats, particularly areas he thought were strategically vital to the RS. This would seem to have put him at odds with Milosevic, who was more than willing to compromise on the map, and more in line with Karadzic and hardline elements of the SDS. The general was ideologically close to Milosevic, the ex-Communist, however, and he despised Karadzic and the SDS as unfit and corrupt rulers who siphoned off money and supplies to fill their own pockets instead of helping the army fight.² Nor could the general openly defy Belgrade, on which he depended for money and logistic support to prosecute the war; he knew as well as anyone that the Bosnian Serbs could not afford a schism with Serbia. So, despite Mladic’s dislike of the Contact Group plan, he tacitly backed Milosevic in the dispute and blamed Karadzic for promoting another “Chetnik-Partisan” split among the Serbs. This did not

stop him from continuing to argue for offensive action against the Bosnian Army: when Karadzic ordered the VRS to halt its offensive against Bihać and then accepted a cease-fire in late 1994, Mladic blamed Karadzic, and their disagreement became permanent, ready to burst wide open in the spring of 1995.

The Bosnian Serb Army in 1994—The Weary Giant*

The Bosnian Serb Army during 1994 went from the victorious force that had achieved major victories in the previous year to a skilled but tired army that was still able to hold on to most of the Serbs’ territorial claims. These defensive successes, however, came at a price in manpower and resources that the VRS was less and less able to sustain. As the Serbs’ own failed offensive operations and the Bosnian Army’s attacks took their toll, the wear and tear on the VRS began to show. Ammunition and fuel expenditures began to drain the VRS depots; the always critical manpower situation worsened with increasing casualties and desertions, forcing the VRS to rely even more on overage reservists and undertrained conscripts. Officers and NCOs from the Yugoslav Army, and VJ logistic and maintenance support (which continued despite the inter-Serb sanctions imposed in August), helped stiffen and sustain the faltering VRS, while VJ and Serbian RDB special operations units joined with VRS combat forces during fighting at Bihać late in the year. These troops probably numbered no more than 500 to 1,000 men and could hardly substitute for VRS formations stretched along the 1,000-kilometer front-line.³ Allied Krajina Serb Army formations and Fikret Abdic’s Serb-armed Muslim separatist troops were also welcome additions to VRS operations, but only in actions around Bihać.^{4**}

The VRS was able to adapt its combat doctrine to counter increasingly effective Bosnian Army attacks as the year progressed. Faced with a long frontage and a manpower shortage, the Main Staff’s objective in

* See Chapter 21, “Mladic’s Own: The Bosnian Serb Army,” for a general survey of the VRS throughout the war.

** See Annex 46: On the Ropes: An Analysis of VRS Resilience, for a more in-depth discussion of VRS problems during 1994.

formulating defensive doctrine was to artificially create a layered “defense in depth.” The outer layer consisted of a thick carpet of mines, followed by an outpost line, then a main defensive line of interlocking bunkers and trenches. Brigade-level reserves were then stationed behind the main line. The interaction of these elements, with supporting artillery, should have the desired effect. The VRS appears to have assumed that, given the frontage a brigade might hold—often 20 kilometers or more—the ARBiH would be able to infiltrate and storm at least some portion of the VRS line. The minefields, combined with a rain of mortar and artillery fire, were designed to slow this penetration and thin the Muslim infantry as they passed through the Serb front. The line infantry holding the main defensive line would add their own attrition effect, but these older troops would withdraw rather than try to stand and be overrun. When, hopefully depleted of a considerable portion of their strength, the Muslim troops gradually slowed to a stop, the Serb reserves, picked men formed into elite “intervention” units, would then counterattack and drive the weakened ARBiH units out of the Serb defenses. Corps-level intervention forces provided the vital stiffening for the local units in such counterattacks. To make up for the overall manpower shortages, these few mobile reserve formations were repeatedly shifted across the country, from battle to battle.⁵

Chapter 52 **Bosnian Government Objectives and Military Strategy in 1994**

As 1994 began, the Bosnian Government’s first priority was to end the Croat-Muslim conflict—by sword or pen. Happily for the Bosnian Army, that conflict was ended by treaty a few weeks into the year, allowing the Army to concentrate on its primary adversary—the VRS—and its primary objective—the recapture of lost Muslim-majority territories. To do this, however, the ARBiH would have to go over to the strategic offensive, with all that it implied. The government’s military leaders needed an overall offensive strategy, a doctrine and tactics that fit this strategy but could still be carried out with the Army’s limited resources, and a training program that would produce a force disciplined and proficient enough to execute the maneuvers required by the strategy. By the

beginning of 1994, Sarajevo had an Army that was capable of doing this, although not in the most efficient or desirable manner.

Army commander Delic was the architect of the country-wide attrition strategy that was the foundation of the Army’s plans. Put simply, the numerically superior ARBiH would bleed its opponent with many wounds by attacking everywhere, winning the war even if it lost most of the battles. The Army’s new doctrine fit with this strategy: it would seek to achieve a continual series of limited gains sustainable without artillery support or motorized transport and roll the frontline back a kilometer at a time if need be.

From the Presidency in Sarajevo all the way to the infantry platoon advancing toward a local ridge line, the Bosnian Government had a coherent political-military strategy whose goals and means matched. It was hardly an ideal strategy—no army in the world has ever been enthusiastic about wars of attrition—but it was one that offered a realistic prospect of victory on the horizon, distant though that horizon might be.

The Bosnian Army in 1994: Fighting the War of Attrition

Thanks to the vision and dogged determination generated by the chaotic first days of the war, the Bosnian Army had by the beginning of 1994 evolved into an effective light infantry force able to defend government-held territory against most Bosnian Serb Army attacks and to conduct modest offensive operations. Steady improvements in training, leadership, and equipment had all worked to raise the capabilities of Sarajevo’s fighting forces. Morale had been boosted by battlefield successes against the HVO, and the signing of a federation agreement between the Bosnian Muslims and Croats gave the ARBiH the final lift it needed to shift to the strategic offensive against the Serbs.

Organizationally, the force was much the same as the one launched early in 1992. The ARBiH was divided into five corps headquartered at Sarajevo, Tuzla,

Zenica, Travnik, and Bihać. (The former 6th Corps headquartered at Konjic was deactivated early in the year, at the same time the new 7th Corps was established at Travnik.) Most of these corps were further subdivided into "Operational Groups," semipermanent groupings of several brigades that provided an intermediate, division-level of command. The brigade remained the primary maneuver unit, usually comprised of 1,500 to 2,000 troops but sometimes ranging in size from several hundred to over 3,000. Some important changes were under way, however, as the Army began to differentiate its units and establish the elite, all-volunteer assault formations usually designated either "liberation brigade" or "light brigade" that would make its offensive strategy possible.*

In material terms the Bosnian Army still lagged glaringly behind its Bosnian Serb opponent. An elaborate network of overseas fundraising operations had helped bring in substantial sums of money from the Bosnian diaspora: between April 1992 and the end of 1993, the Bosnian Army received some \$24 million from overseas contributions and was able to use this money to purchase infantry weapons, ammunition, uniforms, and other military supplies.⁶ These acquisitions still left the Bosnian military terribly deficient in the crucial area of heavy weapons—and, just as significantly, in terms of ammunition for the few artillery pieces, tanks, and mortars the ARBiH had seized or captured. The Army's logistic system was still rudimentary but workable and dealt adequately with recurring problems of standardization, supply, and distribution. Its greatest shortcoming was lack of mobility: it had too few APCs or even trucks to allow its infantry to exploit breakthroughs effectively, and its brigades could not adequately support or reinforce each other. Without the force multiplier of mobility, the manpower advantage that the planners relied on could not be fully exploited because not enough riflemen could be brought together at critical times and places.

None of the gains the Army had made in organization, size, or even weaponry were as important as its improvements in strategy, doctrine, tactics, and

* A liberation brigade was usually organized into three or four battalions with a total of 1,000 to 2,000 troops and (relatively) robust fire support. A light brigade was usually organized into six or seven companies with a total of less than 1,000 troops. These distinctions sometimes blurred, and there were many "mountain" brigades that were elite assault units.

training. In all of these areas, the ARBiH had progressed beyond its initial focus on basic survival and was slowly mastering the much more difficult challenges of conducting large-scale operations. The ARBiH had by this point established officer and soldier training schools to help establish uniform standards and improve skills across the board. Of necessity, most of the lessons of warfare were still being learned the hard way in the more demanding and less forgiving academy of the battlefield.

Increasingly sophisticated tactics emerged that played to the Army's strengths as an infantry force and were intended to strike at the Bosnian Serbs' advantages. Elite "recon-sabotage" units would scout the battlefield before attacks and identify weaknesses in the enemy lines. These same units would conduct sabotage operations early in the battle to disrupt VRS command and control links, destroy artillery observation posts, and knock out key strongpoints, softening the enemy for the main attack. Handpicked assault units would spearhead the main infantry assault, followed by the territorially based regular infantry.

During 1994 these cumulative improvements in Bosnian Army organization, equipment, and training were to produce increasingly proficient forces that proved able—at least on occasion—to mount coordinated attacks involving multiple brigades. The Army still lacked the equipment and logistic infrastructure necessary for sophisticated and sustained combined-arms operations, but it had developed a war-fighting method commensurate with the material and human resources available to it. Although still not capable of defeating the VRS in set-piece battles or of retaking and holding large tracts of Serb-held territory, the Bosnian Army was prepared to try fighting its way out of the corner.

Chapter 53 Bosnian Croat War Aims and Military Strategy in 1994

At the beginning of 1994, the overriding Bosnian Croat political objective was simply to get out of the Croat-Muslim conflict it had started the previous year. The HVO had little prospect of additional gains; it would in all likelihood eventually lose the surrounded

enclaves around Vitez, Kiseljak, and perhaps Zepce; and was faced with a serious problem of limited manpower and mounting casualties. Having tried to ride the tiger, the Bosnian Croats were looking for a way to dismount. The international community—led by the diplomatic efforts of the United States—and the Croatian Government offered the Bosnian Croats that escape. The Washington Agreement was a political and military about-face that made the former adversaries into overnight allies—but it got the Bosnian Croats out of a bloody and destructive conflict that they were losing and allowed them to redirect their resources and attention in another direction.

That direction was to be toward southwest Bosnia. In tenuous alliance with the Bosnian Army on its right flank, and substantially assisted by major elements of the Croatian Army from across the border, the HVO began to drive west first through Kupres and then on through Livno and Glamoc. The combined HV/HVO offensive concluded the year with significant territorial gains and set the stage for continued operations the following year that would eventually do much to conclude the war.

The HVO in 1994: Caught in the Slow Lane

The HVO are pretty feeble fighters but they have very strong artillery.

—Emir, a Bosnian Army soldier
outside Donji Vakuf, November 1994

When Ante Roso took charge of the HVO in November 1993, he found himself playing organizational catch-up ball against his Serb and Muslim opponents. Backed by Zagreb and established as early as 1991, the HVO was in organizational second place at the war's outbreak in April 1992—lacking the fully formed military infrastructure of the VRS but far ahead of the virtually nonexistent Bosnian Army. The HVO had in large measure failed to evolve since the war's beginning, however, while at least one of its adversaries—the ARBiH—had.

Ante Roso's job was to improve and professionalize the HVO into a compact, effective fighting force. At the very least, he had to deal with the HVO's most unruly and unreliable elements. Under Rasim Delic, the Bosnian Army had cracked down on its renegade units in Sarajevo the previous year. The HVO had yet to deal with its own ill-disciplined criminal elements, especially in places like Kiseljak and Mostar.⁷ Most HVO troops were draftees or reservists, and when they were not defending their home areas their fighting spirit tended to wane.

Roso's solution to the problem was to develop a cadre of all-volunteer, fully professional HVO units—the four HVO Guards Brigades and the HVO's Special Operations Command—which could be employed throughout Croat-held Bosnia and provide an offensive punch that the lightly armed and ill-motivated Home Defense Regiments, which Roso formed (from the HVO's locally raised brigades) could not. Almost all of the HVO's heavy equipment (tanks, APCs, and heavy artillery pieces) were concentrated in the Guards Brigades and the corps-level artillery units. This concentration of force into a handful of units was only possible after the conclusion of the Croat-Muslim war allowed the HVO to demobilize most of its troops and after the cascade of ARBiH offensives tied down the VRS and allowed the HVO to assume a more relaxed defensive posture in most areas facing the Bosnian Serbs.

The formation of the HVO Guards Brigades improved the force's offensive capabilities, but organizational changes alone could not address the HVO's fundamental personnel problems. Despite Roso's best efforts, the HVO still suffered from too many politically connected but less than talented officers and a shortage of competent junior-grade officers and NCOs who could maintain discipline and train the troops. Indeed, the establishment of the Guards Brigades in some ways aggravated the HVO's problems by drawing off the most talented and best motivated soldiers and leaving the Home Defense Regiments even weaker than before.

Chapter 54

My Enemy, My Ally—The End of the Croat-Muslim War and the Washington Agreement, January–March 1994¹

By early 1994, developments borne of necessity had put the ARBiH at least on a par militarily with the HVO. The HVO was still probably better organized on the unit level and had on average more and better equipment. The Bosnian Army had, however, made major advances in organization, discipline, and coordination of larger military operations. It was a fairly even fight, and—even with the Croatian Army's intervention in support of Herceg-Bosna—the Bosnian Army had the weight of numbers on its side.

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 3rd Corps troops surprised the defenders of the HVO Vitez Corps District with a predawn attack and attempted to cut the Vitez-Busovaca enclave in two at its narrowest point.⁸ 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 positions to the point where the Croats held only a few hundred meters on either side of the road. The desperate HVO defenders hung on doggedly as the two sides battled each other in house-to-house and hand-to-hand fighting over shattered buildings that changed hands each day. At times reduced to a little less than a kilometer-wide isthmus, they still managed to retain control of the vital east-west road link, but their traffic was always vulnerable to Bosnian Army gunfire.^{9 10 11 12}

Suddenly—roughly the third week of January—the government forces let up on 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 infantry assaults across level ground, for that is what probably would have been necessary to overrun the Croat positions; or the Bosnian Government may

have decided to simply contain the pocket, either for military reasons or political ones. Perhaps the Bosnian Army leadership concluded that containment of the Croat-held enclave would be adequate—especially in view of the Croat threats to demolish the Vitez munitions plant rather than allow it to fall into Muslim hands—and they could have decided that their military resources were better directed elsewhere. It is also possible that at this delicate juncture—with Croat-Muslim peace talks under way and the international community's attention focused on the Bosnian Government—the Sarajevo leaders concluded that the political fallout after a bloody crushing of the enclave would have outweighed the military gains. Whatever the reason, the Bosnian Army failed to press home the advantage at a crucial moment. The Bosnian Croats counterattacked and regained a little breathing space, and the Vitez-Busovaca enclave remained in Croat hands.^{13 14}

While the Vitez battles raged and the fiercest battles of the 1994 Croat-Muslim war flared in the central Bosnian Lasva Valley, the other towns along the Croat-Muslim faultlines were by no means peaceful. Muslim-held east Mostar suffered an unrelenting artillery bombardment from the HVO Mostar Corps District that devastated the eastern half of the city. Southeast of Mostar, Muslim-held Blagaj was also shelled frequently from adjacent Croat-held Buna. Even though the Serbs were the primary foe of the Muslim defenders of Maglaj, there were also exchanges of mortar fire and occasional infantry clashes between the ARBiH 7th Operational Group and the HVO 111th Brigade forces along the northern edge of the Zepce enclave.¹⁵ 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 was not pressed nearly as hard as nearby Vitez, but sporadic fighting and shelling occurred in that area as well. In none of these varied areas was either side able to make any significant gains, however, and the outlines of a potential military stalemate were becoming visible to both sides.

¹ See Annex 47, bearing the same title, for more details.

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. The Croatian Government had been feeling more than the usual heat as UN Secretary General Boutros-Ghali publicly accused the Croatian Army of sending units into Bosnia, and Italy threatened to call for European Union sanctions against Croatia. Determined to avoid economic sanctions like those that were hurting Milosevic in Serbia, Tudjman ordered his Foreign Minister Mate Granic to meet with Bosnian President Izetbegovic in Geneva and issue a joint statement calling for Bosnian Government–Bosnian Croat talks to explore the possibilities for a cease-fire. ARBiH commander Delic duly met with HVO commander Roso in Kiseloj 10 days later to open the talks.^{16 17 18 19 20}

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.²¹ Even more surprising, the cease-fire agreement that took effect at noon on 25 February generally held, though not without several days of lingering 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 descended.^{22 23}

The Croat-Muslim peace was formalized by the Washington Agreement signed in the US capital 1 March 1994. Under its terms the military adversaries of the Bosnian Army and the HVO would be transformed into a “Federation Army” consisting of two separate but cooperating armed forces. This military arrangement was further elaborated in the “Split Agreement” signed by the two army commanders in that Croatian city on 12 March.²⁴ As if lifted from George Orwell’s “1984,” two former warring factions overnight became allies against a third opponent.

Although none of the parties had a fundamental stake in the long-term success of the newborn Bosnian Federation, each had valid reasons for signing. The Sarajevo-based Bosnian Government arguably took a

step backward in terms of its sovereignty. Its leaders knew, however, that to maintain the support of the international community they had to be seen to agree to something. Much more important, the Croat-Muslim peace offered the ARBiH an escape from its desperate two-front war and allowed it to concentrate on its crucial operations against 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 were even more anxious than the Muslims to get out of a losing military struggle. Having narrowly avoided international censure and sanctions for their military intervention in Bosnia, the Bosnian Croats now came out of the war as peace brokers. Zagreb’s improved standing with the international community helped it secure a much-needed \$125 million loan from the World Bank shortly thereafter²⁵ and allowed the Croatian military to disengage from Bosnia and devote its energies toward Croatia’s core concern—the reconquest of 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. At the time, however, it was the best arrangement available, and in such desperate circumstances even an imperfect peace and an uneasy alliance was a vast improvement over what had gone before. Bosnia’s Croats and Muslims might still keep one eye cocked toward the other, but at least they could both start looking toward their common Serb enemy.

Within days of the signing of the draft Croat-Muslim Federation agreement on 1 March 1994, UNPROFOR adopted a new role as cease-fire monitors, juxtaposing UN peacekeepers between the two formerly warring parties as the combatants 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.²⁶ Following an arrangement similar to that agreed to for the Sarajevo heavy

weapons exclusion zone—and that 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.^{27 28 29 30}

UNPROFOR's role in facilitating the Croat-Muslim peace was a largely unrecognized UN success in Bosnia. This is in spite of the fact that many—if not most—of the heavy weapons were never withdrawn or turned in as agreed and that numerous cease-fire violations and interethnic disputes occurred long after the agreement was signed. The bottom line was that the pointless, debilitating Croat-Muslim conflict had ended, and it was UNPROFOR that in some measure had helped make this possible. This 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 served the genuine interests of the parties involved. Sadly, such circumstances were all too rare in the Bosnian war.

Chapter 55 Operation “Drina 93”: The Bosnian Serb “End the War” Offensive, November 1993 to March 1994

As discussed earlier, Bosnian Serb military strategy during late 1993 and early 1994 focused on inflicting a decisive military defeat on a significant portion of the Bosnian Army to force the Bosnian Government to accept a peace settlement on Serb terms. The primary operation undertaken to achieve this objective, around Olovno, sought to physically sever Tuzla and northeastern Bosnia from Zenica and central Bosnia. The Serbs apparently hoped that, if this occurred, either Sarajevo would surrender or they could cut a separate peace agreement with the more independent-minded Muslim mayor, Selim Beslagic, as they had with Fikret Abdic.³¹ If neither of these options panned out, the VRS would then eliminate the 2nd Corps in the giant Muslim-held pocket around Tuzla. As the VRS was to find, however, its ability to defeat entrenched Bosnian Army units had weakened considerably since the start of the war.

The VRS Main Staff's strategic offensive—which at least initially appears to have been designated “Drina 93”—involved four separate campaigns or operations during this period:

- The primary campaign against the Olovno area and Tuzla-Zenica road links during November 1993–January 1994.
- An operation to eliminate the Teocak-Sapna salient east of Tuzla during November–December 1993 (which was coordinated with the Olovno operation).
- An operation against the Maglaj-Tesanj salient during December 1993–March 1994 (also coordinated with the Olovno operation).
- An operation to seize the Grabež plateau and road/rail links along the Una River near Bihać city in February 1994.

None of these campaigns succeeded in achieving their objectives.

The Battle of Olovno began in early November 1993, soon after ARBiH troops had taken the neighboring HVO-held town of Vares. Olovno lay on the main road between Tuzla and Sarajevo—already largely controlled by the VRS—and secondary routes between Tuzla and Zenica. The Main Staff's objective was to capture the town and then drive some distance north, cutting these roads and probably consolidating its gains.³² If this was successful, the VRS forces—up to 10,000 troops drawn from at least three different VRS corps—could then renew the attack and push toward the VRS-controlled Ozren salient, some 35 kilometers from Olovno.³³

The VRS advance on 8 November—under the command of the Main Staff and the Drina Corps—attempted to encircle the town from east and west.³⁴ Only the western prong had any success, seizing several villages before running into strong resistance from Bosnian Army 2nd Corps troops along a line of hills. Repeated attacks during the rest of the month

and through the end of December achieved little gain, particularly after 2nd Corps committed many of its troop reserves together with elements of the 3rd and 6th Corps.³⁵

The VRS renewed the advance during mid-January after Herzegovina Corps reinforcements rotated into the line.³⁶ On 12-13 January, the Herzegovian units broke through the ARBiH front, pushing to within 3 kilometers of Olovo. Again, however, ARBiH reserve units from 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Corps were able to stop the advance. The Main Staff broke off the offensive by the end of January.³⁷

The near-simultaneous attack against the northern half of the Sapna-Teocak salient to capture the dam for the Serb-held Ugljevik power plant—designated Operation “Kladanj 93”—also failed to achieve its goals.³⁸ The VRS East Bosnian and Drina Corps began their assault on 20 November 1993, attempting to sever the top half of the salient via converging attacks from the direction of Zvornik and Priboj.³⁹ Although the VRS made some gains, counterattacks by 2nd Corps forces recaptured all lost territory. VRS attempts to renew the advance persisted until late December, when the operation was called off.⁴⁰

At the beginning of December, 1st Krajina Corps troops under the command of Colonel Vladimir Arsic, in conjunction with local HVO troops, assaulted 2nd Corps elements under Mustafa Ceravac around Maglaj-Tesanj.⁴¹ The final objective of the operation remains unclear, but the VRS probably hoped to break up the enclave, securing the Serb-held Doboj and Ozren areas, as well as capturing lines of communication.⁴² VRS/HVO forces were quickly able to cut the main road link between Tesanj and Maglaj. Continued attacks during the rest of December, however, gained only minimal ground, pushing closer to Maglaj city but achieving no breakthroughs. The VRS halted the attack by 1 January.⁴³

The VRS renewed the operation two weeks later, but this time shifted the main attack to the northwest against road links in the Usora area while making supporting assaults around Maglaj city from the south and the east (in Ozren).⁴⁴ The Serbs failed to make more than minor gains and were unable to break the ARBiH

or HVO lines even though they pushed the operation into mid-March.⁴⁵ With the signing of the Washington Agreement and the lifting of the HVO blockade of Maglaj on 19 March, the VRS broke off the offensive for good.⁴⁶

In western Bosnia the VRS 2nd Krajina Corps, under Major General Grujo Boric, attacked on 6 February to seize the Una River line to secure the Serb republic's “border” and capture the rail line along the river.⁴⁷ The battle turned into a seesaw fight with Brigadier Atif Dudakovic's ARBiH 5th Corps, as first the VRS would seize key hills overlooking the river, and Muslim troops would take them back. The last surge occurred during the last week of February, and the battle ended with the 5th Corps still in control of its main line.⁴⁸

February 1994: The First Sarajevo Marketplace Shelling and the International Response*

The Sarajevo area had been relatively quiet during the early part of 1994 except for the usual Serb siege tactics of sniping and sporadic shelling and occasional standup clashes along the frontline. On 5 February 1994, however, a 120-mm mortar round sailed into the crowded Markale marketplace in downtown Sarajevo, killing 68 people and wounding approximately 200 more.⁴⁹ It was one of the worst shelling incidents in the Bosnian war.

International outrage over the grisly attack prompted a UN call for a cease-fire and a NATO intervention threat on 9 February.⁵⁰ The new UN commander, General Michael Rose, set out a four-part cease-fire proposal that included the creation of a 20-kilometer zone around the city from which all heavy weapons would be excluded, and the NATO ultimatum backed it up.⁵¹ The deadline for Serb compliance was 20 February.

At first the Bosnian Serb political and military leaders refused to comply, fearing that without their heavy weapons the VRS forces would be overrun by the

* See Annex 48: Sarajevo, 1994: The Guns Are Silenced, But the Siege Continues, for more details.

Bosnian Army infantry.⁵² The 17 February Russian offer to send a battalion of paratroopers to help monitor the agreement broke the ice and won Serb compliance. The VRS immediately undertook to pull out the majority of its heavy weapons, placing the rest under what was regarded as UN control.⁵³ By the deadline, the VRS had more or less completed the withdrawal, leaving about half its heavy weapons (anything 20 mm and over) in UN-monitored storage sites and redeploying the other half. Sarajevans could now move around the city in relatively safety for the first time in almost two years.

Superficially, the strong Western response had a major impact. The shelling stopped, people were no longer dying, and citizens could walk freely around the city. The city's tram cars started up again, and food was allowed in more regularly. Nevertheless, the frontlines were still manned, and sporadic clashes between the two forces continued. The VRS could very easily resume a full-scale siege if its masters chose to defy the NATO threat. Essentially, the city remained under 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 frontline, particularly in the city center, brought the eventual partition of Sarajevo—a key Serb war aim—a step closer.⁵⁴

The Serbs had clearly made the best of a difficult situation, complying with the letter of the agreement while yielding nothing vital to Serb interests.

The strategic impact was minimal. The ultimatum had no effect on any Serb military operations going on at the time of the incident, such as those at Maglaj-Tesanj and Bihac,⁵⁵ and it had little or no deterrent effect on VRS (or ARBiH) 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 effect was to decrease the Serbs' ability to pressure the Bosnian Government for a capitulation by threatening and punishing its capital.

On the other hand, the NATO ultimatum did take the international community another step toward direct involvement in former Yugoslavia. As it had with its Mount Igman ultimatum in 1993, NATO had successfully forced the Serbs (with Russian help) to comply with a Western demand. Nevertheless, Western self-congratulation for this apparent success ignored its minimal impact on the larger war and again reaffirmed the West's sentimentally shortsighted focus on Sarajevo rather than on the actualities of the broader conflict.

Chapter 56

The Bosnian Army's "Spring Offensive" Commences, March 1994

In March the Bosnian Army kicked off its long-anticipated "spring offensive." With the conclusion of the Croat-Muslim conflict the previous year, the Army for the first time could go on the strategic offensive against the Bosnian Serbs. There had been local offensives during 1993, but the war with the Croats had made any comprehensive operations out of the question. Now, in the spring of 1994, the Bosnian Army was ready to flex its muscles, intending to employ its numerical superiority in multiple, simultaneous attacks in the hopes that the Serbs would not have the reserves to counter them all.

The Serbs appear to have been surprised when the spring offensive began with a strike toward the long-sought prize of Donji Vakuf on 16 March, beginning with the capture of the peak at Mala Suljaga and the cutoff of the water supply from Bugojno to Donji Vakuf.^{56 57} ARBiH 7th Corps elements (the 370th "Donji Vakuf" Mountain Brigade, probably supported by at least the 307th "Bugojno" Mountain Brigade and elements of the 7th Corps' elite assault brigades) continued to advance against the VRS 30th Infantry Division/1st Krajina Corps, capturing one tank and a substantial amount of other equipment.⁵⁸ Although the attack was to fall short of the town itself, the Bosnian Army advanced to within heavy mortar range and had certainly progressed far enough to alarm the town's Serb population.^{59 60} A VRS counterattack on

22 March recouped some of the Bosnian Serb losses, and the two armies battled it out for the next week or so.⁶¹⁶² When the government offensive halted around 29 March, the Bosnian Army had advanced the front-lines about 5 kilometers to the west.⁶³⁶⁴

At the very end of March, the Bosnian Army mounted the first of its many assaults on the Mt. Vlasic feature—a huge, Serb-held mountain overlooking Muslim-held Travnik—apparently as a secondary effort in support of the ongoing attack toward Donji Vakuf. The efforts against Mt. Vlasic were to continue well into April. After weeks of uneventful skirmishing, elements of the ARBiH's newly formed 7th Corps finally broke through the lines of the “Vlasic” Operational Group/1st Krajina Corps on 28 April and made some important tactical gains.⁶⁵ The VRS, however, contained the advance the following day and recaptured some of the lost territory over the next two weeks.⁶⁶⁶⁷

In the Tesanj area north of Maglaj, the Muslim counteroffensive came only days after a local cease-fire between the HVO and the ARBiH was arranged on 19 March. On 23 March, the ARBiH's displaced 204th “Teslic” Mountain Brigade spearheaded a drive toward its original hometown, now in Serb hands a few kilometers to the west.⁶⁸⁶⁹ The first attacks were quite successful, and by 26 March the ARBiH had made gains of 1 to 2 kilometers deep along a 6-kilometer front against VRS “Doboj” Operational Group 9 forces.⁷⁰ The advance looked promising, and hopes were high that Teslic itself might be reached in the near future, but it was not to be. Infantry battles and exchanges of shelling continued into early April, but the government advance was halted 5 or 6 kilometers east of Teslic.

VRS Counterstroke: The Assault on Gorazde, April 1994*

For the Bosnian Serb political and military leadership the onset of the Muslim “spring offensive” looked ominously like the beginning of a protracted war of attrition. In hopes of forcing the Bosnian Government to accept Serb terms for a permanent, country-wide cease-fire that would effectively end the war, the Serb

leaders looked for an important territorial holding of the Bosnian Government that they could put in jeopardy.⁷¹ The chosen target for the operation was the Gorazde enclave. If Sarajevo refused to accept the Serb terms, the VRS was prepared to eliminate the enclave, which would also consolidate another Serb war aim—the occupation of the Drina valley.

Preparations for Operation “Zvezda (Star) 94” began in late March. General Mladic and the VRS Main Staff began shifting reinforcements to the Gorazde area, increasing VRS troop numbers from 7,500 troops to 13,000 to 14,000 men, plus additional armor and artillery. Major General Radovan Grubac’s Herzegovina Corps assumed command over the entire force drawn from the Sarajevo-Romanija, Drina, and Herzegovina Corps. The Bosnian Army’s Gorazde-based East Bosnian Operational Group, under Colonel Ferid Buljubasic, had been cut off from central Bosnia in 1993 and could receive only minimal help infiltrated through Serb lines. Buljubasic had an estimated 8,000 troops to defend the enclave, not all of them equipped with even small arms and with negligible artillery and no armor.

Artillery preparation for the offensive began on 28 March. The ground assault started the next day along three axes, with the main advance coming from the southeast. It took until 5 April, however, for the Serb troops to break through Muslim forces in the south. Over the next five days, the VRS closed in on the town, seizing most of the southern (right) bank of the Drina. Stubbornly, the Bosnian Government rejected as blackmail the Serb demands for a universal and permanent cease-fire in exchange for the halting their nutcracker drive on Gorazde. As shells began dropping around and into the town, UN and Western leaders expressed concern about the fate of UN and international personnel stationed there and about the town itself. To warn the Serbs off, two NATO air-strikes—the first in its history—were flown against VRS targets on 10 and 11 April. The Serbs reacted by seizing and locking up a score of UN personnel in Serb territory and holding them until after the crisis had ended. Nevertheless, the pinprick NATO attacks

* See Annex 49 for a more detailed account.

seemed to have had the desired effect of forcing the VRS to break off its offensive.

The Serbs had only paused, however, and on 15 April the VRS redoubled its efforts. Serb troops quickly smashed ARBiH defenses along all three axes and drove to the outskirts of town. The ARBiH lost the entire southern bank, except for parts of the town itself, while Serb troops fanned around the northern and eastern sides and almost completely encircled the town. Gorazde was at the mercy of the VRS. Individually and through the UN, Western leaders again tried to get the Serbs to agree to a cease-fire and demanded a withdrawal from a 3-kilometer zone around Gorazde town, plus the establishment of a 20-kilometer zone free of heavy weapons. Though Radovan Karadzic came to an agreement with the UN on 18 April, fighting continued, and on 20 April the VRS tried to capture a Muslim-held ammunition factory. A NATO ultimatum on 22 April directed the Serbs to comply with the agreement or face large-scale airstrikes, and the Bosnian Serb leadership at last suffered the plan to take effect. Despite sporadic clashes over the next few days, the VRS withdrawal and the arrival of new UN troops to monitor the agreement were reasonably smooth.

The Bosnian Serb offensive had drastically shrunk the size of the Gorazde enclave, but it failed to achieve the objective of ending the war. The Bosnian Government refused to accept Serb demands for a nationwide cease-fire that everyone could see would lock in the Serbs' territorial gains. Instead, the Bosnian Army stepped up its offensive operations in west-central Bosnia even as the VRS was grinding against Gorazde, and the Bosnian Government almost certainly would have let Gorazde be crushed and occupied without yielding to the Serb demands. In the event, the international community did intervene through NATO to save the core of Gorazde with some minatory airstrikes and 12 days later the threat of more substantial ones. It would appear that, having debated the pluses and minuses among themselves, Karadzic and the other Serb leaders (under pressure from Milosevic) concluded that the retaliation they might suffer outweighed the gains anticipated. Overriding their earlier calculations, the Serbs gave up both their hope of a nationwide victory and their fallback objective of completely eliminating the enclave.

The VRS Fails to Widen the Corridor at Brcko, April 1994⁷²

As the VRS was driving on Gorazde and its embattled Muslim garrison, Major General Novica Simic's VRS East Bosnian Corps also launched its planned attempt to widen the Posavina corridor. The attack was similar to the successful operation undertaken the previous July. Simic hoped his troops, reinforced with elements of the Main Staff's 65th Protection Motorized Regiment, could widen the corridor by about 2 kilometers, biting off the northernmost part of a Muslim salient pointed at Brcko town.⁷³ The Serb assault against the ARBiH 1st Operational Group/2nd Corps (and the HVO 108th Brigade) began on 13 April.⁷⁴ After trying to break into ARBiH/HVO positions for the better part of a week, the East Bosnian Corps had to give up with no gains in any territory and broke off the attack by 20 April.

Chapter 57 The ARBiH Spring Offensive Continues, April-June 1994

While the ARBiH in isolated Gorazde hung on the edge of complete defeat, the Bosnian Army in the core government-held area of central Bosnia was continuing to attack the Bosnian Serbs in all directions. The ARBiH not only resumed its March offensives in the Donji Vakuf, Mt. Vlasic, and Tesanj-Teslic areas but also launched a whole series of concurrent attacks: against Brgule near Vares, against Mt. Stolice in the Majevica hills east of Tuzla and Mt. Vjenac in the Ozren mountains near Banovici, and east of Kladanj.

Donji Vakuf, April 1994*

At the very beginning of April the Bosnian Army 7th Corps again attempted to advance the remaining distance toward Donji Vakuf against the VRS 30th Infantry Division.⁷⁵ Hopes were high after the initial attack

* See Annex 50: Donji Vakuf, 1994 for a more detailed account.

on 2 April, which placed the most advanced 7th Corps units about 5 kilometers southeast of Donji Vakuf.⁷⁶ ARBiH forces continued to press the attack from two directions, advancing from Prusac to the south and Bugojno to the east.⁷⁷ The attack was again halted by tough Serb defenses, however, and the offensive had wound down by 6 April.⁷⁸ Fighting slowed substantially during the rest of April and May, while the Bosnian Army spent the time building up its forces in the area for yet another attempt.

Mt. Stolice, April 1994*

The Majevica region around the “Sapna thumb” east of Tuzla had been relatively quiet thus far, with only occasional Serb shelling and intermittent infantry fighting. But this calm was not to last. There was a crucial prize in the Majevica hills—the Stolice radio tower, atop 916-meter Mt. Majevica itself. This tower was a vital communications node, serving as a relay for 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 the mountain.

The Bosnian Army began massing its forces in the area in April, and government forces first assaulted the mountain on 11 May.⁷⁹ The ARBiH 2nd Corps mounted repeated attacks against the VRS Tactical Group “Majevica”/East Bosnian Corps deployed on Mt. Majevica and a secondary elevation on adjacent Banj Brdo.⁸⁰ At least two full ARBiH brigades were committed to the fiercest of the government assaults on 14 and 15 May. The Serbs replied with heavy shelling of Bosnian towns and with infantry counterattacks on 15 and 16 May.⁸¹⁸² 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.⁸³ Fighting tapered off around 20 May, as the offensive subsided and the Bosnian Army paused to regroup and reinforce.⁸⁴ Apparently undaunted, the ARBiH resumed the attack on

27 May, again charging up the Stolice mountain and Banj Brdo.⁸⁵⁸⁶ The Serbs counterattacked and drove south several kilometers from Stolice, retaking much of the ground they had lost to government forces earlier in the month.⁸⁷ When the June cease-fire took effect, the Bosnian Army had very little to show for its effort, having been pushed back out of most of its recently won territory.

Kladanj, May 1994**

During the latter half of April and the first week of May, UN observers noted a steady buildup of government forces—including the spearhead 7th Muslimski Brigade—and military supplies in the Kladanj area, north of Sarajevo and south of Tuzla.⁸⁸ The government also began restricting the movements of UN military observers south of Tuzla—an almost certain sign of an impending offensive.⁸⁹ The UN—and the Bosnian Serbs—watched and waited for the blow to fall. It was not long in coming. The expected offensive rolled eastward from Kladanj against the VRS Drina Corps in the second week of May—concurrent with the other 2nd Corps attacks at Mt. Stolice and Mt. Vijenac in the Ozren mountains—moving in the general direction of Vlasenica, Sekovici, and Han Pijesak. By 15 May the UN was reporting substantial Bosnian Army gains in the area.⁹⁰ The really significant breakthrough came on 16 May when the Bosnian Army advanced to a line connecting the Sokolina and Bijela Stijena peaks and captured some 32 square kilometers.⁹¹⁹² The VRS responded with several days of very heavy shelling and a short counterattack on 21 May.⁹³⁹⁴ The Bosnian Army nibbled away at the Serb defenses, advancing a kilometer at a time in the hilly and wooded terrain,⁹⁵ but subsided in early June to record an advance of some 15 km at its furthest point.⁹⁶ The Bosnian Army’s gains in this area were more important morally than militarily, but that was accomplishment enough.

** See Annex 52: Kladanj, 1994 for a more detailed account.

* See Annex 51: A Contest of Wills: The Struggle for Mt. Majevica and the Stolice Transmitter, 1994 for a more detailed account.

The Bosnian Serbs on the Attack—Cemerska Planina, May 1994

As the Bosnian Army was ending its successful operation near Kladanj, the VRS was preparing both its counterattack there and a new attack some 35 kilometers to the southwest in the Cemerska Planina-Nisici Plateau area. The objective of the new attack was to further secure the road between the Serb-held western Sarajevo suburbs and the Pale-Romanija area through the capture of the ARBiH-controlled Cemerska Planina and possibly the town of Breza. After receiving reinforcements from the 1st Krajina Corps and assembling his own elite assault units for the operation, Major General Stanislav Galic's VRS Sarajevo-Romanija Corps began its attack on 18 May. More than a week of fighting failed to dislodge Brigadier Vahid Karavelic's ARBiH 1st Corps forces from their hill positions overlooking the road. The battle ended on 27/28 May with little or no Serb gains.⁹⁷

Tesanj-Teslic, May-June 1994*

After a pause of several weeks, the Bosnian Army again attempted to advance in the Tesanj-Teslic area around 22 May—this time with the more limited objective of capturing several intermediate elevations. The HVO's 111th “Zepce” Brigade—Operational Group 7-South's former foes—appears to have contributed at least two tanks to the fight.^{98 99 100} Even these more modest objectives proved to be unattainable, however, and the ARBiH was unable to push the confrontation lines very far against determined resistance by the VRS 1st Krajina Corps' “Doboj” Operational Group 9.¹⁰¹ While the Bosnian Army did gain control over a line of peaks between 5 and 15 kilometers southeast of Teslic, 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. Despite OG 7-South's best efforts, it was unable to achieve the hoped-for territorial gains before the country-wide cease-fire took effect on 10 June.^{102 103}

* See Annex 53: Tesanj and Teslic, 1994 for more details.

Mt. Vlasic, May 1994

After a short lull, government forces resumed their attacks against Mt. Vlasic on 24 May, launching a major assault along the Vlasic frontline in an effort to encircle the mountain. Although the 7th Corps 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 “Vlasic” Operational Group could still resupply their forces on the mountain. It was, however, a close-run thing: Bosnian Serb reserves were all but exhausted, and the VRS was just barely able to maintain the line.

The Spring Offensive Draws to a Close

As in March, the Bosnian Army had failed to reach its objectives at Donji Vakuf, Teslic, and Mt. Vlasic or gain control of the peak at Mt. Stolice, although it had had reasonable success east of Kladanj. These setbacks left the force undaunted, however, and in all of the contested areas—Donji Vakuf, Tesanj-Teslic, Vlasic, and Stolice—the ARBiH continued to regroup and reinforce, preparing for bigger and better attempts later in the year. Neither the battles nor the war were over by any means, and the ARBiH attacks continued to inflict casualties on the VRS that it could ill afford.

The June 1994 Cease-Fire: Just Long Enough To Reload

After one of the many meetings in Geneva, one of the Bosnian war's many cease-fires was signed on 8 June 1994. The agreement, which included all three ethnic factions, was originally proposed for four months but was reduced to four weeks at the last minute after the Bosnian Serbs rejected the original duration.¹⁰⁴ As it turned out, the truce never entirely took hold. As the Bosnian Army went ahead with a planned offensive against Vozuca at the southern tip of the Ozren salient, the agreement unraveled a little more each day and had broken down completely within three weeks.¹⁰⁵

Chapter 58

The Battle of Vozuca, Ozren Mountains, June-July 1994*

The Bosnian Army's confidence in its ability to take the war to the Serbs was growing, and the ARBiH General Staff prepared plans for a much more ambitious offensive in the Ozren mountains. Its aim was to cut off and capture the southern end of the Serb-held Ozren salient around Vozuca, thus freeing up an important road route—the UN's so-called "Route Duck"—connecting the cities of Tuzla and Zenica. The operation would be the largest yet conducted and would involve a coordinated attack by major elements of the 2nd and 3rd Corps—up to 14,000 assault troops—directly under General Delic's supervision.

In a preliminary move, elements of the 2nd Corps seized an important hilltop—Vijenac—from VRS 1st Krajina Corps troops in May. The capture of the hill gave the ARBiH an excellent observation point over the Krivaja River valley and Vozuca while shielding nearby Muslim-held towns. The defeat was a severe psychological blow to the Serbs, who lost an entire company of troops killed or captured.

The main operation began on 18 June, breaking the 10-day-old UN-sponsored cease-fire. The ARBiH plan called for a pincer movement with 2nd Corps troops attacking from the east and 3rd Corps troops from the west to link up in the middle of the 10-kilometer-wide salient. The initial advance took the VRS Ozren Tactical Group of "Doboj" Operational Group 9 by surprise and quickly penetrated Serb lines. Over the next week, Muslim troops continued the attack, gradually pushing through VRS defenses. By 26 June, ARBiH 2nd and 3rd Corps units were within 3 kilometers of linking up.

The VRS, however, was preparing a bold counter-strike, having shifted elite 1st Krajina and East Bosnian Corps units into the salient. By 1 July an initial counterattack had drawn ARBiH 3rd Corps elements away from their main axis. As the Muslim troops maneuvered to block the Serb thrust, the VRS allowed them to walk into an uncharted minefield upon which it had previously targeted artillery. The ARBiH

casualties were heavy, and the shock of the action permitted the VRS reinforcements to counterattack and drive both 2nd and 3rd Corps forces back to their start lines by 4-5 July.

The Battle of Vozuca was an eye-opening experience for both the ARBiH and the VRS. The Bosnian Army had satisfied itself that it could penetrate Serb defenses and almost defeat a major VRS force. It also had a number of weaknesses and vulnerabilities that the VRS could exploit. As the ARBiH General Staff would find throughout the year, their units often tended to overextend themselves during an advance, leaving their flanks open to Serb counterattacks. They learned also that command and control during offensive operations was far more difficult than on the defense, particularly for an army with such limited tactical communications. The Muslims needed tools and tactics to deal with the Serbs' extensive minefields and devastating artillery fire. The VRS, too, discovered several weaknesses that needed to be dealt with, notably the inadequate training and discipline of many of its frontline infantry units, who tended to panic when ARBiH sabotage units appeared in their rear. Overall, the thinness of VRS frontline defenses and the ease with which the Muslims usually penetrated them was troubling. VRS strengths in senior command leadership, communications, firepower, and mobility, however, allowed the Serbs to counter the more lightly armed Muslim infantry and drive them back out. Nevertheless, as the VRS was to find repeatedly over the next year, winning battles against the Muslims was becoming a near-run thing.

Chapter 59

The Northeast Bosnia Battles, August-November 1994

Brka, 3 August 1994

In early August, the Bosnian Army mounted a small attack on the southern side of the Posavina corridor, attacking from the tiny town of Gornja Brka, 8 kilometers southwest of Brcko. (Immediately to the north

* For more details, see Annex 54: The Battle of Vozuca, Ozren Mountains, June-July 1994.

of Muslim-held Gornja Brka was the Serb-held village of Donja Brka.¹⁰⁶) Paired in a relatively flat and strategically important area, the Brka towns were logical targets for an attack by either side. On 3 August, the Bosnian Army commenced with artillery and mortar fire in the early morning, followed by an infantry assault on Donja Brka.¹⁰⁷ In what appears to have been a very limited, surprise attack, the Bosnian Army's 2nd Corps grabbed about 4 square kilometers from Tactical Group "Posavina"/East Bosnian Corps and then halted to secure their gains.¹⁰⁸ The Bosnian Serbs shelled the lost territory heavily and counterattacked several times during the remainder of August and into September, but at the end of the day the Bosnian Government still held both Gornja and Donja Brka.^{109 110 111}

The Battle of Vis, 8-12 August 1994¹¹²

August also saw a small-scale government operation to seize important high ground around Vis Hill, in the Trebava region, north of the town of Gracanica. On 8 August elements of the ARBiH 212th Liberation Brigade, reinforcing Operational Group 2/2nd Corps, attacked and seized 14 square kilometers of territory from VRS "Doboj" Operational Group 9 units.¹¹³ Muslim troops held on to most of their gains, although the Serbs may have regained some territory over the next three days.

The 2nd Corps Attacks at Doboj-Gradacac, October-November 1994¹¹⁴

Following its successful operation in August near Gracanica, the ARBiH 2nd Corps scheduled for October a much larger one against VRS "Doboj" Operational Group 9 forces in the Doboj-Gradacac sector. The new attack, which brought together all of 2nd Corps's new elite liberation and light brigades, called for thrusts along three axes: toward Doboj, Modrica, and Obudovac-Pelagicevo.¹¹⁵ Unfortunately, the axes, while in the same region, do not appear to have been mutually supporting or to have had a single objective. The offensive made some good tactical gains, but the 2nd Corps was unable to move beyond its capture of the VRS front defenses.

The operation began on 15 October with a new Operational Group 2/2nd Corps attack toward the Skipovac area, north of Vis Hill, that quickly took another 20 square kilometers of territory.¹¹⁶ Two days later, the 2nd Corps attacked at Gradacac and Doboj, and ARBiH troops penetrated 4 kilometers into the front-line defenses of VRS Tactical Group 4 units northeast of Gradacac.¹¹⁷ VRS reinforcements allowed the Serbs to contain the Muslim advance over the next week, although the ARBiH held onto most of its initial gains.¹¹⁸ In their attack toward Doboj, however, ARBiH forces failed to dent Serb defenses in a week of fighting.¹¹⁹ A renewed attack on 8-10 November also went nowhere.¹²⁰

Tesanj-Teslic: The Bosnian Army's Third Try, October-November 1994*

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 ARBiH's October-November offensive was to be significantly larger and more complex than its previous efforts in the area, consisting of major efforts by both Operational 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 14,000 to 16,000 men, one of the biggest troop commitments of the year in Bosnia.

The battle was to extend over a period of weeks and achieve another partial success for the Bosnian Army, with 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 Serb defenders off guard, and approximately 20 square kilometers were captured in a matter of hours.¹²¹ A similar drive west of Teslic—with the 202nd Mountain Brigade taking the lead—

* For more details, see Annex 53: Tesanj and Teslic, 1994.

suffered badly.¹²² Bosnian Serb forces of the 1st Krajina Corps' "Doboj" Operational Group 9 halted the ARBiH after only modest advances, and—probably reinforced—counterattacked on 10 and 11 October.¹²³ ¹²⁴ VRS artillery also retaliated with heavy shelling of Muslim-held villages in the area. The government forces advanced as far as the Teslic suburb of Banja Vrucica but could go no further.¹²⁵¹²⁶

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 limited Serb reserves into the defense of Teslic, OG 3-North was able to make further advances, pushing north and west to take another 50 square kilometers or so in a series of short advances of 2 to 3 kilometers a day along a 10-kilometer-wide front.¹²⁷

By late October it began to look like the two-front attack might succeed. Operational 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. Bosnian Serb forces made several counterattacks around Teslic, retaking some territory, but the ARBiH 3rd Corps countered with yet another assault by OG 3-North on 8 November. Once again, the crack 7th Muslimski Brigade led the way in an advance that seized 30 more square kilometers over the next 10 days.¹²⁸¹²⁹

¹³⁰

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 troops from "Doboj" OG 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. Even though the objective of Teslic was never reached, the ARBiH October-November offensive can be considered a substantial success. The Bosnian Army's 3rd Corps had demonstrated its ability to effectively mount sizable, coordinated operations within its area of responsibility. VRS Doboj Operational Group forces, which had begun the year on the offensive, were 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 Bosnian Army had fallen short of its goals, but the effort had brought its own rewards.

Chapter 60

Last Man Standing—The ARBiH-VRS Battles in Central Bosnia, August-November 1994

The Bosnian Army Capture of Brgule, August 1994

In July, the ARBiH 1st Corps began preparations for an operation to seize control of a Serb salient jutting into Muslim lines toward Vares and centered on the village of Brgule.¹³¹ The elimination of the salient would further threaten the Serb-held road to the Serbs' western Sarajevo suburbs and put the ARBiH in a better position for future operations toward Sarajevo.¹³² The offensive began on 1 August. The 1st Corps troops attacked from either side of the HVO-held Dastansko pocket, quickly seizing Brgule, and then pushing south. Within a week, ARBiH forces had secured most of the salient.¹³³ By 11 August, the VRS Sarajevo-Romanija Corps controlled a much reduced fragment of territory in the area.¹³⁴

September: The ARBiH at Sarajevo/Sedrenik

Since the 5 February marketplace shelling and the establishment of the 20-km heavy weapons exclusion zone, Sarajevo had been largely quiet for most of 1994. "Quiet" was a relative term, as sporadic sniper and small-arms fire continued to terrorize the civilian population of the city. The artillery and mortar fire that had caused most of the casualties and devastated portions of the city had essentially been halted, however, by the exclusion zone.

The one noteworthy break in the calm came in September, when the Bosnian Army launched a very small attack to capture part of the Sedrenik

neighborhood in the northeastern part of the city north of Sarajevo's old quarter. ARBiH 1st Corps forces from the Muslim-held Grdonj neighborhood launched a surprise attack against VRS Sarajevo-Romanija Corps-held Sedrenik beginning on 18 September.¹³⁵ The Bosnian Army gained territory on the first day, and fierce clashes continued as the Serbs counterattacked the following day. After a two-day fight, UN spokesmen reported the VRS had recaptured some of the initially ceded area. The isolated fighting event concluded with minor ARBiH gains.

Mt. Vlasic, September 1994*

At the beginning of September, the Bosnian Army 7th Corps launched what appears to have been one last attempt for the year against the Mt. Vlasic feature near Travnik, and the VRS "Vlasic" Operational Group responded with another limited counterattack in the Vlasic-Turbe area on 6 September.¹³⁶ The Bosnian Army units succeeded in capturing some additional ridge lines, but again failed to gain control of the mountain. With winter approaching, the government 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. Meanwhile, the Bosnian Serbs relied primarily on artillery fire for the remainder of the year, continuing to shell Travnik and its environs and occasionally sending small infantry probes in the direction of Turbe.

To and Fro: Nisici Plateau and Cemerska Planina, October-November 1994

At the beginning of October, the VRS finished plans for a renewed effort—Operation "Brgule 94"—to achieve its unfulfilled objective in the Cemerska Planina area, securing the road route to the Serb-held western Sarajevo suburbs.¹³⁷ Major General Dragomir Milosevic's Sarajevo-Romanija Corps received reinforcements for the assault from the Drina and Herzegovina Corps, plus the Main Staff.¹³⁸ The 4 October attack quickly penetrated ARBiH 1st Corps lines,

seizing key hilltops in the first two days of the operation and pushing Muslim troops back over the next week for an advance of as much as 2 kilometers in some locations.¹³⁹

The ARBiH 1st Corps commander, Brigadier General Vahid Karavelic, was then able to shift reinforcements to Cemerska from his Operational Group 3 and the Sarajevo Operational Group, denying the Serbs any further gains. By 14 October the ARBiH was beginning to counterattack and on 15 October recaptured the important Mosevacko hill. Fighting continued over the next two days, but again the two sides were stalemated.¹⁴⁰

After the battle ended the ARBiH 1st Corps began planning to recapture all of the lost ground from the VRS Sarajevo-Romanija Corps while simultaneously eliminating the rest of the Serb-held salient south of Brgule near Nisici.¹⁴¹ On 6 November the ARBiH struck, seizing the remaining VRS-controlled hills in Cemerska Planina while crushing the salient north of Nisici. Despite the VRS's best efforts, the Bosnian Army had held its ground and had taken even more Serb territory.

Stolice . . . Again, November 1994**

In early November the Bosnian Army 2nd Corps again made a serious attempt to capture the Stolice radio relay in the Majevica hills. Preliminary probes appear to have begun as early as mid-October when "recon-sabotage" groups scouted the area looking for weaknesses in the VRS East Bosnia Corps' lines.^{142 143} The Bosnian Army's main offensive effort—directed, once again, at the Stolice transmitter—began on 9 November.¹⁴⁴ By 13 November the attackers claimed the capture of several important hills—including nearby Velika and Mala Jelika—but not Stolice itself.^{145 146} Once again fighting raged around the Stolice transmitter and again damaged it, but the Bosnian Army still failed to gain control of the Mt. Majevica summit.^{147 148}

** For a more detailed account, see Annex 51: A Contest of Wills: The Struggle for Mt. Majevica and the Stolice Transmitter, 1994.

* For more details, see Annex 55: Mt. Vlasic, 1994.

As 1994 drew to a close, the situation in the Majevica hills was not far different from what had prevailed when the year had begun. 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. The VRS shelled Tuzla and the smaller towns of the “Sapna thumb” regularly, causing substantial destruction but accomplishing little from a military standpoint. Casualties piled up on both sides of the confrontation line, but for little visible gain.

Chapter 61 **Bosnian Army Operations in Southeast Bosnia,** **September-November 1994***

Konjic, September 1994

The Muslim-held town of Konjic—40 km southwest of Sarajevo—was shelled regularly (though not especially heavily) during most of 1994, but, on the whole, the area 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 out infantry probes to determine weaknesses in each other’s lines.^{149 150 151 152 153} Bosnian Serb shelling of Konjic also increased.¹⁵⁴ On 11-12 September, the ARBiH 4th Corps commenced its main operation against the VRS Herzegovina Corps, launching infantry assaults on three Serb-held suburbs: Bijela, Borci, and Glavaticevo.¹⁵⁵ The Bosnian Army made steady advances over the next few days, systematically eliminating VRS bunkers and strongpoints and occupying Bijela—a sizable village southeast of Konjic—on 15 September.^{156 157 158}

Up through the capture of Bijela, the HVO’s 56th “Herceg Stjepan” Home Defense Regiment—the local unit in the area—participated in the offensive, occupying its section of the confrontation line and supporting the Bosnian Army with mortar fire.¹⁵⁹ On 15 September, however, the HVO reversed its position and indicated it was pulling out of the line.¹⁶⁰ This

announcement caused substantial consternation in the Federation camp. ARBiH and HVO officials met in Sarajevo on 15 September to resolve their differences while playing down the rift in their public statements. US diplomatic pressure helped to avert a crisis within the nascent Federation, and the HVO eventually reversed position again and agreed to cancel plans to withdraw from the fight.^{161 162 163}

Meanwhile, the Bosnian Army pressed on with its successful offensive south, advancing the frontline up to 10 km on 15 and 16 September and capturing a total of 30 to 40 square kilometers.^{164 165 166 167} Steady fighting continued through the following week, but with smaller Bosnian Army advances.¹⁶⁸ There was a brief lull, followed by a renewed Bosnian Army effort along the Borci-Glavaticevo line southeast of Konjic beginning 23 September.¹⁶⁹ At the beginning of October, the Bosniacs extended their advance slightly further, taking the important Kiser hill south of Konjic and continuing on to the south.¹⁷⁰ These gains, however, concluded the advance. Back and forth fighting continued through the rest of the year—in which the VRS reclaimed some of their lost land—but the frontlines had generally stabilized.¹⁷¹

At the conclusion of the battle, the Bosnian Army had captured almost 100 square kilometers. In terms of net gains, the Konjic-area offensive was to be one of the ARBiH’s most successful operations of the year.

October 1994: The Mt. Bjelasnica Controversy

At 2,067 meters, Mt. Bjelasnica—slightly south and west of Mt. Igman—was one of the highest peaks in Bosnia. Its towering height had added 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

* For more details, see Annex 56: The Battles for Herzegovina, 1994 and Annex 57: “Twin Peaks”: The Battles for Mts. Bjelasnica and Treskavica, 1994.

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.¹⁷² Despite the ostensible demilitarization, however, the Bosnian Army kept troops on both peaks, and probably as many as 1,500 to 2,000 ARBiH troops occupied the “UN controlled” mountains at any given time. In addition, Bosnian Army forces worked on prepared defenses, bunkers, and trenchlines within the demilitarized zone. UN peacekeepers had tried but failed to sweep the government forces off the mountains in late 1993.

Around the end of September, the Bosnian Army began massing its forces on and around Mt. Bjelasnica for a substantial offensive through the demilitarized zone and against Serb positions on the mountain’s far side.¹⁷³ The first of October marked the commencement of a major ARBiH offensive operation in the Bjelasnica-Treskavica area against the VRS Sarajevo-Romanija and Herzegovina Corps. The attack was kicked off by probably two full 1st Corps brigades, as well as elements of at least three other brigades, further supported by the Interior Ministry’s elite “Lasta” (Swallows) Special Police battalion.¹⁷⁴ The offensive was first directed against the village of Rakitnica on the slopes of Mt. Bjelasnica and soon expanded to include fighting along the entire Bjelasnica-Treskavica frontline.¹⁷⁵ The town of Trnovo itself came under Bosnian Army artillery fire the following day.¹⁷⁶ (Still further to the south, the ARBiH 4th Corps also took the offensive from Konjic toward Kalinovik.) French UN peacekeepers blocked some 300 Bosnian Army troops transiting the mountain on 3 October, but others were clearly getting through.^{177 178}

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 location near Mount Bjelasnica. The UN initially appeared to corroborate the Bosnian Serb reports, and UN Special Envoy Yasushi Akashi told reporters that in many cases the Serb bodies had been “mutilated or burned and disfigured.”¹⁷⁹ What exactly had happened atop the snow-covered mountain, however, remained obscure, and

the Bosnian Serbs hotly threatened retaliation, implying that they would resume shelling Sarajevo in defiance of the heavy weapons exclusion zone.^{180 181} The UN took immediate action, hoping to forestall a general VRS offensive by forcing the Muslims off the mountains themselves. French UN peacekeepers swept over the Igman and Bjelasnica areas on 7 October, forcing Bosnian Army soldiers out of their positions—occasionally with the additional persuasion of French warning shots—and destroying their bunkers with antitank rockets.¹⁸²

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 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 Trnovo battalion.¹⁸³ An indignant Bosnian Government demanded a formal apology for UN Special Envoy Akashi’s earlier assertions that the Bosnian Army had executed its prisoners. The UN lamely countered with the charge that the Bosnian Army was not supposed to be operating in the demilitarized zone in the first place.¹⁸⁴

Meanwhile, UN forces continued to force government troops off the mountains, both to preserve UN credibility and to forestall VRS retaliation against Sarajevo city.^{185 186} On 9 October, the Bosnian Serbs, 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.¹⁸⁷ The dispute dragged on, however, as the Bosnian Government kept putting off the joint inspection of the mountains. Worse yet, the Bosnian Army mounted 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 and scour the peaks by force.¹⁸⁸ Talks broke down on 18 October when the Bosnian Government refused to withdraw the 500 or so troops remaining on the two mountains—insisting that any withdrawal be 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.^{189 190} The 20 October deadline came and went without incident, however, leaving the standoff unresolved.

The UN went after the remaining Bosnian Government troops in the DMZ on 24 October, whereupon the Bosnian Army 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. The three-way standoff—Bosnian Government, Bosnian Serbs, and United Nations—had finally been resolved, for a time, at least. As October drew to a close, the focus of activity and attention was to move from Mt. Bjelasnica to Mt. Treskavica, its neighbor to the south.^{191 192 193}

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—another peak southeast of Mt. Bjelasnica and of equally imposing dimensions (2,088 meters)—and the Sarajevo-Trnovo road segment. The shift 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.¹⁹⁴ Bosnian Army forces also shelled a nearby UN observation post with an artillery piece from within the exclusion zone.^{195 196} The following day, the Bosnian Army shelled Serb-held Javorak on

the south side of Bjelasnica with heavy artillery and captured the town.¹⁹⁷

The Bosnian Army's 1st Corps continued its advance in early November, attacking further to the east after taking Javorak and moving onto the Hojta ridge line connecting the flanks of Mounts Bjelasnica and Treskavica.¹⁹⁸ In a successful push over the next few days, the Bosnian Army advanced the frontlines several kilometers to the east and took three towns along the smaller north-south road that ran several kilometers west of Trnovo.¹⁹⁹ The VRS Herzegovina Corps, however—hastily reinforced by elements of the Sarajevo-Romanija Corps—halted the ARBiH advance around 6 November, with the frontline still several kilometers west of the main highway.^{200 201} On 14-15 December, the Bosnian Army made its last push of the year in the direction of the Trnovo road. Again the ARBiH advanced, claiming gains of 20 square kilometers—but still failed to secure the road.²⁰²

At the end of the year, the Bosnian Army had taken a total of some 100 square kilometers on Mts. Bjelasnica and Treskavica and had captured at least five highly prized tanks, several small artillery pieces and mortars, and sizable munitions stores.^{203 204 205} Nevertheless, although the Bosnian Government gains were substantial, they still fell short of their primary goal of interdicting or capturing the Trnovo road. Despite a valiant—and partially successful—effort, Trnovo still lay out of reach.

Nevesinje in November

Serb-held Nevesinje was about 20 km due east of Muslim-held Blagaj and Croat-held Buna. The confrontation line was well west of the town, and Nevesinje had been more or less untouched by the war. The Bosnian Army and sometimes the HVO would occasionally shell some of the intervening Serb-held villages, 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 4th Corps offensive from Konjic, well to the north. On 19 September, the Bosnian Army shifted its emphasis to the Mostar-Nevesinje axis, while continuing its attacks around Konjic. These efforts continued through 26 September, but with no apparent gains.²⁰⁶
²⁰⁷ ²⁰⁸ ²⁰⁹ ²¹⁰ ²¹¹ ²¹² The Bosnian Army made another offensive push in the Mostar-Nevesinje area against the VRS Herzegovina Corps 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.²¹³ ²¹⁴ ²¹⁵

The Bosnian Army's main offensive effort came the following month when the ARBiH 4th Corps attempted to cut the road to Nevesinje. The 4th Corps began its preparations the night before the main assault, with elite "recon-sabotage" elements—most likely from the General Staff's crack "Black Swans" unit—infiltrating Serb lines 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.²¹⁶ ²¹⁷ ²¹⁸ The conventional assaults had only limited success, but the infiltration teams appear to have caused considerable disruption in Serb rear areas.²¹⁹ Some of the infiltration teams, however, had to fight it out with the Herzegovina Corps, and most likely took heavy casualties on the way out. The Bosnian Army offensive halted around 20 November with apparently heavy casualties on both sides.²²⁰ ²²¹ ²²² ²²³

Chapter 62

Combined Croat-Muslim Operations in West-Central Bosnia, October-November 1994*

The year was to close with a major offensive operation in west-central Bosnia, which began with the capture of Kupres and then continued northeast and west from there. Presaging the much larger combined offensive that would end the war the following year, this series of attacks was to include simultaneous actions by the Bosnian Army, the HVO, and the

* For more details, see Annex 50: Donji Vakuf, 1994 and Annex 58: "With Friends Like These, Who Needs Enemies?" The HVO-Bosnian Army Capture of Kupres, November 1994.

Croatian Army. The VRS proved able to slow, but not stop, these advances and ended the year with its largest territorial loss to date and a military problem that would only grow worse the following year.

The HVO-ARBiH Capture of Kupres, November 1994

The combined Croat-Muslim offensive began with the capture of Kupres, an objective of interest to both factions. 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. Besides wanting to avenge a humiliating Croat defeat and recapture a municipality that had a sizable prewar Croat population, the HVO also wanted control of the road junction from Tomislavgrad toward Bugojno and Sipovo.²²⁴ The Bosnian Muslims had less historical attachment to Kupres itself but held nearby Bugojno and wanted to control the lines of communication from Kupres to the real Muslim objective in the area—Donji Vakuf, 20 kilometers to the northeast.

The Bosnian Army fired the first shots of the campaign with a unilateral offensive effort against Kupres beginning on 20 October, launching infantry attacks against the VRS 30th Infantry Division Donji Vakuf along a roughly 14-km front northeast of the town.²²⁵ ²²⁶ By 23 October, the ARBiH had advanced close enough to Kupres to direct mortar fire into the town.²²⁷ The Bosnian Army's 7th Corps continued to make slow advances in the difficult, mountainous terrain, capturing one peak at a time but never able to achieve a decisive breakthrough. Nevertheless, by 27 October UN observers were reporting VRS forces in retreat and Serb civilians fleeing the town.²²⁸ ²²⁹

Yet the Bosnian Army failed to press on all the way into Kupres. This could have been for a variety or a combination of reasons. The advance had been slowed by fog, rain, and the need to consolidate gains. Even against the thinly stretched Serb defenders, advances in the rugged mountains northeast of the town had been 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—by now just a few kilometers outside the town—could make the final push whenever it cared to; or there may have been a prior agreement with the Croats that would explain the holdup. Whatever the cause, the Bosnian Army's delay—of just a few days—was to prove crucial. By the first of November, the ARBiH 7th Corps had driven to the front gates of Kupres. It was to be the Bosnian Croats, however, who would race into the town through the other, unguarded gate.

Through the end of October, the HVO had remained on the sidelines of the Kupres battle, massing its forces and waiting for the most opportune moment to step in. HVO commander Ante Roso's newly established HVO Guards Brigades had been collecting in the area for days and would serve as the backbone of the operation. Three of the four HVO Guards Brigades were to contribute to the operation, further supported by the elite 60th "Ludvig Pavlovic" Guards Airborne Battalion, Bosnian Croat MUP special police troops, and HVO corps-level artillery. (In addition, although Zagreb vociferously denied any participation in the battle, Croatian Army forces almost certainly took part in at least the planning and probably the actual execution of the attack.)²³⁰

With the Bosnian Army on the verge of taking the town—and tying down the Serb defenders—the time had come to launch Operation "Cincar," the Croat capture of Kupres. Having chosen its moment carefully, the HVO pushed a two-pronged offensive from the south against the thinly stretched 7th Kupres-Sipovo Motorized Brigade/2nd Krajina Corps beginning on 1 November. One spearhead drove north from Sujica along the main road into Kupres. This western axis captured the town of Donji Malovan on 1 November and continued several kilometers further to take smaller Gornji Malovan on 2 November.²³¹ A second spearhead advanced in parallel to the east, moving from Ravno to the Serb-held village of Rilic on 2 November.^{232 233} Kupres—by this point an abandoned ghost town—fell to the lightning Croat advance on 3 November. The ARBiH had meanwhile continued its methodical advance and announced the capture of the heights at Kupreska Vrata—a mere 3 km from the center of town—that same day.²³⁴ It was even now

too late for the Bosnian Government, however; the Croats were already announcing that special police and HVO special forces detachments had entered Kupres a little after midday.^{235 236}

Exactly what the Croats and Muslims had agreed to before the offensive remains unclear.²³⁷ It seems most likely that the two factions had discussed their intentions to the extent of agreeing on a simultaneous attack in the direction of Kupres but without divulging actual operational plans to each other. Probably the Bosnian Army did not have its heart set on capturing Kupres—before the war the large Croat population had dominated the town—but it had paid the town's ransom in blood slogging through the hills to the north. Its troops were 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 arrived at the pragmatic decision that Croat military cooperation was more important than ownership of traditionally Croat Kupres, recognizing that a battle for the town could well reignite the Croat-Muslim war that had already proved so destructive to both sides.

For all its flaws in planning and execution, the Croat-Muslim capture of Kupres was nevertheless a step in the right direction—militarily, politically, and geographically—and a step closer to both factions' ultimate objective of Jajce. It was still not clear whether the ARBiH and the HVO were marching down the road in cadence or racing each other toward the destination, however.

The Year's Last Drive on Donji Vakuf, November 1994

After the Bosnian Croat capture of Kupres, the Bosnian Army could advance no further south and once again redirected its main efforts toward Donji Vakuf to the north. On 4 November the Serb-held hamlets of Koscani (about 7 km southwest of Donji Vakuf), Kopcici, and Urije fell to determined infantry attacks.²³⁸ After further probing assaults, equipment

shifts, and extensive preparations in the area, the Bosnian Army 7th Corps launched a major assault toward Donji Vakuf—about 16 km away—from the southwest on 7 November.²³⁹ Bosnian Croat artillery—though not troops—supported the attack on VRS 30th Division defense lines between Kupres and Donji Vakuf.^{240 241} A day of heavy shelling failed to pave the way past Prusac, 7 km south of Donji Vakuf. Muslim and Serb troops tried to push each other off the strategic high ground over the next few days, but neither could dislodge the other.²⁴² The Bosnian Army made another hard drive on 16–20 November, shelling and assaulting Serb-held Koscani, which sat atop high ground overlooking Donji Vakuf.^{243 244 245} The end of November and December saw weeks of bitter, inconclusive, uphill-and-downhill fighting 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 trench lines running up and down the pine-forested ridges. At least until the following spring, the war of maneuver was over.

Cooperation between the Bosnian Army and the Croats was surprisingly good during the last stages of the attack on Donji Vakuf, even if the Croats did take control of Kupres without fully signaling their intention to do so. Relations remained good enough even after the fall of Kupres that the Bosnian Croats were supplying the Bosnian Army with weapons during its attacks on Donji Vakuf.²⁴⁶ 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 for both armies.²⁴⁷

As 1994 drew to a close, the Bosnian Army had come frustratingly close to Donji Vakuf, but success remained out of reach. Alagic's 7th Corps soldiers could see—but not yet enter—Donji Vakuf from the hills to the south and southwest. The VRS 30th Infantry Division still held the even higher peaks to the northwest and northeast and retained a secure defensive position for the winter months. As it turned out, the war for control of Donji Vakuf would be fought from ridge line to ridge line for almost another year.²⁴⁸

Chapter 63 The Western Theater

The Bihać Battles of 1994*

While the Croat-Muslim war burned itself out and then concluded and the series of ARBiH offensives sprawled across the rest of Bosnia in the spring and summer of 1994, the isolated Bihać pocket remained a theater unto itself. The hardy but still isolated ARBiH 5th Corps (supported by a tiny contingent of allied HVO fighters) continued to battle no less than three separate opponents: the Bosnian Serbs, the Krajina Serbs from Croatia, and Fikret Abdic's Muslim rebels of the Autonomous Province of Western Bosnia (APWB). On the separate stage of the Bihać enclave, these actors would play out a bloody and complicated series of battles during the course of the year.

The Demise of Fikret 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 UN official in Bihać, June 1995²⁴⁹

In mid-January the Bosnian Government threw the first punch in the continuing, back-and-forth war between the Bosnian Army and Abdic's rebels. ARBiH 5th Corps forces pressed along a broad front, advancing about 2 kilometers and capturing the town of Skokovi.^{250 251 252} 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.²⁵³ Beginning on 16 February, however, the tables turned, as the Abdic forces and the Bosnian

* For more details, see Annex 59: The Demise of Abdic's Empire, January–August, 1994; Annex 60: Operation "Breza 94," The Bosnian and Krajina Serb Armies Attack Bihać, September 1994; and Annex 61: Punch and Counterpunch, Bihać Operations, October–December 1994.

Serbs hit the ARBiH 5th Corps with simultaneous attacks from two directions.²⁵⁴ Bosnian Army Brig. Gen. Arif Pasalic confirmed on 21 February that Abdic forces had advanced to within 10 km of government-held Cazin. At the same time, UN officials reported that Bosnian Serb forces of Maj. Gen. Boric's 2nd Krajina Corps were strongly pressuring Bihać and Bosanska Krupa.^{255 256} For a time, the situation looked almost critical, but Dudakovic's resilient 5th Corps managed to rally yet again. No further advances were reported, and comparatively little fighting took place along the Abdic-5th Corps confrontation line during most of spring 1994.²⁵⁷

When the Bosnian Government signed a cease-fire with the Bosnian Serbs in early June, it freed up the Bosnian Army's 5th Corps to devote its full attention against the Abdic separatists. Abdic did not sign the agreement, and the 5th Corps could finally divert scarce resources to take on its secondary opponent.²⁵⁸ The Abdic forces appear to have struck the first blow, reportedly attacking government-held territory on 11 June and making some initial gains.^{259 260} The battlefield situation changed rapidly, though, and by 13 June the ARBiH had counterattacked successfully, capturing some 30 square kilometers and advancing 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.²⁶¹ The following day, reports emerged that Abdic had purged his ranks, arresting 500 or more of his own supporters he suspected of disloyalty.²⁶²

Whether inspired by Abdic's leadership or fear of arrest, the APWB forces rallied on 15-16 June, halting the 5th Corps advance and counterattacking near the town of Liskovac.²⁶³ By 20 June, however, the UN reported that government forces had resumed their advance, approaching to within 13 km of Abdic's de facto capital of Velika Kladusa.²⁶⁴ The fiercest fighting was in and around the town of Golubovici, which sat atop the high ground overlooking the approaches to Velika Kladusa.²⁶⁵ Meanwhile, UN observers—fearing an escalation of the conflict—watched nervously as Krajina Serb Army troops supported the Abdic rebels with tank and artillery fire from across the border in Croatia.

The emphasis of the fighting came to center on the key town of Pecigrad, which had been fiercely contested for over a week.²⁶⁶ Both the assaulting ARBiH 5th Corps and Abdic's defending 4th Brigade knew that the town's capture would open the way for a Bosnian Army advance into Velika Kladusa. Abdic's 4th Brigade—probably the APWB's best formation—did not give ground, but found itself increasingly surrounded by fast-moving Bosnian Army advances. The 5th Corps forces had surrounded the town on three sides by 22 June, leaving Abdic's 4th Brigade blocking the government advance but trapped in Pecigrad.^{267 268 269}

Desperate, Abdic appealed for help to his last hope, the Krajina Serbs. The Krajina Serb Army (*Srpska Vojska Krajina*—SVK) had continued to support the Abdic rebels with artillery fire but had remained unwilling to commit Serb infantry into the battle itself. On 30 June, UN monitors reported that the SVK had removed at least 20 heavy weapons from UN-monitored weapons collection sites in Croatia and moved them into Abdic-controlled territory.²⁷⁰ The UN was extremely concerned that the SVK would cross over to battle the 5th Corps in Bosnia, but, in the event, the Krajina Serbs elected not to commit their own troops directly in support of Abdic's failing regime.

At this point in the seesaw battle that Bihać had become, one of the oddest operations of the entire Bosnian war was launched. 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.²⁷¹ Later in the day, Abdic's news agency reported that the chaos had been caused by mutinying 5th Corps troops who had refused to continue fighting the Muslim rebels. 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.²⁷² Reports began to filter in that loyal 5th Corps troops were battling defecting “peace force” elements who had gone over to Abdic’s side. Then Abdic’s own brigades—again backed by Krajina Serb artillery and mortar fire—mounted a supporting assault along part of the confrontation line. Things looked bleak indeed for Dudakovic’s 5th Corps—simultaneously fighting against the Bosnian Serbs, the Krajina Serbs, the Abdic rebels, and “peace force” mutineers within its own ranks.²⁷³

On 10 July, however, the Bosnian Army announced triumphantly that the entire “peace force” rebellion had been a charade, 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 staged a mock mutiny, confining the UN to base to prevent its finding out the truth and allowing reporters access only to selected pieces of information. The capstone of the effort, however, was an appeal for assistance from a fictional “Seventh Brigade” of Abdic supporters in the town of Izacic. Eager to assist more supposed defectors, Abdic—with Krajina Serb assistance—sent truckloads of small arms, rocket launchers, and ammunition to his alleged supporters. Of course, on arrival, 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.²⁷⁴

In the end, the operation proved a brilliant and completely successful combination of deception and execution. The desperately underarmed 5th Corps gained an additional 3,000 weapons and over 200,000 rounds of ammunition—provided by its APWB opponents, no less. A handful of key Abdic supporters in Bihać had tipped their hand, allowing the 5th Corps to round up the enemy sympathizers within its ranks, and Dudakovic had achieved a public relations coup, boosting the morale of his own forces and exposing the Abdic rebels as Serb collaborators. While later battlefield successes were undoubtedly greater in scope, in many ways “Tigar-Sloboda 94” was the wily Dudakovic’s masterstroke.^{275 276 277 278 279 280 281 282}

Meanwhile, as Abdic and the 5th Corps battled to the north, the VRS also continued its own operations against Dudakovic’s forces.²⁸³ In July, Major General Grujo Boric’s 2nd Krajina Corps 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. The capture of these areas would allow the corps to take important railroad links running through the outskirts of Bihać city. The VRS’s previous effort had come in February 1994. 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—which seems to have been perpetually contested—then grab the villages lining the Una below the hills.²⁸⁴ 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 center of battle shifted once again to the little town of Pecigrad, where Abdic’s surrounded defenders continued to put up a determined resistance. Bosnian Army forces pounded the town with mortar and artillery fire, but Abdic’s 4th Brigade hung on determinedly.²⁸⁵ Pecigrad finally fell on 4 August, after the 4th Brigade’s commander refused a 5th Corps surrender offer and was killed by a tank round immediately afterward.²⁸⁶ 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.²⁸⁷ The way was open for the 5th Corps to continue its advance.

On 21 August, just hours after Abdic refused the Bosnian Government’s unconditional surrender demand, Bosnian Army troops overran Velika Kladusa.^{288 289} 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.²⁹⁰ Abdic himself also abandoned Velika Kladusa for the relative safety of Croatia, where he would seek Serb backing for a renewed effort.

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."

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." Unfortunately for the Serbs, the new offensive was ill timed, coming after the ARBiH 5th Corps had defeated Abdic's rebel forces. As a result, the 5th Corps faced only two major attack axes, not three. The VRS plan called for 2nd Krajina Corps to lead off the offensive with renewed attacks on the Gravez 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 SVK 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 logistic 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.

Major General Grujo Boric's 2nd Krajina Corps began its attack on 31 August against key ARBiH-held hill defenses on the Gravez plateau. Although the Serbs appear to have made some initial gains, 5th Corps troops drove the VRS forces back to their original positions on 6 September.

A day before, Major General Momir Talic's 1st Krajina Corps—under General Mladic's direct supervision—had begun the main VRS push, signaled with the firing of "Orkan" 262-mm rockets with cluster munitions at the Muslim-held towns of Buzim and Cazin. Attacking from Serb-held Croatia and positions in Bosnia east of Otoka, VRS and SVK troops slowly pushed Muslim forces back toward Buzim and Otoka with the support of strong artillery fire. By 9 September, Serb units on the secondary axis toward Otoka had seized a bridgehead over the Bastra River within

1 kilometer of the town. ARBiH units, however, managed to hold key hills surrounding Otoka, blocking further progress. To the north, on the main drive toward Buzim, VRS and SVK forces hit stiff resistance and advanced only 1 to 3 kilometers. By 12 September, the 5th Corps, spearheaded by the crack 505th Buzim Motorized Brigade, was ready to counterattack. Muslim recon-sabotage units were able to infiltrate VRS lines while hitting the VRS/SVK spearheads in the flank. Serb troops withdrew in near panic, and ARBiH units almost captured General Mladic. The offensive abruptly ended.

The 5th Corps again demonstrated that strong, well-organized VRS offensives could be contained by relatively well-prepared Muslim defenses. The difficult terrain and low-force density frontages around Buzim favored the 5th Corps's studied use of picked recon-sabotage units to infiltrate and disrupt VRS positions. Serb deficiencies in tactical training and junior leadership were exposed and exploited by the superior low-level tactics and motivation of Muslim units. VRS strengths in higher-level command staff skills and firepower proved of little effect in these battles.

Punch and Counterpunch: Bihac Operations, October-December 1994

By the fall of 1994, Brigadier General Atif Dudakovic's ARBiH 5th Corps was a confident, experienced, and battle-hardened force. 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. The operation was codenamed "Grmec-94," and it was to begin late that autumn.

On 25 October, almost the entire 5th Corps was unleashed against VRS 2nd Krajina Corps to the south, with only a relatively small holding force defending the enclave's other borders with the SVK. Dudakovic's forces achieved near-complete surprise, and government forces captured the Gravez barracks

and much of the long-contested Gravez plateau east of Bihac—locations from which the VRS had constantly shelled the town—on the first day.²⁹¹ As an added bonus, the always underequipped 5th Corps forces seized and distributed the contents of the barracks, further fueling their advance. The Bosnian Army continued to make major advances over the next few days, advancing along two main axes south and east of Bihac. By 27 October the Bosnian Army had taken between 100 and 150 square kilometers of territory, advancing about 10 km south toward Bosanski Petrovac and reaching right up to the edges of Bosanska Krupa to the east.²⁹² 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 attempted to consolidate its gains and allow its rudimentary logistic system to catch up with the advancing frontline forces.²⁹³

At this point, the Bosnian Serb leadership became genuinely concerned about the military situation in northwest Bosnia, and they were outraged that the United Nations watched apparently unconcerned as the Bosnian Government mounted a large-scale offensive out of the supposedly demilitarized “safe area” of Bihac. Bosnian Serb Army Chief of Staff Milovanovic demanded that the Bosnian Army withdraw to its confrontation line of 23 October and threatened that the VRS would “retaliate by attacking the area from which their attacks are launched” if they failed to do so.²⁹⁴ Bosnian Serb President Karadzic called for an all-out counteroffensive to recapture the lost territory and called for retaliation “regardless of the safe areas.”^{295 296 297}

In the last days of October the 5th Corps would reach the high water mark of its “Grmec-94” advance. To the east, the ARBiH had encircled but not captured the very sizable town of Bosanska Krupa.²⁹⁸ Intense battles raged for two days in Bosanska Krupa, and at least one ARBiH brigade forced its way into the town itself. In the end, however, the VRS held the town, and Bosanska Krupa marked the end of the offensive’s eastward advance.²⁹⁹ To the south, the Bosnian Army had captured the town of Kulen Vakuf, on the Bosnian-Croatian border fully 30 km southeast of Bihac. The 5th Corps continued to press forward even after this, although its lines had already become

dangerously overextended. Having taken almost 250 square kilometers in one week,³⁰⁰ the 5th Corps now faced the challenge of hanging on to what it had just won.

The VRS’s General Milovanovic had matched his public threats with private actions, ordering all VRS corps commands to contribute reinforcements to create three composite brigades for deployment to Bihac, where he was planning a major counteroffensive. Major General Rajko Balac, the commander of the VRS’s military training center, even led some of his cadets to the Krupa area to beef up the operation, along with troops from parts of the 1st Krajina Corps. The arrival of these forces helped blunt the 5th Corps assault on Krupa and broke the encirclement with a counterattack; 2nd Krajina Corps troops had meanwhile managed to slow the 5th Corps west of Krupa. As a result, the 5th Corps was unable to broaden the base of its operation, leaving its new holdings to the south, toward Kulen Vakuf, stretched out in a vulnerable salient.

With the 5th Corps offensive contained, General Milovanovic took direct command of the combined Serb forces and launched the VRS counteroffensive, Operation “Stit (Shield) 94” on 4 November.³⁰¹ Milovanovic’s ambitious objective was to recapture all lost territory, establish the “border” of Republika Srpska at the Una River, and eliminate the 5th Corps as a military threat. In addition, the Serbs clearly hoped to establish Fikret Abdic as a Muslim puppet leader over the region. VRS forces had already retaken Kulen Vakuf on 1 November, three days before the formal start of the operation, and Serb troops quickly attacked back up the main Bihac-Petrovac road, down which 5th Corps had raced in October. In addition, Balac’s troops—despite the general’s death in action the day the counteroffensive began—assaulted 5th Corps forces west of Krupa, on the Gravez plateau.

By 8-9 November, VRS troops, organized into four tactical groups, had closed to within 10 kilometers of Bihac city, having driven 5th Corps forces down the Bihac-Petrovac road and along the Croatian border. The first significant engagement of Krajina Serb

Army (SVK) units in the battle began as SVK 15th Lika Corps and VRS 2nd Krajina Corps formations assaulted 5th Corps and HVO positions southwest of Bihac city for limited gains, while to the east VRS forces pushed 5th Corps units back 4 kilometers northwest of Krupa. On 8 November, a Krajina Serb “Orao” fighter-bomber from Udbina Air Base in the RSK violated NATO’s “no-fly zone” around Bihac city and destroyed an ammunition storage depot in Bihac with Maverick missiles.

While VRS troops were closing in on Bihac city and the Grabež plateau, the SVK, with assistance from Belgrade, was mobilizing and reorganizing the remnants of Fikret Abdic's “People's Defense” forces of the APWB. On 16 November, this new army attacked across the border toward Velika Kladusa. Abdic's reconstructed force amounted to some 4,000 to 5,000 troops, bolstered by about 2,500 SVK troops in two tactical groups and some 500 Yugoslav Army and Serbian RDB/MUP special operations troops, under the command of SVK Major General Mile Novakovic and Serbian RDB Colonel “Raja” Bozovic. The few 5th Corps formations put up a stiff defense as the Serb/Abdic forces lapped around both ARBiH flanks on the north and south sides of Velika Kladusa in an attempt to pinch it off.

Further south, three tactical groups from the SVK 15th Lika Corps formations, reinforced with SVK units from Eastern and Western Slavonia and the Knin area, attacked along three axes, one toward Cazin and two toward Bihac. In support of this drive, the Serbs launched another airstrike on 18 November, narrowly missing 5th Corps headquarters in Bihac city with napalm and cluster bombs. The attack toward Cazin, although it penetrated 2 to 3 kilometers, quickly stalled. Around Bihac, however, the joint 15th Lika and 2nd Krajina Corps's renewed assault against the defenses southwest of the city quickly crushed HVO forces on 20 November, overrunning several Croat villages and advancing into the UN “safe area” around Bihac city. The VRS launched a new attack at Bosanska Krupa on 20 November, crossing the Una River north of the town in a move to outflank ARBiH defenses. That same day, General Milovanovic was able to announce that the VRS had retaken all of the territory it had lost to the Muslims' October offensive.

The Serbs now were on intent on going beyond the previous frontline and knocking out the 5th Corps.

With joint VRS/SVK forces pushing toward the city and SVK-VRS-Abdic units maintaining their pressure on Grabež at Velika Kladusa and around Krupa, the 5th Corps defenses were stretched to the limit and nearing the breaking point. A NATO airstrike against Udbina on 21 November to punish the Serbs for their airstrikes against Bihac had no effect on the Serb advance, nor did Croatia's 1 December warning that it might intervene militarily if Bihac was about to fall.³⁰² On 23-24 November, SVK/VRS units pressing the 5th Corps along the southwestern approaches to Bihac overran the key Debeljaca hill, looking directly down on the city. Over the next week, Serb troops edged closer to the city through its outlying villages in heavy fighting. The battle for the city's water treatment plant was particularly intense, and it appears to have fallen only on 7-8 December. Nevertheless, although the Serbs certainly fought to dominate the approaches to Bihac, it does not appear that they intended to actually capture the city, and in the event they did not despite their substantial gains. General Milovanovic in a post-war interview makes a good case that the VRS had no intention of physically occupying the city.

Whether or not General Milovanovic was ordered by the RS Supreme Command not to enter the city, the failure or inability of the VRS/SVK to capture Bihac seemed to signal that the Serbs were unable to defeat the 5th Corps, and the strong 5th Corps defense of Grabež, Krupa, and the western approaches to the enclave take on more significance. Dudakovic's ability to hold and defend these areas in late November meant that the VRS/SVK operation was unable to reach the center of the enclave at Cazin and dismantle the 5th Corps, marking a partial but significant failure of Operation “Stit 94.”

While battles continued in December in the southwest, as well as at Grabež and Krupa, the main focus of the fighting shifted to Velika Kladusa. During the first two weeks of December, SVK/APWB forces led by the VJ/Serbian special operations troops hammered 5th

Corps positions and inched forward against a tenacious defense. The Serb commanders' objective remained to force the ARBiH from the town with a pincer movement rather than a frontal assault. On 15-16 December the joint Serb/APWB units seized key high ground overlooking the main 5th Corps supply line into the town. This forced the remaining ARBiH troops to withdraw to avoid being cut off and annihilated; by 17 December the town was under Serb/APWB control. Although battles were to continue throughout the enclave for over a week—until the implementation of the nationwide cease-fire negotiated by former US President Jimmy Carter—the fall of Velika Kladusa was the last major action of the campaign.

The operations at Bihac during late 1994 were some of the most operationally and tactically interesting actions of the year, highlighting the strengths and weaknesses of both sides. The Bosnian Army's lightning offensive in October clearly showed the ARBiH's superiority at the tactical level, particularly in its use of elite recon-sabotage units and infiltration tactics. The complete collapse of the VRS 2nd Krajina Corps in this offensive showed the lack of discipline, training, and cohesion—despite clear recognition at senior levels of the VRS—that infected the lower levels of the Army. The VRS counteroffensive (together with the SVK) also showed the Serb forces' continued resiliency when it threw back 5th Corps forces through the VRS's combination of unparalleled command and staff work and heavy firepower. Finally, Dudakovic's ability to hold his ground at the gates of Bihac and Velika Kladusa, despite the VRS/SVK's overwhelming strength, illustrated the ARBiH's greatest asset throughout the war—its morale.

Operation "Zima 94": Croatia Reenters the War, November-December 1994*

It was not only the Western nations that vigorously protested the VRS move toward Bihac. The Croatian Government had important strategic reasons for wanting to ensure that the enclave was not occupied by

VRS/SVK/APWB forces. Bihac's fall would have allowed the SVK and VRS to consolidate their position in western Bosnia, virtually integrating the RS and RSK, which Croatia obviously found politically unacceptable. More important, however, it would have made any future Croatian Army assault on the RSK that much more difficult without the 5th Corps to threaten the SVK rear. Thus it was that Zagreb issued its first warnings to the Serbs on 10 and 14 November that it was considering intervening in the event that Bihac seemed on the verge of falling. US diplomatic pressure on Zagreb not to widen the war persuaded the Croatians to hold back on these threats, but on 29 November the Croatian Army, together with the HVO, initiated Operation "Zima (Winter) 94" in the Livno Valley, hitting a long quiet 2nd Krajina Corps sector. This operation was designed both to relieve pressure on Bihac in the near term and to position HV forces for a later advance on the RSK capital of Knin. Two days later, on 1 December, Croatian Defense Minister Susak again warned that the Croatians would intervene directly against the RSK if necessary: "If Croatia should estimate that Bihac will fall, Croatia will intervene before that happens."³⁰³ Neither the initiation of "Zima 94" nor the Croatian threats seemed to have any effect on the continued advance of the VRS/SVK forces.

Nominally under the control of HVO Major General Tihomir Blaskic and the HVO Main Staff, "Zima 94" employed as many as 3,000 to 4,000 HV troops of the "Livno" Operational Group for the main attack force, with more in reserve.³⁰⁴ The HVO-led "Kupres" Operational Group contributed another 2,000 to 3,000 troops for supporting attacks. They faced up to 3,500 VRS 2nd Krajina Corps troops spread along some 55 kilometers of front.

The assault began on 29 November in bitterly cold weather and heavy snow, when Major General Ante Gotovina's HV troops began infiltrating VRS positions in the Dinara Mountains along the Croatian-Bosnian border. In more than a week of fighting, HV/HVO troops attacking along the Livno Valley and the

* For a more detailed account, see Annex 62.

Chapter 64 Conclusion^{*}

Dinara mountains penetrated some 10 to 12 kilometers into VRS positions. On the far right, southeast of Glamoc, however, HVO units attacking alone were unable to gain any significant ground against a stubborn VRS defense. Over the next two weeks, as the HV “Livno” Operational Group kept up the pressure, VRS resistance continued to crumble, despite some reinforcements from neighboring SVK units across the border. The VRS managed only a few local counterattacks and, with all hope gone of holding positions in the middle section of the Livno Valley at manageable costs, by 24 December the 2nd Krajina Corps had pulled back to more defensible positions along the northern rim of the valley. Operation “Zima 94” was over.

The operation had two primary strategic objectives. The first was to relieve pressure on the Bosnian Army 5th Corps; the second was to seize VRS positions that would eventually allow HV forces to attack the Krajina Serb capital of Knin and the southern half of the RSK. The HV/HVO attack failed to achieve its first goal of diverting the VRS, although this was not the fault of the Croats, but rather represented a choice made by the VRS Main Staff. Mladic and Milovanovic clearly chose to continue their counteroffensive at Bihać rather than shift reserves to block the HV/HVO operation. They could not do both, and so the Croats were able to wear down the weak VRS defenses along the Livno-Glamoc front. By default, the VRS decision not to transfer significant forces to the sector gave the Croatians their secondary objective while the 5th Corps’s successful stand against the VRS at Bihać gave the Croatians all that they had desired. Bihać had survived, and the Croatians had gained their first steppingstone to Knin.

Operation “Zima 94” also gave observers their first chance since 1993 to see how the HV conducted a relatively large offensive operation. The results were impressive. In a month of fighting the HV was able to advance over 20 kilometers and seize some 200 square kilometers of territory. HV forces effectively integrated armor, infantry, and artillery into a combined arms force that was able to defeat the opposing VRS units, despite exceptionally difficult terrain and bad weather. Nevertheless, this drive—although rapid by Bosnia’s World War I standards—was significantly slower than what the HV would accomplish during the summer and fall of 1995.

Although it may not have been evident at the time, 1994 was to prove a turning point in the war. At the beginning of the year the VRS had the initiative, continuing offensives from late in 1993 and pushing the ARBiH to the brink of defeat at Gorazde in April. By the end of the year, however, the VRS was clearly on the strategic defensive, barely halting some ARBiH and HVO offensives, conceding key towns for the first time in the war, and facing a hemorrhaging loss of territory as the combined HV-HVO offensive drove inexorably up the Livno Valley.

The settlement of the Croat-Muslim war was crucial to the turning of the military tide against the Serbs. As long as their Croat and Muslim opponents were killing each other off, they did not have to do anything at all to retain control over almost three-quarters of Bosnia. Once the Croat-Muslim peace was brokered, the VRS had to actively defend itself against a series of increasingly powerful and sophisticated offensives—and with less and less success. The Bosnian Army’s spring offensives were stopped cold at Mt. Vlasic, Mt. Stolice, Donji Vakuf, and Tesanj-Teslic. Repeated attacks against these same locations were now wearing away the VRS, even if it was not conceding the territory. The Bosnian Serbs were winning the battles and losing the war.

By October the VRS was not even winning all the battles. The ARBiH 5th Corps’ October attack south of Bihać caught the 2nd Krajina Corps off guard, and the VRS had to scramble to reinforce collapsing units, restore the defense lines, and recapture the lost ground. By November the VRS had lost Kupres—the first major Serb-held town surrendered during the war—and was losing territory southwest of Tesanj, southeast of Konjic, and in the Livno-Glamoc valley. These losses were not rapid or especially serious as individual cases. Cumulatively, however, they led to the irrefutable conclusion that the VRS could not sustain its war indefinitely and that its losses of troops and territory were almost sure to increase.

^{*} See Annex 63: UNPROFOR in 1994: Towards Escalation or Evacuation? for a summary of UN activities.

Endnotes, Section V

¹ These were (1) the President of Slovenia, (2) the President of Croatia, (3) the President of the self-proclaimed "Republic of Krajina," (4) the President of the Republic of Bosnia, (5) the President of the Croat-Muslim Bosnian Federation, (6) the President of the self-proclaimed "Croatian Republic of Herzeg-Bosna," (7) the President of the self-proclaimed Republika Srpska, (8) the President of the self-proclaimed "Autonomous Province of Western Bosnia," (9) the President of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro), (10) the President of the Republic of Serbia, (11) the President of the Republic of Montenegro, and (12) the President of Macedonia. The count does not include Ibrahim Rugova, the "President" of the outlawed Kosovar Albanian "shadow government" in Serbia.

² See the 1992 section, "Mladic's Own: The Bosnian Serb Army," for an overview of the VRS-SDS conflict. See also Milovan Milutinovic, "Wisdom and Caution," *Srpska Vojska* 22 March 1996, pp. 10-14, an interview with Lieutenant Colonel General Milan Gvero, VRS Assistant Commander for Morale, Religious, and Legal Affairs, in which Gvero discusses in detail the problems that the VRS had with the SDS throughout the war.

³ As in 1993, VJ troops—other than individual officers and NCOs serving as cadre in VRS formations—consisted almost exclusively of units drawn from the VJ Corps of Special Units, primarily from the 63rd Airborne and 72nd Special Brigades. RDB/MUP troops were drawn from "Frenki" Simatovic's "Red Beret" special operations unit, regional MUP special police elements, and the MUP-controlled Serbian Volunteer Guard under Arkan. These Yugoslav/Serbian troops were primarily involved in the Bihać counteroffensive in November-December 1994.

⁴ The Krajina Serb Army (*Srpska Vojska Krajina*) was the little brother of the VRS and was bound to the VRS through their former JNA ties. The two armies often operated as one force in the Bihać area, with integrated commands and other links. Both armies received substantial financial and logistic support from the Yugoslav Army (VJ), as well as VJ officer and NCO cadres. The "People's Defense" of Fikret Abdic's Autonomous Province of Western Bosnia was essentially a 5,000-man puppet army run by the SVK. Abdic's reliance on the Serbs became even greater after his forces were evicted from the Velika Kladusa in August 1994. When his rearmed and reorganized troops were sent back into Bihać in November 1994, an operational group headed by a Serbian RDB special police commander and a senior SVK officer directly commanded the force, superimposing Serbian authority over the nominal Muslim commanders.

⁵ A variant of these tactics often demonstrated on Mount Vlasic, near Travnik, and also during the summer 1994 Ozren offensive, was for a VRS frontline unit to withdraw to lure ARBiH infantry into an artillery killing zone pinned in by mines. After the Muslim units were decimated, the Serbs would walk back in and take over their old positions.

⁶ Halilovic, Sefer, *Lukava Strategija* ("Clever Strategy"), chapter 13.

⁷ Reuters, "Change in War Aims. Generals Breed Fear in Bosnia" by Kurt Schork, 16 December 1993.

⁸ At its narrowest point, the Vitez enclave was less than 2 kilometers wide—narrow enough to see across.

⁹ Reuters, "Moslem Offensive in Central Bosnia Clouds Peace Talks," Nicole Courtney, 9 January 1994.

¹⁰ Reuters, "Moslems Battle Outnumbered Croats in Central Bosnia," by Dan de Luce, 10 January 1994.

¹¹ Reuters, "Moslems Press Offensive Against Croats, Snub Peace Talk" by Dan de Luce, 11 January 1994.

¹² Reuters, "U.N. Says Jets Violate No-Fly Zone in Bosnia" by Samir Koric, 14 January 1994.

¹³ Zagreb Radio, 21 January 1994. FBIS London LD2101233794, 212337Z January 1994.

¹⁴ Zagreb Radio, 18 February 1994. FBIS London LD1802230194, 182301Z February 1994.

¹⁵ The HVO's 111th Home Defense Regiment in the Zepce enclave also obstructed UN aid convoys into besieged Maglaj at this time.

¹⁶ Specifically, Boutros-Ghali's letter charged that the Croatian Army had a total of 3,000 to 5,000 troops from the 1st, 2nd, 5th, and 7th HV Guards Brigades; the 114th and 116th Brigades; and military police elements.

¹⁷ Reuters, "UN Chief Lists Croatian Military Units in Bosnia" by Evelyn Leopold, 2 February 1994.

¹⁸ Reuters, "Italy Tells Croatia it Faces Possible Sanctions" by Paul Holmes, 3 February 1994.

¹⁹ Reuters, "Bosnia, Croatia Request UN Border Monitors" 10 February 1994.

²⁰ Sarajevo Radio, 20 February 1994. FBIS London LD2002194394, 201943Z February 1994.

²¹ Zagreb Radio, 23 February 1994. FBIS London LD2302220794, 232207Z February 1994.

²² Reuters, "Moslems, Croats, British Forces Wary of New Bosnian Truce" by Kurt Schork, 24 February 1994.

²³ Reuters, "189 Moslem, Croat Prisoners Freed in Bosnia," 1 March 1994.

²⁴ Zagreb Radio, 12 March 1994. FBIS London LD1203125094, 121250Z March 1994.

²⁵ Reuters, "Bosnia Accord Paves Way For IMF Help To Croatia" by Kolumbina Bencevic, 20 March 1994.

²⁶ Paris AFP, 4 March 1994. FBIS Vienna AU0403135994, 041359Z March 1994.

²⁷ Paris AFP, 5 March 1994. FBIS Vienna AU0503193294, 051932Z March 1994.

²⁸ Paris AFP, 7 March 1994. FBIS Vienna AU0703120294, 071202Z March 1994.

²⁹ Zagreb Hina, 7 March 1994. FBIS London LD0703152594, 071525Z March 1994.

³⁰ Paris AFP, 8 March 1994. FBIS Vienna AU0803184394, 081843Z March 1994.

³¹ There is no evidence to suggest that Beslagic—a strong believer in multiethnicity and a political independent—would have knuckled under to Serb demands. Beslagic was a longtime foe of Serb nationalism as well as of Muslim nationalism.

³² In a late January 1994 interview Bosnian Serb vice president Nikola Koljevic—a member of the RS Supreme Command—stated that the objective of the Olovo operations was to cut links between Tuzla and Sarajevo. Zeljko Garmaz, "Croatia Could Return Krajina

If the Serbs Are Given Considerable Autonomy," *Zagreb Globus* 28 January 1994, pp. 5-7, from an interview with Vojislav Seselj and Nikola Koljevic. Essentially, Koljevic meant not just Sarajevo but links to all of central Bosnia (that is, Zenica). See also Dragan Cicic, "When the Spring Comes," Belgrade *Nin* 21 January 1994, pp. 25-26.

³³ The boundaries of two VRS corps, the Sarajevo-Romanija and the Drina Corps, ran just south of Olovo. As a result, it is unclear which corps was in overall command of the operation; it may in fact have been directly led by the Main Staff. There was normally one brigade—2nd Romanija Motorized Brigade/Drina Corps—plus elements of the 1st Ilijas Infantry Brigade/Sarajevo-Romanija Corps deployed opposite the Olovo area. These formations appear to have been reinforced with at least one tactical group from 1st Krajina Corps (apparently up to a battalion of the 11th Mrkonjic Light Infantry Brigade, plus probably a battalion of the 6th Sanske Infantry and 43rd Prijedor Motorized Brigades), plus major elements of the 65th Protection Motorized Regiment, and up to a battalion from 1st Guards Motorized Brigade. The Sarajevo-Romanija Corps appears to have siphoned assault units from its line brigades, and the Drina Corps also sent composite units from several of its brigades to reinforce the area. The estimated 10,000 troops involved almost certainly were not all used in a single attack but rotated into the line when necessary. There were probably no more than 2,000 to 3,000 infantry attacking during any given assault.

³⁴ The frontline in the Olovo sector ran from Olovske Luke, some 3 kilometers east of town to near the HVO-held Dastansko pocket (the remnants of the Vares force), a front of about 35 kilometers. Olovo town was about 7 kilometers north of the forward trenches directly to the south, protected by a line of hills over 1,000 meters. An irregular feature of the front was the narrow VRS-held Brzule salient that jutted north from the Nisici plateau to Dastansko.

³⁵ The following narrative of the battle is based primarily on a detailed 1/50,000 scale map analysis of contemporary Sarajevo Radio reports during the VRS offensive, supplemented with checks in AFP and Reuters reporting, particularly some public UN descriptions of the battles. Only Sarajevo Radio had details on the tactical information required for this analysis:

The VRS assault on 8 November began with an attack along two axes designed to push around the back and sides of Olovo, rather than driving straight toward the town from the south. On the left-hand axis, VRS troops made initial gains in the Brzule salient on 8-11 November, penetrating to a depth of 1 to 2 kilometers and overrunning several Muslim-populated villages, whose people fled. Attempts to exploit this success failed because of the 126th Mountain Brigade's staunch defense of the important Zvijezda mountain mass, which blocked the VRS from pushing behind Olovo. On the right, Serb troops advanced toward Olovske Luke from the east, reaching the village's outskirts, but failed to break through the ARBiH defenses of the 1st Olovo Mountain Brigade.

Two weeks after the first attack the VRS appears to have shifted its focus to a frontal assault directly toward Olovo from the south, along a road into town along the line of Krusevo-Bakcici-Kremenjaca (Hill 1113). Again, VRS attacks bogged down in the ARBiH defenses, now reinforced with additional troops from 2nd, 3rd, and 6th Corps. Fighting stretched into late December, when the operation paused.

The successful Bosnian Army defenders were a composite force that had reinforced the brigades that normally held sectors in the area. The Vares area was the corps boundary between the ARBiH 2nd Corps and 6th Corps, with brigades from the 3rd Operational Group/2nd Corps (1st Olovo Mountain) and the Visoko Operational Group/6th Corps (126th Mountain) normally holding the line. The 2nd

Corps sent the bulk of the reinforcements, shifting local reserves from other brigades in the 3rd Operational Group (Kladanj), while drawing a tactical group from the 2nd and 5th Operational Groups (about a battalion from each brigade in the groups; brigades involved included the 1st and 2nd Tuzla, the 109th Doboj, 111th Gracanica, 117th Lukavac), while the 3rd Corps also appears to have sent a tactical group. The 6th Corps shifted local reserves from the Visoko OG's other brigades. Total ARBiH troops probably numbered up to 12,000 men. See the Bosnian Army newspaper/journal, *Prva Linija* 14 February 1994.

³⁶ The Herzegovina Corps appears to have organized a tactical group—referred to in the Serb press as the "Combined Brigade" of the Herzegovina Corps—to reinforce the VRS offensive, probably taking over from tactical groups drawn from other corps that had been in the line for some time. Belgrade Tanjug 13 January 1994. The tactical group appears to have consisted of composite battalions drawn from at least the 15th Herzegovina Infantry and 18th Herzegovina Light Infantry Brigades, plus probably the 8th Herzegovina Motorized Brigade. In addition to the Herzegovinian troops, it appears that the Yugoslav Army (VJ) transferred elements of the elite 63rd Airborne Brigade—which had been fighting near Teocak—to help spearhead the attack. See Dragan Cicic, "When the Spring Comes," Belgrade *Nin* 21 January 1994, pp. 25-26, for information from VRS sources on the presence of VJ troops at Olovo.

³⁷ This narrative is again based primarily on a 1/50,000 scale map analysis of contemporary press reporting, although this time including additional information from Serb sources—Belgrade Tanjug and Belgrade Radio. The Reuters report from 15 January providing UN descriptions of the battle area was also useful:

The new VRS assault began on 12 January, another push straight up the middle toward Olovo along the same line where the VRS had failed in late November-December. This time, however, the Herzegovina Corps troops broke through the ARBiH line, seizing "three rows of bunkers covered with earth" (Belgrade Tanjug 13 January 1994), and capturing the village of Krusevo on the right flank. The VRS troops continued to attack and by 15 January claimed to have taken the village of Prgosevo, 3 kilometers south of Olovo. The VRS had now advanced about 4 kilometers into the ARBiH defenses and threatened to break through the Muslim lines and capture the town.

ARBiH reinforcements from the 1st (taking over from 6th), 2nd, and 3rd Corps were, however, rushing to the scene. In heavy fighting over the next five days, the Muslim troops were able to halt the Serb attack and retake Prgosevo, although the VRS held on to Krusevo. The VRS assault then petered out.

³⁸ Muslim sources refer to this attack as Operation "Seminar 93," although the actual name was Operation "Kladanj 93." For example, see Almasa Hadzic, "The People of Krajina and the Drina Valley Share the Same Crust of Bread!" *Travnik Bosnjak* 2 January 1996, pp. 10, 23.

³⁹ It appears that Major General Novica Simic, the commander of the East Bosnian Corps, was in overall command of the operation. VRS forces in the area comprised the 1st and 2nd Majevica Light Infantry Brigades/Tactical Group "Majevica" from the East Bosnian Corps, which were the normal sector-holding brigades along the northwest side of the salient, probably reinforced with the elite 1st Bijeljina Light Infantry Brigade "Panthers." The Drina Corps probably reinforced the 1st Zvornik Infantry Brigade, which normally held the frontline along the southeast with the brigade's "Drina Wolves" assault detachment. The Bijeljina Special Police Detachment also probably took part. The total force probably numbered about 5,000 troops.

⁴⁰ The narrative is again based almost exclusively on an analysis of Sarajevo Radio reporting covering the period of the offensive. See also Almasa Hadzic, "The People of Krajina and the Drina Valley Share the Same Crust of Bread!" *Travnik Bosnjak* 2 January 1996, pp. 10, 23, an article describing a tour of the area by General Dudakovic after the war; and Rifet Haskovic, "Crucial Test," *Travnik Bosnjak* 21 November 1995, pp. 2-3, an interview with ARBiH officer Senahid Hodzic, who served in the 206th Zvornik Brigade at the time. Both articles have short descriptions of some elements of the battle:

The Serb assault began on 20 November, preceded apparently by SA-2 surface-to-air missiles fired at the town of Teocak in surface-to-surface role. The East Bosnian Corps forces attacked from the direction of Priboj toward the village of Obrsine along the southwest side of the Snijeznica dam and reservoir (which supported the Ugljevik power plant). The Drina Corps troops advanced along a 8-kilometer frontline between the village of Laze and the 700-meter Zecija Kosa hill. A secondary attack pushed toward Tursanovo Brdo and the village of Stari Teocak itself. The Muslim defense was stubborn, and the VRS attack stretched into December. At some point, apparently in December, the VRS troops captured the important Visoka Glavica hill, between Laze and Zecija Kosa. If the Drina Corps units had retained possession of the hill and continued the advance, they would soon have linked up to the East Bosnian Corps forces. Elements of the 1st Teocak and 206th Zvornik Mountain Brigades, however, were able to recapture the position. The battle ended on about 24 December with the ARBiH still in control of its main defenses.

Bosnian Army order of battle comprised elements of the 4th Operational Group/2nd Corps, primarily the 1st Teocak Mountain Brigade "Hajrudin Mesic" and the 206th Zvornik Mountain Brigade. These brigades may have been reinforced with elements of the "Black Wolves" Independent Sabotage Battalion and the "Zivinice Wasps" Countersabotage Company. The force probably numbered about 4,000 troops.

⁴¹ The VRS/HVO forces operating southwest of Maglaj consisted of the following units: most of the 27th Derventa Motorized Brigade, elements of the 2nd Armored Brigade, the 4th Battalion/43rd Prijedor Motorized Brigade, and probably two to three battalions from various VRS light infantry brigades, such as the 1st Prnjavor Light Infantry or 1st Teslic Infantry Brigades. The VRS "Ozren" Tactical Group 6, under Major Milovan Stankovic, had at least one Ozren light infantry brigade, probably the 3rd Ozren, directly opposite Maglaj town on the east bank of the Bosna River, and likely reinforced it with assault elements from the other three Ozren brigades. The VRS forces were all under the command of "Doboj" Operational Group 9, headed by Colonel Arsic. HVO Colonel Ivo Lozancic had two to three battalions of the 111th Zepce Brigade, plus the "professional" Andrija Tadic Battalion arrayed against Maglaj. The total number of troops probably was about 4,000 to 5,000 Serb troops and 1,000 to 2,000 Croat troops. Some of these forces, however, plus another 1,000 to 2,000 HVO personnel, may have faced ARBiH troops around Zepce and Zavidovici to the south.

ARBiH forces comprised the 7th (South) Operational Group/2nd Corps, but attached to 3rd Corps, because of the awkward distance between it and the main 2nd Corps forces around Tuzla. Two brigades, the 201st Maglaj and the 204th Teslic Mountain Brigades, comprised the bulk of the forces facing the attack along the south side of the enclave with about 4,500 troops. Three additional ARBiH brigades, plus an HVO brigade, defended the rest of the enclave to the north (see endnote 44).

⁴² A good description can be found in a 24 February 1994 Sarajevo radio report, which was probably based on information provided by the 7th Operational Group staff or the ARBiH General Staff:

According to reliable assessments, these attacks will take the following course: the enemy will again try to cut the Doboj-Teslic route and occupy the valley of the Usora River. There it will launch a massive offensive on the links of the 110th Glorious HVO Usora Brigade and other units . . . with renewed calls for a Croatian betrayal . . . besieging Tesanj by capturing the dominant hills around it and gradually destroying it. The aggressor's next step will be to cut off the Maglaj-Tesanj route and thus close the circle around Maglaj, which is at the moment under heavy attack. All this would create the conditions for the complete occupation of the Tesanj and Maglaj territories.

⁴³ This account is based on analysis of Sarajevo, Zagreb, and Belgrade Radio reporting covering 27 November-28 December 1993:

The main fighting took place along a line of hills running from east of Teslic to south of Maglaj and ranging from 300 to 600 meters in height. The main Maglaj-Tesanj road runs along this hill line. HVO troops claimed to have taken the important Bandera hill overlooking the road, and thus cutting it, on 5 December. Most of the battles during the rest of the month involved VRS/HVO and ARBiH troops attacking and counterattacking in contention for control over this hill and the others along the route. For all practical purposes the VRS and HVO appear to have severed the road but were unable to make any additional progress toward encircling Maglaj itself. Some time around mid-December, it appears that Stankovic's "Ozren" Tactical Group forces also undertook supporting attacks against ARBiH positions along the east bank of the Bosna River near Maglaj town.

⁴⁴ The "Doboj" Operational Group had the veteran 16th Krajina Motorized Brigade northeast of Teslic making the main thrust. It was supported on its left and right by the 1st Krnjin Light Infantry Brigade and the 1st Teslic Infantry Brigade respectively. The 4th Battalion/43rd Prijedor Motorized Brigade also appears to have been involved in this sector. The 1st Gradiska Light Infantry Brigade later reinforced the 16th Krajina. The total attack force had an estimated 4,000 to 5,000 troops. The forces around Maglaj town to the south and Ozren to the east remained about as described above. In addition, elements of the VRS light infantry brigades defending Doboj town—1st Doboj, 2nd and 4th Banja Luka—and elements of the 2nd Armored Brigade made supporting attacks south of the town.

The ARBiH 7th Operational Group's 110th HVO Usora and 207th Usora Mountain Brigade—some 5,000 troops—took the brunt of the attack, supported by the 202nd Tesanj Mountain Brigade. The 203rd Doboj-Bosna Motorized Brigade defended the area directly south of Doboj town. The other ARBiH forces remained as described above.

⁴⁵ This narrative is based on analysis of Zagreb and Sarajevo Radio reporting covering 17 January to 20 March 1994:

Despite the size and experience of the VRS force, they made little headway against the Usora defenders. The main effort by 16th Krajina Motorized over the nearly two months of the operation came against a 10-kilometer front along the northwest corner of the enclave between the Usora River and the Bandera hill [different feature] toward the town of Jelah. The attack opened on 17 January, with the apparent firing of a FROG-7 [Luna-M] rocket at Tesanj. Attacks over the next week made no dent in the ARBiH line, either in the main sector or around Maglaj town.

On 21 January the 7th OG attacked out of Maglaj, penetrating HVO defenses and advancing about 2 kilometers on a 5-kilometer front and capturing several villages. This success does not appear to have had a major effect on the continuation of the offensive. At the beginning of February, the VRS launched a supporting attack from Doboj, crossing the Usora River toward Ularice. It gained little ground. In mid-February, the main attack also was renewed but failed to break the HVO-ARBiH line. An even stronger attack at the end of the month likewise failed. Nevertheless, the VRS continued the operation into March and called it off only after the Muslim-Croat Federation agreement disrupted the encirclement of the enclave on 19 March.

⁴⁶ HVO Colonel Ivo Lozanic indicated on 19 March that he had ordered all VRS forces withdrawn to Teslic. Zagreb Radio 19 March 1994.

⁴⁷ The VRS normally manned the frontline with three of its light infantry brigades, the 15th Bihać holding positions directly south/southeast of Bihać city, and the frontline to the northeast along the Grabež plateau rotating between three light infantry brigades, the 1st Drvar, 3rd Petrovac, and 17th Ključ. Interestingly, the forces required to hold the Grabež had continued to grow since 1992, when just the 15th Bihać and the neighboring 11th Krupa manned the Bihać sector. By early 1993 the VRS had to commit two additional brigades to holding it, and after the February 1994 operation all three of the brigades—1st Drvar, 3rd Petrovac, and 17th Ključ—had to hold the front, leaving 2nd Krajina Corps with few corps reserves. Krajina Serb Army (SVK) forces appear to have held positions southwest/west of town in the Plješevica area. For the operation against Bihać, the VRS committed all four of the light infantry brigades listed above, reinforced by one battalion of the 6th Sanski Infantry Brigade/1st Krajina Corps and MUP special police detachments from Banja Luka and Prijedor. In addition, the 2nd Krajina Corps may have sent elements of the 5th Glamoc Light Infantry Brigade to the front in mid-February. An armor battalion and major elements of the 2nd Mixed Artillery Regiment provided fire support. The total force probably numbered about 5,000 troops.

The Bosnian Army 5th Corps defended the Grabež plateau with a mixture of battalions from several different brigades, including the 501st and 502nd Bihać Mountain Brigades, the 503rd Cazin Mountain Brigade, and the 1st Bosnian (later 510th) Liberation Brigade. In addition, the battalion-sized HVO 101st Bihać Brigade held positions to the south/southwest of town. The total force probably numbered 4,000 to 5,000 troops.

⁴⁸ This following narrative is based primarily on an analysis of Sarajevo Radio and Belgrade Tanjug reporting:

The VRS attacked on 6 February, quickly penetrating the 5th Corps line some 7 to 8 kilometers northeast of Bihać city, capturing Hasin Vrh and Barakovac positions. After taking these, the 2nd Krajina Corps then hoped to break out into the plain along the Una around Bihać city, taking the city from behind and seizing the rail line and road to the north, through Mrkonjić Lug, and the railyards east of Bihać city. The 5th Corps, however, managed to block the determined VRS advance and then drove the Serbs back, apparently retaking the two important hills between 10 and 15 February. A week later, on 21 February, the VRS appears to have broken through the ARBiH positions again. Another week of fighting, however, enabled the 5th Corps to retake nearly all of the lost ground.

⁴⁹ 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 120-mm 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 leaders of both sides publicly traded accusations of responsibility. It seems unlikely to this

analyst that a Bosnian Army mortar crew would have been able to intentionally hit a difficult target such as the market—wedged between several buildings—with 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. In an excerpt of this analysis, Silber and Little note,

The common sense observation that if you fire around 500,000 mortar, artillery, and tank rounds into a small city over 22 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.

⁵⁰ 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.

⁵¹ 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.

⁵² The Serbs demanded on 12 February that the Bosnian Army withdraw its infantry from the frontlines in exchange for a Serb heavy weapons withdrawal.

⁵³ Silber and Little note that the UN's definition of "control" quickly slid from UN personnel physically in possession of the weapons to essentially UN observation of them as the UN desperately attempted to obtain compliance and avoid making good on its airstrike threats. In addition, the Serbs were allowed to choose the "weapon control points," many of which were essentially broad field-deployed areas where mortars and artillery pieces were stationed to maintain the siege. Silber and Little, pp. 316-317.

⁵⁴ Silber and Little, p. 318.

⁵⁵ Claims made at the time 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 were greatly exaggerated. Certainly, the VRS could use the armor and artillery units pulled out in other sectors, but, given their importance to the defense of Serb-held Sarajevo should the fighting resume, they had to stay close to home. They were in fact used primarily for operations near the city, such as Gorazde and the Nisici plateau, although the VRS almost certainly could have carried out the Gorazde operation without this equipment.

⁵⁶ Sarajevo Radio, 16 March 1994. FBIS Vienna AU1603104794, 161047Z March 1994.

⁵⁷ Reuters, "On Some Bosnian Fronts, No Truce, No Peace" by Laura Pittner, 18 March 1994.

⁵⁸ The VRS 19th Infantry Brigade from Donji Vakuf (which the Serbs renamed "Srbobran") bore the brunt of the attack, supported by the 11th Mrkonjić and 1st Sipovo Light Infantry Brigades. Colonel Jovo Blazanovic commanded the 30th Infantry Division. Sarajevo Radio, 17 March 1994. FBIS Vienna AU1703102094, 171020Z March 1994.

⁵⁹ Belgrade Tanjug, 19 March 1994. FBIS London LD1903214994, 192149Z March 1994.

⁶⁰ Belgrade Tanjug, 21 March 1994. FBIS London LD2103202894, 212028Z March 1994.

- ⁶¹ Belgrade Tanjug, 21 March 1994. FBIS London LD2103152194, 211521Z March 1994.
- ⁶² Belgrade Tanjug, 21 March 1994. FBIS London LD2103152694, 211526Z March 1994.
- ⁶³ Belgrade Tanjug, 29 March 1994. FBIS London LD2903134594, 291345Z March 1994.
- ⁶⁴ Reuters, "Moslems Poised for Bosnian Offensive, UN Says" by Laura Pitter, 31 March 1994.
- ⁶⁵ The VRS 22nd Infantry Brigade defended the frontline on Vlasic. Colonel Janko Trivic commanded the "Vlasic" OG. Sarajevo Radio, 28 April 1994. FBIS Vienna AU2804124394, 281243Z April 1994.
- ⁶⁶ Belgrade Tanjug, 29 April 1994. FBIS London LD2904125894, 291258Z April 1994.
- ⁶⁷ Reuters, "Moslems Seized Land While World Watched Gorazde—UN" by Davor Huic, 6 May 1994.
- ⁶⁸ Sarajevo Radio, 23 March 1994. FBIS Vienna AU2303202594, 232025Z March 1994.
- ⁶⁹ Sarajevo Radio, 25 March 1994. FBIS Vienna AU2503180394, 251803Z March 1994.
- ⁷⁰ The attacks probably hit the 1st Teslic Infantry and 2nd Teslic Light Infantry Brigades, together with the reinforcing 16th Krajina Motorized Brigade.
- ⁷¹ See statements from President Karadzic and General Mladic on 7 April. Mladic refused to enter into any talks with Bosnian Army commander General Delic, stating 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 counteroffensive and then let the Security Council save them . . .*
- Belgrade Tanjug 7 April 1994. Silber and Little seem to misconstrue the entire 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 to "solidify" the frontlines because it would lock in their territorial gains. The Serbs were trying to force the Muslims into such an agreement. See Silber and Little, p. 325.
- ⁷² This narrative is based primarily on Sarajevo Radio reports from 12 April to 19 April 1994.
- ⁷³ The main thrust of the operation was to be undertaken by the 1st Bijeljina Light Infantry Brigade "Panthers" toward the Boderiste area, severing the Brcko-Boce road. While the 1st Posavina Infantry Brigade carried out supporting attacks in the center, the 65th Protection Regiment and 5th Kozara Light Infantry Brigade were to make a right hook (from the VRS's perspective) toward Brcko, linking up to the "Panthers" coming from Boderiste. The 3rd Mixed Artillery Regiment provided corps-artillery support with its 155-mm howitzers. The total VRS force, including sector troops from the 1st Posavina Brigade, numbered about 4,500 troops.
- ⁷⁴ The ARBiH 108th Motorized Brigade and the HVO 108th Infantry Brigade, numbering about 5,500 troops, provided the bulk of the defenders.
- ⁷⁵ The VRS order of battle appears to have remained the same as that in the earlier ARBiH operations.
- ⁷⁶ Sarajevo Radio, 2 April 1994. FBIS London LD0204175994, 021759Z April 1994.
- ⁷⁷ Belgrade Tanjug, 4 April 1994. FBIS London LD0404091794, 040917Z April 1994.
- ⁷⁸ Belgrade Tanjug, 6 April 1994. FBIS London LD0604155794, 061557Z April 1994.
- ⁷⁹ Belgrade Tanjug, 11 May 1994. FBIS London LD1105150594, 111505Z May 1994.
- ⁸⁰ The VRS 2nd Majevica Light Infantry Brigade was deployed on and around Stolice with the 3rd Majevica Infantry Brigade deployed to the north/northwest and the 1st Majevica Infantry Brigade deployed to the northeast. TG "Majevica" was under the command of Colonel Momir Zec.
- ⁸¹ Belgrade Tanjug, 14 May 1994. FBIS London LD1405133794, 141337Z May 1994.
- ⁸² Sarajevo Radio, 15 May 1994. FBIS London LD1505175094, 151750Z May 1994.
- ⁸³ Belgrade Tanjug, 15 May 1994. FBIS London LD1505215194, 152151Z May 1994.
- ⁸⁴ Belgrade Tanjug, 20 May 1994. FBIS London LD2005215294, 202152Z May 1994.
- ⁸⁵ Reuters, "Bosnian Rivals Blame Each Other Over Talks" by Kurt Schork, 27 May 1994.
- ⁸⁶ Belgrade Tanjug, 27 May 1994. FBIS London LD2705132492, 271324Z May 1994.
- ⁸⁷ Belgrade Tanjug, 27 May 1994. FBIS London LD2705153294, 271532Z May 1994.
- ⁸⁸ Paris AFP, 8 May 1994. FBIS Vienna AU0805155294, 081552Z May 1994.
- ⁸⁹ Reuters, "Moslem 'Safe Haven' Shelled After Serb Town Hit" by Davor Huic, 11 May 1994.
- ⁹⁰ Reuters, "Bosnian Rivals Report Increased Fighting," 15 May 1994.
- ⁹¹ Sarajevo Radio, 16 May 1994. FBIS Vienna AU1605190194, 161901Z May 1994.
- ⁹² Reuters, "Tuzla Shelled After Moslems Claim Military Gains" by Dan De Luce, 16 May 1994.
- ⁹³ Sarajevo Radio, 19 May 1994. FBIS Vienna AU1905185994, 191859Z May 1994.
- ⁹⁴ Reuters, "Serbs Widen Battle Fronts in Bosnia" by Dan De Luce, 21 May 1994.
- ⁹⁵ Paris AFP, 29 May 1994. FBIS Vienna AU2905132294, 291322Z May 1994.
- ⁹⁶ Zagreb *Globus*, "The Tuzla Corps Has Gotten Through Almost to Han Pijesak. General Mladic's Headquarters!" by Karlo Jeger, 27 May 1994. FBIS Vienna AU0706183794, 071837Z June 1994.
- ⁹⁷ Based on analysis of Sarajevo Radio reporting from 16 May to 31 May 1994. VRS forces were under the overall command of the Sarajevo-Romanija Corps. The 1st Iljas Infantry Brigade was the normal sector-holding brigade along the front. It was reinforced with the assault battalions from the 3rd Sarajevo, 1st Ilidza, and 1st Igman Infantry Brigades, which together with the 1st Iljas Brigade's Assault Battalion, a tactical group from 1st Krajina Corps (the 1st Battalion/43rd Motorized Brigade, plus probably a battalion from 6th Sanski Infantry Brigade and possibly elements of 1st MP Battalion or 1st Recon-Sabotage Detachment), and a MUP Special Police Detachment, comprised the assault units for the attack. The VRS force probably had 3,000 to 4,000 troops. See Sarajevo Radio 27 May 1994 and Zivko Ecim, "We Know Our Goal," *Kozarski Vjesnik* 20 May 1994, an interview with Colonel Radmilo Zeljaja, commander of 43rd Prijedor Motorized Brigade. ARBiH forces came under the command of Operational Group 3—"Vares" from the 1st Corps. The 126th Mountain Brigade, reinforced with elements of the 322nd Vares Mountain Brigade, the 304th Breza Mountain Brigade, and probably the 315th and 316th Visoko Mountain Brigades/"Visoko" Operational Group—also about 3,000 to 4,000 troops.
- ⁹⁸ Paris AFP, 24 May 1994. FBIS Vienna AU2405163694, 241636Z May 1994.
- ⁹⁹ Belgrade Tanjug, 24 May 1994. FBIS London LD2505023194, 250231Z May 1994.
- ¹⁰⁰ Paris AFP, 25 May 1994. FBIS Vienna AU2505123094, 251230Z May 1994.
- ¹⁰¹ Paris AFP, 26 May 1994. FBIS Vienna AU2605142294, 261422Z May 1994.

- ¹⁰² Paris AFP, 9 June 1994. FBIS Vienna AU0906120994, 091209Z June 1994.
- ¹⁰³ Paris AFP, 11 June 1994. FBIS Vienna AU1106204694, 112046Z June 1994.
- ¹⁰⁴ Reuters, "Bosnian Rivals Sign Compromise Truce Deal" by Kurt Schork, 8 June 1994.
- ¹⁰⁵ Reuters, "Cease-Fire Collapsing in Central Bosnia, UN Says" by Kurt Schork, 28 June 1994.
- ¹⁰⁶ Also known as Srpska Brka.
- ¹⁰⁷ Belgrade Tanjug, 3 August 1994. FBIS London LD0308074894, 030748Z August 1994.
- ¹⁰⁸ Bosnian Army commander Delic stated publicly at the time that the Brka attack was a limited operation and that the ARBiH was not attempting to sever the Posavina corridor.
- ¹⁰⁹ Sarajevo Radio, 5 August 1994. FBIS Vienna AU0508092294, 050922Z August 1994.
- ¹¹⁰ Sarajevo Radio, 8 August 1994. FBIS Vienna AU0808104694, 081046Z August 1994.
- ¹¹¹ Sarajevo Radio, 12 September 1994. FBIS Vienna AU1209191294, 120912Z September 1994.
- ¹¹² The narrative is based on Sarajevo Radio 9 August 1994 and Said Huremovic "222nd Liberation Brigade: 'Young Lions' Standard Bearers of Freedom," *Prva Linija* March 1997, p. 23-24.
- ¹¹³ Elements of the 111th Gracanica Mountain Brigade supported the 212th. The ARBiH troops faced elements of the 1st Trebava Infantry Brigade/Tactical Group 3. The hills were in the Skipovac section of Trebava, some 10 to 15 kilometers northwest of Gracanica.
- ¹¹⁴ Narrative based primarily on Sarajevo Radio, Belgrade Tanjug, Sarajevo Radio-Republike Srpske, and Zagreb HINA covering the period 15-26 October. In addition, the following sources provided supporting detail:
- Said Huremovic, "222nd Liberation Brigade: 'Young Lions' Standard Bearers of Freedom," *Prva Linija* March 1997, p. 23-24
 - "Three Years of the 241st Spreca-Muslim Light Brigade: Lisaca—A Victory That Will Be Inscribed in Gold Letters," *Prva Linija* July 1997, p. 3
 - "On the Occasion of the Third Anniversary of the Formation of the 242nd Zvornik Muslim Light Brigade," *Prva Linija* October 1997, p. 31.
 - S. Cehajic, "My 'Serbian Republic' Is Shaking," *Sarajevo Lijelan* 9 November 1996, p. 15, an article based on captured VRS documents.
 - Ozren Jorgjanovic, "The Second Anniversary of the Great Serb Victory Over the Muslim Army—the Successful Defense of Dobojs . . .," *Banja Luka Srpski Radio* 21 October 1996.
 - Zora Kuzman, "Dobojs Between the Java and Sana: The Tragedy of Families," *Srpska Vojska* 15 November 1994, pp. 28-29.
 - Major General Momir Talic, "Praise of the Units for Heroically Holding Out During the Attack on the City of Dobojs," *Krajiski Vojnik* 15 November 1994, p. 22, commendations for units defending Dobojs.
 - L. Zaric, "A Song 'On the Krajina's Heights: Three Years of Battles of the 4th Banja Luka Brigade," *Krajiski Vojnik* August 1995, p. 36.
 - "The Wartime Journey of the 1st Armored: A Striking Fist," *Krajiski Vojnik* June 1996, pp. 26-29, an article on the 1st Armored Brigade.
- ¹¹⁵ Operational Group 2 was responsible for the attacks toward Dobojs and Modrica (Skipovac). For the Dobojs operation, the 109th Dobojs Brigade was reinforced with the 242nd Zvornik-Muslim Light and 251st Liberation Brigades. The 212th Liberation Brigade led the attack against Skipovac before being shifted to the Dobojs sector. Operational Group 1 undertook the Gradacac attack, receiving the 241st Spreca-Muslim Light Brigade as reinforcement for the 107th Gradacac Motorized Brigade.
- ¹¹⁶ The attack again hit the 1st Trebava Infantry Brigade.
- ¹¹⁷ ARBiH units took the villages of Sibovac, Razljevi, and Liporasee, among others. The 6th Sanske Infantry Brigade, the bulk of which was under TG-4's command, took the brunt of the ARBiH attack.
- ¹¹⁸ Elements of the 1st Armored Brigade deployed in the Odzak area were sent to strengthen the 6th Sanske Brigade's counterattacks.
- ¹¹⁹ Serb troops held onto three key hills—Ciganiste, Hill 522, and Bregova Kosa—which would have allowed the ARBiH to look directly down on Dobojs.
- ¹²⁰ VRS formations involved in Dobojs's defense included the 1st Dobojs Light Infantry Brigade, 2nd Banja Luka Light Infantry Brigade, 4th Banja Luka Light Infantry Brigade, elements of the 2nd Armored Brigade, and the 9th Reconnaissance Company—all part of Colonel Vladimir Arsic's "Dobojs" Operational Group 9.
- ¹²¹ Sarajevo Radio, 3 October 1994. FBIS Vienna AU0310202794, 3 October 1994.
- ¹²² Sarajevo Radio, 7 October 1994. FBIS Vienna AU0710095494, 7 October 1994.
- ¹²³ Sarajevo Radio, 10 October 1994. FBIS Vienna AU1010195294, 10 October 1994.
- ¹²⁴ Sarajevo Radio, 11 October 1994. FBIS Vienna AU1110210394, 11 October 1994.
- ¹²⁵ Sarajevo Radio, 12 October 1994. FBIS Vienna AU1210120394, 12 October 1994.
- ¹²⁶ Sarajevo Radio, 12 October 1994. FBIS Vienna AU1210193394, 12 October 1994.
- ¹²⁷ Sarajevo Radio, 19 October 1994. FBIS Vienna AU1910205894, 19 October 1994.
- ¹²⁸ Sarajevo Radio, 8 November 1994. FBIS Vienna AU0811195694, 8 November 1994.
- ¹²⁹ Sarajevo Radio, 9 November 1994. FBIS Vienna AU0911204494, 9 November 1994.
- ¹³⁰ Sarajevo Radio, 17 November 1994. FBIS Vienna AU1711124194, 17 November 1994.
- ¹³¹ Brigadier Vahid Karavelic, the commander of the 1st Corps, reinforced the Operational Group 3—"Vares" with up to two tactical groups from the Sarajevo Operational Group. For example, it appears that the 2nd Motorized and 101st Mountain Brigades each sent at least a battalion to the sector. See Ismet Bajrovic, "Commemoration of the Fifth Anniversary of the Formation of the 101st Mountain Brigade: Thunderers from Moj Milo and Heroes Square," *Prva Linija* October 1997, p. 30 and Ismet Bajrovic, "Heroji sa Zuci," *Prva Linija* November 1997, p. 24 (2nd Motorized Brigade). Personnel from Sarajevo city were sent via the airport tunnel then over Mount Igman and then through Visoko in order to reach the battlefield. The 1st Corps probably fielded about 5,000 to 6,000 troops.
- ¹³² 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.
- ¹³³ General Delic announced the capture of several villages and hills in the salient on 11 August 1994, Sarajevo Radio 11 August 1994.
- ¹³⁴ The VRS launched an attack toward Breza about a week later. It is unclear what the objective of this small operation was, but it probably was designed to disrupt ARBiH lines of communication in Cemerska Planina and the newly captured area around Brule. Although the VRS made some gains, it appears that the 1st Corps was able to push the Serbs back out of the area. Paris AFP 20 and 23 August 1994, Davor Huic, "Serbs Stop Bosnian Offensives, Reaffirm Superiority," Reuters 7 September 1994.

- ¹³⁵ Paris AFP, 18 September 1994. FBIS Vienna AU1809190894, 181908Z September 1994.
- ¹³⁶ Reuters, "Serbs Stop Bosnian Offensives, Reaffirm Superiority" by Davor Huic, 7 September 1994.
- ¹³⁷ At about the same time, the VRS Herzegovina Corps attacked the ARBiH 4th Corps-controlled Mostar-Jablanica road at Bijelo Polje/Vrapcici, just north of Mostar. The closest the VRS came to cutting the route was on 12-14 October, when the Serbs seized some hills overlooking the road, and it was temporarily closed. ARBiH troops, however, managed to retain their hold on Bijelo Polje.
- ¹³⁸ Milosevic had recently replaced Galic in command of the corps. For information on the VRS forces, see Zeljko Radovanovic, "Muslim Scale of Defeats on Nisici and Olovo: Mathematics Against 'Vitez's,'" *Srpska Vojska* 15 November 1994, p. 26. Reinforcements included major elements of the 65th Protection Motorized Regiment, and tactical groups from the Drina and Herzegovina Corps. In addition, the Sarajevo-Romanija Corps shifted its own reserves, such as the Assault Battalion/1st Ilijadza Infantry Brigade, to the sector. The VRS force probably had about 3,000 assault troops, in addition to about 1,000 sector holding troops from the 1st Ilijas Infantry Brigade. ARBiH forces from Operational Group 3—"Vares" included the 126th Mountain Brigade and a tactical group from Sarajevo city, apparently comprising the 2nd and 5th Battalions/101st Mountain Brigade, plus a battalion of the 124th Light Brigade "King Tvrko," which was a former HVO formation.
- ¹³⁹ The battle narrative is from Reuters reporting from 13-17 October 1994, Belgrade Tanjug 4 and 5 October 1994, and Vildana Selimbegovic, "Mt. Cemer is the Chetniks' Nightmare," *Sarajevo Vecernje Novosti* 26 October 1994, pp. 4-5, an interview with Brigadier General Vahid Karavelic. The Reuters pieces include:
- Giles Elgood, "Serbs Seize Land From Moslems Near Sarajevo," Reuters 13 October 1994.
 - Giles Elgood, "Serb Shelling Shuts Vital Supply Road," Reuters 14 October 1994.
 - Giles Elgood, "Convoys Reach Sarajevo With 500 Tonnes of Food," Reuters 15 October 1994.
 - Giles Elgood, "War Flares Anew But Aid Gets to Sarajevo," Reuters 16 October 1994.
 - Giles Elgood, "UN Rules Out Force To Shift Bosnian Army," Reuters 17 October 1994.
 - Giles Elgood, "Serbs Hijack Sarajevo Medical Supplies," Reuters 17 October 1994.
- ¹⁴⁰ See especially Vildana Selimbegovic, "Mt. Cemer is the Chetniks' Nightmare," *Sarajevo Vecernje Novosti* 26 October 1994, pp. 4-5, an interview with Brigadier General Vahid Karavelic, for a description of the ARBiH counterattack against Mosevacko hill.
- ¹⁴¹ Based on Reuters 6 November 1994 and Sarajevo Radio 6 November 1994, which carried Brigadier General Karavelic's announcement of which villages and hills 1st Corps had seized.
- ¹⁴² Belgrade Tanjug, 12 October 1994. FBIS London LD120163994, 121639Z October 1994.
- ¹⁴³ Belgrade Tanjug, 20 October 1994. FBIS London LD2010224394, 202243Z October 1994.
- ¹⁴⁴ Belgrade Tanjug, 9 November 1994. FBIS London LD0911231894, 092318Z November 1994.
- ¹⁴⁵ Zagreb Hina, 13 November 1994. FBIS Vienna AU1311151694, 131516Z November 1994.
- ¹⁴⁶ Sarajevo Radio, 15 November 1994. FBIS Vienna AU1511164494, 151644Z November 1994.
- ¹⁴⁷ Zagreb Hina, 17 November 1994. FBIS Vienna AU1711160794, 171606Z November 1994.
- ¹⁴⁸ During the course of the November offensive, the Bosnian Army encircled some 30 Bosnian Serbs on the secondary Vitovac peak near Majevica itself. The local Serb commander threatened to pound Tuzla—a UN-declared "safe area"—with artillery fire every hour until his "lost platoon" was released. The threat was no bluff, and regular (if not hourly) shelling of the urban Tuzla area began early on the morning of 21 November. As the periodic shelling of Tuzla continued, Bosnian Army infantry attacks proceeded on Majevica mountain. There is no reporting to indicate the captured Serbs were released, but in any event the Bosnian Government assaults and the Bosnian Serb shelling of Tuzla had tapered off by the very end of November.
- ¹⁴⁹ Belgrade Tanjug, 25 August 1994. FBIS London LD2508221494, 252214Z August 1994.
- ¹⁵⁰ Sarajevo Radio, 29 August 1994. FBIS Vienna AU2908120894, 291208Z August 1994.
- ¹⁵¹ Sarajevo Radio, 30 August 1994. FBIS Vienna AU3008192194, 301921Z August 1994.
- ¹⁵² Ljubljana Radio, 7 September 1994. FBIS Vienna AU0709142394, 071423Z September 1994.
- ¹⁵³ Belgrade Tanjug, 9 September 1994. FBIS London LD0909161794, 091617Z September 1994.
- ¹⁵⁴ Sarajevo Radio, 6 September 1994. FBIS Vienna AU0609192894, 061928Z September 1994.
- ¹⁵⁵ Belgrade Tanjug, 12 September 1994. FBIS London LD1209165294, 121652Z September 1994.
- ¹⁵⁶ Sarajevo Radio, 14 September 1994. FBIS Vienna AU1409100794, 141007Z September 1994.
- ¹⁵⁷ Belgrade Tanjug, 14 September 1994. FBIS London LD1409114994, 141149Z September 1994.
- ¹⁵⁸ Reuters, "Bosnian Serbs Vow To Defy US Ultimatum" by Kurt Schork, 15 September 1994.
- ¹⁵⁹ Paris AFP, 15 September 1994. FBIS Vienna AU1509093494, 150934Z September 1994.
- ¹⁶⁰ Paris AFP, 15 September 1994. FBIS Vienna AU1509100894, 151008Z September 1994.
- ¹⁶¹ Paris AFP, 15 September 1994. FBIS Vienna AU1509182894, 151828Z September 1994.
- ¹⁶² Zagreb Hina, 19 September 1994. FBIS Vienna AU1909184194, 191841Z September 1994.
- ¹⁶³ Sarajevo Radio, 20 September 1994. FBIS Vienna AU2009205094, 202050Z September 1994.
- ¹⁶⁴ Zagreb Radio, 15 September 1994. FBIS London LD1509161994, 151619Z September 1994.
- ¹⁶⁵ Zagreb Hina, 15 September 1994. FBIS Vienna AU1509171494, 151714Z September 1994.
- ¹⁶⁶ Sarajevo Radio, 16 September 1994. FBIS Vienna AU1609171694, 161716Z September 1994.
- ¹⁶⁷ Zagreb Hina, 17 September 1994. FBIS Vienna AU1709144194, 171441Z September 1994.
- ¹⁶⁸ Sarajevo Radio, 20 September 1994. FBIS Vienna AU2009144894, 201448Z September 1994.
- ¹⁶⁹ Belgrade Tanjug, 23 September 1994. FBIS London LD2309192794, 231927Z September 1994.
- ¹⁷⁰ Reuters, "Serbs Reneges on Pledge to Unblock UN Convoys" by Kurt Schork, 2 October 1994.
- ¹⁷¹ Belgrade Tanjug, 10 October 1994. FBIS London LD1010160994, 101609Z October 1994.
- ¹⁷² In addition to being demilitarized (that is, no troops or equipment belonging to any faction were supposed to be on or transit across the mountains), both mountains were within the 20-km heavy weapons exclusion zone in any case.
- ¹⁷³ Belgrade Tanjug, 20 September 1994. FBIS London LD2009170994, 201709Z September 1994.
- ¹⁷⁴ Sarajevo Radio, 15 December 1994. FBIS Vienna VA1512202794, 152027Z December 1994.
- ¹⁷⁵ Sarajevo Radio, 1 October 1994. FBIS London LD0110170894, 011708Z October 1994.

- ¹⁷⁶ Belgrade Tanjug, 2 October 1994. FBIS London LD0210135594, 021355Z October 1994.
- ¹⁷⁷ Paris AFP, 3 October 1994. FBIS Vienna AU0310102294, 031022Z October 1994.
- ¹⁷⁸ Belgrade Tanjug 5 October 1994. FBIS London LD0510184494, 051844Z October 1994.
- ¹⁷⁹ Reuters, "UN Withdraws Mutilation Charge in Bosnia" by Kurt Schork, 7 October 1994.
- ¹⁸⁰ Reuters, "Serb Corpses Mutilated in Attack" by Kurt Schork, 6 October 1994.
- ¹⁸¹ Reuters, "Serb Threaten to Ignite Sarajevo After Atrocity" by Kurt Schork, 7 October 1994.
- ¹⁸² Reuters, "UN Drives Bosnian Troops From Mountain DMZ" by Kurt Schork, 7 October 1994.
- ¹⁸³ Reuters, "UN Withdraws Mutilation Charge in Bosnia" by Kurt Schork, 7 October 1994. The Trnovo Battalion was part of the VRS 2nd Sarajevo Light Infantry Brigade.
- ¹⁸⁴ Reuters, "Bosnian President Demands UN Public Apology" by Kurt Schork, 7 October 1994.
- ¹⁸⁵ A warning of sorts came on 8 October, when Bosnian Serb troops used machineguns—not defined as heavy weapons—to fire on 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.
- ¹⁸⁶ Reuters, "UN Resumes Vital Airlift Into Sarajevo" by Kurt Schork, 9 October 1994.
- ¹⁸⁷ Reuters, "Bosnian Rivals Agree on Demilitarized Zone," 9 October 1994.
- ¹⁸⁸ Reuters, "Bosnian Serbs Give Moslems Deadline to Clear Zone," 13 October 1994.
- ¹⁸⁹ Reuters, "Talks on Demilitarized Zone Break Down in Bosnia" by Kurt Schork, 18 October 1994.
- ¹⁹⁰ Reuters, "Sarajevo DMZ Pact Faces New Hitch" by Kurt Schork, 23 October 1994.
- ¹⁹¹ Reuters, "Bosnian Army Fires on French Peacekeepers in DMZ" by Kurt Schork, 24 October 1994.
- ¹⁹² Reuters, "Bosnian Government, UN Agree to Clear DMZ" by Kurt Schork, 25 October 1994.
- ¹⁹³ Reuters, "UN Chief Defends Peacekeeping Commander" by Kurt Schork, 25 October 1994.
- ¹⁹⁴ Mt. Treskavica was just south of the 20-km exclusion zone and had not been included in the August 1993 demilitarization agreement and hence had no restrictions on weapons or forces.
- ¹⁹⁵ Reuters, "Moslems Spread Offensive to Zone Near Sarajevo," 29 October 1994.
- ¹⁹⁶ Reuters, "UN Threatens Bosnian Army With NATO Strikes" by Kurt Schork, 29 October 1994.
- ¹⁹⁷ Reuters, "Bosnian Army Resumes Shelling From DMZ," 30 October 1994.
- ¹⁹⁸ Reuters, "Bosnian Army Closing in on Serb-Held Trnovo" by Kurt Schork, 31 October 1994.
- ¹⁹⁹ Sarajevo Radio, 1 November 1994. FBIS Vienna AU0111210294, 012102Z November 1994.
- ²⁰⁰ Reuters, "UN Reports Bitter Fighting for Northwest Town," 6 November 1994.
- ²⁰¹ Belgrade Tanjug, 4 November 1994. FBIS London LD0411234294, 042342Z November 1994.
- ²⁰² Sarajevo Radio, 15 December 1994. FBIS Vienna AU1512105994, 151059Z December 1994.
- ²⁰³ Sarajevo Radio, 3 November 1994. FBIS Vienna AU0311134994, 031349Z November 1994.
- ²⁰⁴ Reuters, "Bosnian Army Claims Advances on Serb-Held Town" 1 November 1994.
- ²⁰⁵ Zagreb Hina, 5 November 1994. FBIS Vienna AU0511140294, 051402Z November 1994.
- ²⁰⁶ Belgrade Tanjug, 19 September 1994. FBIS London LD1909105994, 191059Z September 1994.
- ²⁰⁷ Belgrade Tanjug, 19 September 1994. FBIS London LD1909200394, 192003Z September 1994.
- ²⁰⁸ Belgrade Tanjug, 21 September 1994. FBIS London LD2109150794, 211507Z September 1994.
- ²⁰⁹ Belgrade Tanjug, 24 September 1994. FBIS London LD2409183994, 241839Z September 1994.
- ²¹⁰ Belgrade Tanjug, 25 September 1994. FBIS London LD2509141194, 251411Z September 1994.
- ²¹¹ Belgrade Tanjug, 25 September 1994. FBIS London LD2509192894, 251928Z September 1994.
- ²¹² Belgrade Tanjug, 26 September 1994. FBIS London LD2609161794, 261617Z September 1994.
- ²¹³ Belgrade Tanjug, 12 October 1994. FBIS London LD1210130894, 121308Z October 1994.
- ²¹⁴ Belgrade Tanjug, 13 October 1994. FBIS London LD1310111094, 131110Z October 1994.
- ²¹⁵ Belgrade Tanjug, 19 October 1994. FBIS London LD1910213294, 192132Z October 1994.
- ²¹⁶ Belgrade Tanjug, 11 November 1994. FBIS London LD1111143994, 111439Z November 1994.
- ²¹⁷ Belgrade Tanjug, 11 November 1994. FBIS London LD1111153694, 111536Z November 1994.
- ²¹⁸ Belgrade Tanjug, 11 November 1994. FBIS London LD1211141294, 121412Z November 1994.
- ²¹⁹ Belgrade Tanjug, 12 November 1994. FBIS London LD1211190594, 121905Z November 1994.
- ²²⁰ Belgrade Tanjug, 12 November 1994. FBIS London LD1211192694, 121926Z November 1994.
- ²²¹ Belgrade Tanjug, 13 November 1994. FBIS London LD1311203494, 132034Z November 1994.
- ²²² Belgrade Tanjug, 18 November 1994. FBIS London LD1811210494, 182104Z November 1994.
- ²²³ Belgrade Tanjug, 21 November 1994. FBIS London LD2111180294, 211802Z November 1994.
- ²²⁴ The Kupres municipality had a prewar population numbering some 9,600, of which about 51 percent were Serb, almost 40 percent Croat, 8 percent Muslim, and 1 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.
- ²²⁵ Belgrade Tanjug, 20 October 1994. FBIS London LD2010224394, 202243Z October 1994. The boundary between the VRS 30th Infantry Division 1st Krajina Corps and the 2nd Krajina Corps ran between Kupres and Donji Vakuf.
- ²²⁶ Paris AFP, 3 November 1994. FBIS Vienna AU0311133894, 031338Z November 1994.
- ²²⁷ Belgrade Tanjug, 23 October 1994. FBIS London LD2310203794, 232037Z October 1994.
- ²²⁸ Sarajevo Radio, 26 October 1994. FBIS Vienna AU2610130594, 261305Z October 1994.
- ²²⁹ Sarajevo Radio, 26 October 1994. FBIS Vienna AU2610173894, 261957Z October 1994.
- ²³⁰ Zagreb Radio, 3 November 1994. FBIS London LD0311172994, 031729Z November 1994.
- ²³¹ Zagreb Radio, 2 November 1994. FBIS London LD0211132994, 021825Z November 1994.

- ²³² Zagreb Hina, 2 November 1994. FBIS Vienna AU0211212094, 022120Z November 1994.
- ²³³ Zagreb Radio, 3 November 1994. FBIS London LD0311112394, 031123Z November 1994.
- ²³⁴ Sarajevo Radio, 3 November 1994. FBIS Vienna AU0311154294, 031541Z November 1994.
- ²³⁵ Mostar Croatian Radio, 3 November 1994. FBIS London LD0311172794, 031727Z November 1994.
- ²³⁶ Zagreb *Vjesnik*, Ivan Sabic Interview With Bosnian Croat Official Valentin Coric, "I Do Not Wish to be at War With Press Reporters," 14 November 1994.
- ²³⁷ Just before the HVO intervened, ARBiH 7th Corps commander Alagic stated publicly that the "HVO is not participating, but I hope they will." (Alagic may have gotten more than he had bargained for when the HVO took Kupres two days later.) Just after the town fell, HVO commander Ante Roso told reporters that "This is a very good moment for cooperation." When asked if the Croats and Muslims were operating under a joint command, however, he immediately followed the statement with "We're coordinating, we don't need a joint command." Reuters, "Bosnian Army Claims Advance on Serb-Held Town," 1 November 1994. Reuters, "Bosnian Serbs Lose Key Town of Kupres" by Kurt Schork, 3 November 1994.
- ²³⁸ Belgrade Tanjug, 4 October 1994. FBIS London LD0411161194, 041611Z November 1994.
- ²³⁹ Reuters, "Bosnians Plan Fresh Offensives—U.N." by Sean Maguire, 7 November 1994.
- ²⁴⁰ Reuters, "Serbs Hit New Bombardment in Bosnia" by Sean Maguire, 7 November 1994.
- ²⁴¹ Reuters, "Bosnian Muslims, Croats Pound Serbs Around Kupres" by Kurt Schork, 7 November 1994.
- ²⁴² Reuters, "Bosnian Serbs Said Attacking Croat Troops," 14 November 1994.
- ²⁴³ Reuters, "Bosnian Army Attacks in Central Bosnia," 16 November 1994.
- ²⁴⁴ Paris AFP, 16 November 1994. FBIS Vienna AU1611100594, 161005Z November 1994.
- ²⁴⁵ Belgrade Tanjug, 20 November 1994. FBIS London LD2011172894, 201728Z November 1994.
- ²⁴⁶ Reuters, "Croats Supplying Arms to Bosnian Army—Commander" by Kurt Schork, 6 November 1994.
- ²⁴⁷ Reuters, "Bosnian Muslims, Croats Pound Serbs Around Kupres" by Kurt Schork, 7 November 1994.
- ²⁴⁸ Reuters, "Bosnian Army Readies Attack on Donji Vakuf" by Kurt Schork, 8 November 1994.
- ²⁴⁹ Reuters, "Sarajevo Forces Advance in Bihac Conflict" by Mark Heinrich, 20 June 1994.
- ²⁵⁰ Reuters, "Sarajevo Pounding Continues Despite Airstrike Threat" by Chris Helgen, 11 January 1994.
- ²⁵¹ Belgrade Tanjug, 11 January 1994. FBIS London LD1101132394, 111323Z January 1994.
- ²⁵² Zagreb Radio, 11 January 1994. FBIS London LD1101151994, 111519Z January 1994.
- ²⁵³ Reuters, "Serbs Planning Offensive on Bihac—Croat Commander," 27 January 1994.
- ²⁵⁴ O'Shea, Brendan, *Crisis at Bihac: Bosnia's Bloody Battlefield*, UK: Sutton Publishing, 1998. p. 35.
- ²⁵⁵ Reuters, "Sarajevo Ultimatum Fails to Stop Bosnia Fighting," 21 February 1994.
- ²⁵⁶ See the section "Ending the War? Bosnian Serb Offensive Operations, November 1993 to March 1994" for additional details.
- ²⁵⁷ Reuters, "Bosnian Radio Reports Fighting in Gorazde" 21 April 1994.
- ²⁵⁸ Reuters, "U.N. Says Fighting Decreases With Bosnian Ceasefire" by Kurt Schork, 11 June 1994.
- ²⁵⁹ Reuters, "Bosnian Ceasefire Gradually Taking Hold—UN" by Kurt Schork, 11 June 1994.
- ²⁶⁰ Reuters, "U.N. Says Fighting Decreases With Bosnian Ceasefire" by Kurt Schork, 11 June 1994.
- ²⁶¹ Reuters, "Bihac Fighting Dims Hope of Bosnia Truce Lasting" by Kurt Schork, 14 June 1994.
- ²⁶² Reuters, "Fierce Bihac Fighting Adds to Peace Doubts" by Kurt Schork, 15 June 1994.
- ²⁶³ Reuters, "Rival Moslem Forces Fight in Bosnia" by Kurt Schork, 16 June 1994.
- ²⁶⁴ Reuters, "Sarajevo Forces Advance in Bihac Conflict" by Mark Heinrich, 20 June 1994.
- ²⁶⁵ Ibid.
- ²⁶⁶ Reuters, "Bihac Fighting Continues as Bosnia Truce Falters" by Kurt Schork, 18 June 1994.
- ²⁶⁷ Reuters, "Rebel Moslems Count on Serb Help Against Enemy Kin" by Mark Heinrich, 22 June 1994.
- ²⁶⁸ Reuters, "Bosnian Government Forces Attack Rebel Moslems" by Mark Heinrich, 22 June 1992.
- ²⁶⁹ Reuters, "Army Attack on Moslem Kin Will Fail—Rebel Tycoon" by Mark Heinrich, 23 June 1994.
- ²⁷⁰ Reuters, "Serbs Give Heavy Weapons to Rebel Moslems" by Davor Huic, 30 June 1994.
- ²⁷¹ Reuters, "Bosnian Army Surrounds UN Compound in Bihac," 7 July 1994.
- ²⁷² Reuters, "Moslem Troops Hold Aid Workers in Bosnia" by Mark Heinrich, 7 July 1994.
- ²⁷³ Reuters, "Rebel Moslems, Serbs Jointly Attack Bosnian Army" by Mark Heinrich, 10 July 1994.
- ²⁷⁴ Reuters, "Bosnian Army Stages Mock Mutiny to Flush Out Rebels" by Mark Heinrich, 10 July 1994.
- ²⁷⁵ Sarajevo Radio, 9 July 1994, FBIS London LD0907215694, 092156Z July 1994.
- ²⁷⁶ Zagreb Radio, 10 July 1994. FBIS London LD1007180494, 101804Z July 1994.
- ²⁷⁷ Zagreb *Globus*, "The 5th Corps of the Bosnia-Herzegovina Army Has Cut the Una Railroad at the Serb Corridor to Knin Again!" by Karlo Jeger, 15 July 1994. FBIS Vienna AU1907203394, 192033Z July 1994.
- ²⁷⁸ Sarajevo Radio, 23 August 1994, FBIS Vienna AU2308113694, 231136Z August 1994.
- ²⁷⁹ Zagreb *Globus*, "The Command of the 5th Corps of the Bosnia-Herzegovina Army Announces: We Will Enter Velika Kladusa and Put Fikret Abdic on Trial As a Traitor" by Karl Jeger, 19 August 1994. FBIS Vienna AU2508104794, 251047Z August 1994.
- ²⁸⁰ Sarajevo *Ljiljan*, Interview With Brigade Commander Hamdija Abdic, "The War Comedy in Which We Made a Jackass Out of Fikret Abdic," by Mustafa Borovic and Mirsad Sinanovic, 4 October 1995. FBIS Reston VA, 96BA0015D, 020323Z February 1996.
- ²⁸¹ Sarajevo Televizija Bosne I Herzegovina, 7 July 1996. FBIS London LD0707214696, 072146Z July 1996.
- ²⁸² 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 January 1998.
- ²⁸³ 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.
- ²⁸⁴ The 1st Drvar, 3rd Petrovac, and 17th Kljuc Light Infantry Brigades were the main VRS combat formations.
- ²⁸⁵ 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.

²⁸⁶ A UN official narrated the story somewhat more colorfully: *The Fourth Brigade realized 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 . . ."

Reuters, "Separatist Bosnian Moslem Leader Vows to Fight On" by Davor Huic, 10 August 1994.

²⁸⁷ Reuters, "Moslem Rebels Surrender as Bosnian Town Falls" by Richard Meares, 4 August 1994.

²⁸⁸ Reuters, "Bosnian Government Troops Crush Abdic Revolt" by Mark Heinrich, 21 August 1994.

²⁸⁹ 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 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 August 1994. 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.

²⁹⁰ Reuters, "Bosnian Government Troops Crush Abdic Revolt" by Mark Heinrich, 21 August 1994.

²⁹¹ Reuters, "Bosnian Army Push Back Serbs Around Bihac" by Mark Heinrich, 26 October 1994.

²⁹² Reuters, "7,000 Serbs Flee Bosnian Army Onslaught" by Mark Heinrich, 27 October 1994.

²⁹³ Reuters, "Moslem-Led Army Advances in Northwest Bosnia" by Kurt Schork, 27 October 1994.

²⁹⁴ Reuters, "Bosnian Serb Army Threatens Retaliation," 27 October 1994.

²⁹⁵ Reuters, "Bosnian Serbs Issue Fresh Threats" by Kurt Schork, 28 October 1994.

²⁹⁶ Apparently unimpressed by the Bosnian Serb rhetoric, UNPROFOR Bosnia commander Rose responded with a counterthreat of NATO airstrikes should the Bosnian Serbs shell any the UN-declared safe areas. Reuters, "U.N. Warns Bosnian Serbs Over Sarajevo Threat," 28 October 1994.

²⁹⁷ On 29 October, the Bosnian Serb President underlined the Pale leadership's concern with the situation by declaring a "state of war" in the VRS 2nd Krajina Corps' area of responsibility. It was not fully clear what this meant—more than two years into the conflict—but the declaration did suspend 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. Reuters, "Bosnian Serb Leader Declares 'State of War,'" 29 October 1994.

²⁹⁸ Reuters, "Moslem-Led Army Advances on Serb-Held Town," 29 October 1994.

²⁹⁹ Reuters, "Sarajevo Comes Under Shelling Attack" by Kurt Schork, 31 October 1994.

³⁰⁰ Reuters, "Serbs and Moslems Battle in Northwest Bosnia" by Kurt Schork, 21 October 1994.

³⁰¹ The VRS signaled the start of its assault by firing a salvo of SA-2 surface-to-air missiles in the ground-to-ground mode at Bihac and Cazin.

³⁰² NATO aircraft also struck at two VRS air defense sites northeast of the Bihac sector on 23 November after two British Royal Navy Sea Harriers were fired on the previous day.

³⁰³ Giles Elgood, "Croatian Would Intervene to Stop Bihac Fall," Reuters 1 December 1994.

³⁰⁴ HV frontline units regularly rotated so that, although possibly as many as 9,000 HV troops were involved in "Zima 94," only 3,000 to 4,000 probably were ever on the ground in Bosnia at any one time.

Bosnia 1994



Bosnian Serb Army (VRS) T-55 tanks, probably from the 1st Sarajevo Mechanized Brigade, near Sarajevo, early 1994.



Antisniper barriers in downtown Sarajevo, as seen in 1996.



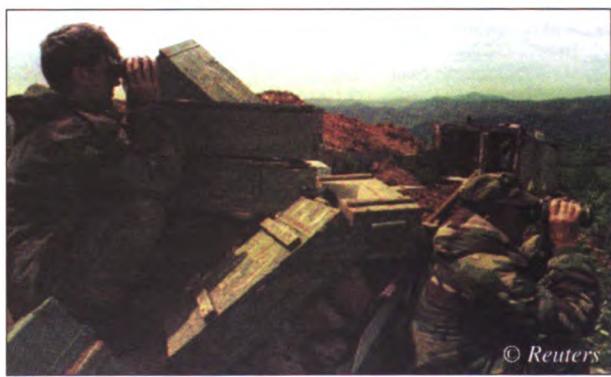
The *Oslobodjenje* newspaper building in Sarajevo, as seen in 1996.



Damaged houses near Sarajevo Airport, as seen in 1996.



Bosnian Serb Army (VRS) M-56 105-mm howitzers and crews, probably from the 1st Majevica Infantry Brigade, north of the Bosnian Government-controlled town of Teocak, December 1993.



Bosnian Army (ARBiH) 2nd Corps troops overlooking Bosnian Serb Army (VRS) positions in the Ozren Mountains following the capture of Mount Vrijenac, May 1994.

Bosnia 1994



© Reuters

Bosnian Serb Army (VRS) soldiers, probably from the 1st Sarajevo Mechanized Brigade or 1st Romanija Infantry Brigade, walk past the Olympic bobsled and luge run on Mount Trebevic, south of Sarajevo, February 1994.



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Bosnian Serb Army (VRS) T-55 tanks and M-80 infantry fighting vehicles, probably from the 1st Sarajevo Mechanized Brigade, withdraw from the Sarajevo area following the NATO ultimatum, February 1994.



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Bosnian Serb Army (VRS) troops, probably from the Herzegovina Corps, marching up a hill near Gorazde, April 1994.



© Reuters

Bosnian Serb Army (VRS) Col. (later Maj. Gen.) Momir Zec and staff officers from the 30th Infantry Division study maps near Donji Vakuf, December 1994.

Section VI

Croatia 1993-1994: Biding Its Time, Building Its Army

... it is sufficient to emphasize the indisputable position of our state policy that if all efforts failed to solve the problem by peaceful means and to reestablish full sovereignty of the Republic of Croatia within internationally recognized borders, it would be compelled to resort to other legitimate means . . .

Rear Admiral Davor Domazet,
Chief of HV Military Intelligence¹

The army that would launch Operation "Zima 94" in December 1994 to regain its lost territories was a far cry from the poorly trained, minimally disciplined scratch force that had defended Croatia during 1991. During the intervening years, the Croatian Army (HV) raised itself by its own bootstraps into a professional army, creating a new combat doctrine, reorganizing the force structure, intensively training its troops, and developing its Guards Brigades into the finest combat formations in the Balkans. All of this was for one purpose, the reconquest of the Republic of Serb Krajina.

Chapter 65 General Bobetko and the Army Reorganization, November 1992²

The first major step toward the transformation of the Croatian Army into the dynamic combat force that took on the Serbs in 1993 and defeated them in 1995 appears to have begun with the appointment of General Janko Bobetko to the post of Chief of the HV Main Staff in November 1992.³ Except for its four Guards Brigades, the HV in late 1992 was suffering from a disorganized demobilization process and a lack of focus in determining its future organization, doctrine, and warplans. Bobetko complains in his memoirs that the 1992 demobilization that followed Croatia's successful defense of its independence had been carried out haphazardly, with no thought to retaining or creating a professional core for the HV.⁴ Bobetko's appointment confirmed that preparing the HV to retake the Krajina from the Serbs would be the

Army's unifying mission. He moved quickly to halt the demobilization, create additional Guards Brigades, and shuffle the officers serving on the Main Staff, the corps commands, and the Guards Brigades.⁵ Bobetko appointed officers loyal to him and his objective, forming a team that would develop an HV way of doing business in doctrine, training, and attitude.

The Test Bed: Operation "Maslenica 93," January–February 1993

Bobetko's plans for change in the HV, however, had no time to sink in before President Tudjman called on the HV to restart the war in Croatia. The formation of the Republic of Serb Krajina during the 1991 war had not only split the Croatian state in two but had also left the portions remaining under Zagreb's control only tenuously linked in important places. Most notably, the destruction of the Maslenica bridge northeast of the city of Zadar, which carried the main land route between northern and southern Croatia, had left the Dalmatian coast accessible only by ferry. To reopen this link, President Tudjman ordered General Bobetko to prepare a military operation to recapture the Maslenica bridge site (as well as the former JNA airbase at Zemunik, also near Zadar) and secure a buffer zone around the bridge area to protect it from Serb artillery fire. Tudjman directed Bobetko to finish the action quickly to minimize the international outrage that was sure to follow Croatia's breach of the cease-fire.⁶

The operation, dubbed "Maslenica 93," began on 22 January with little warning.⁷ Krajina Serb Army (SVK) and police forces were taken by surprise, and the HV quickly secured most of its objectives in a three-day drive. It seized both the airport and the Serb-controlled bank of the Maslenica bridge site and made advances of as much as 7 kilometers in some places.

The SVK (formed from the Krajina Serb Territorial Defense force and Serb-manned former JNA units) had demobilized its forces in response to the Vance peace plan, placing its heavy weapons under “dual key” control with UN peacekeeping troops. When the HV struck, the Serbs were able to put up only lightly armed Special Police units, which attempted to act as a covering force until the SVK mobilized and deployed its regular infantry and armored forces to the front.

With the main objectives secured, President Tudjman suddenly ordered Bobetko to halt the attack before more than a minimal artillery buffer zone could be created. The Army was anxious to complete the operation, but international reaction to the breach of the peace forced the Croatian Government to issue the stop order. The Croatians no longer controlled the situation, however, and fighting raged even harder northeast of Zadar as both the Bosnian Serb Army and Belgrade dispatched reinforcements to stiffen the SVK and help launch counterattacks to regain some of the lost ground. The most intense fighting began on 27 January and lasted into the second week of February as SVK 7th North Dalmatian Corps troops, bolstered by the elite Serbian Volunteer Guard (personally led by “Arkan”), fought ferocious battles with HV Guards and special operations units around the villages of Kasic, Paljuv, and Novigrad. Serb forces were able to break through HV lines more than once and recapture key points before counterattacks drove them back out.

By the end of February the clashes around Zadar had subsided at a heavy price to both sides. The SVK’s public statements appear to confirm that the Serbs suffered at least 500 casualties, including well over a hundred personnel killed in action.⁸ General Anton Tus, Tudjman’s personal military adviser (and former Main Staff chief), claims that the HV lost more dead than in the much larger 1995 operations “Bljesak” (Flash) and “Oluja” (Storm).⁹

Although “Maslenica” achieved most of its objectives, many of the shortcomings that Bobetko and his staff identified in the HV when they took over in November-December were confirmed as the operation

progressed. In particular, the weakness of the HV’s corps-level command staffs was readily apparent, forcing General Bobetko to establish a forward command post to directly oversee and coordinate the operation rather than relying on the newly appointed Brigadier Ante Gotovina and his new staff at the Split Corps District.¹⁰ Even with Bobetko’s presence, coordinating the three axes of the attack proved difficult. The HV’s tactical limitations, particularly in the weak Home Defense and reserve formations, also became clear once the SVK had mobilized. HV units gained little against prepared Serb forces, and SVK/Serb volunteer troops managed to throw back some of the HV’s initial advances. High HV casualty figures pointed to weaknesses in junior and midlevel officer ranks and to the consequences of insufficient tactical training. All in all, the Croatian forces that had fought in Bosnia and on the Dalmatian coast during 1992 showed some incremental progress by 1993 in some areas, but the HV still had a long way to go before it could overcome the Serbs’ inherent strengths in artillery, organization, and staff work.

Chapter 66 Back to the Frontlines: War Renewed, January 1993–March 1994

The HV operation at Maslenica not only revived fighting in Dalmatia but also brought a remobilization of Croatian and Serb forces throughout the country. As the armies took up their old positions and the SVK withdrew its heavy weapons from UN control, clashes began anew at many of the same old hot spots, despite the continued presence of UN troops at outposts all along the frontline. Serb artillery and mortar fire erupted throughout UN Sectors North and South, covering the Banija, Lika, and Northern Dalmatia regions, and the Croatians responded in kind.¹¹ The Croatian towns of Sisak, Karlovac, Gospic, Zadar, and Sibenik again came under regular fire. Artillery and mortar fire became routine, but few ground operations ensued after Maslenica except for a Croatian operation against the Medak area, near Gospic, in September 1993.

To the Brink: Operation “Medak 93,” September 1993

One of the main targets of the Serb shelling was the Croatian-held city of Gospic, in the Lika region. The importance of lines of communication linking the city and the rest of Croatia to southern Dalmatia was already apparent, and the shelling apparently prompted Bobetko and the HV Main Staff to propose a limited operation to eliminate the SVK-held positions threatening Gospic near the village of Medak, some 10 kilometers away. Tudjman approved the operation, and on 9 September Brigadier Mirko Norac’s Gospic Corps District struck.¹²

Norac directed two reinforced battle groups—one from the 9th Guards Brigade and one from General Markac’s MUP Special Police forces.¹³ In a lightning pincer movement, the two units severed the neck of the SVK-held salient centered on the village of Divoselo, then mopped up the area. The HV rolled over a battalion of the SVK 15th Lika Corps and a number of civilians cut off by the HV assault. SVK counterattacks over the next three or four days retook some ground, and the HV advance halted.

The SVK retaliated for the operation by shelling both Croat frontline and urban targets. Karlovac was particularly hard hit on 10 September, and on 11 September the SVK fired either a 262-mm “Orkan” rocket (from a multiple rocket launcher) or a FROG (LUNA-M) rocket in the direction of Zagreb, hitting near the HV heliport at Lucko. The SVK Main Staff backed up this demonstration with a threat to hit 20 or 30 military targets throughout Croatia unless the HV pulled out of the captured territory. The indiscriminate artillery exchanges continued, with the UN recording over 6,000 detonations, mostly near Gospic-Medak, between 12 and 13 September. On 13 and 14 September Croatian Air Force MiG-21 fighter-bombers went after suspected SVK artillery and rocket sites in Banija and Kordun. SVK air defense units downed one plane on 14 September, near the town of Vrginmost.

This creeping escalation and the attendant possibility of further Croatian ground offensives against the RSK aroused international alarm and led UNPROFOR commander General Jean Cot to arrange and mediate cease-fire discussions and to urge the Croatians to

withdraw their troops from the captured villages. After protracted haggling, Zagreb agreed on 16 September to allow UN troops into the captured area to act as a buffer and to keep the SVK out while the HV withdrew. When UN troops entered the area that day, they found that the retreating Croatians had burned at least 11 villages and apparently had executed a number of Serb civilians. The crisis was over, however.

Chapter 67 Mladic’s Little Brothers—The Krajina Serb Army

The HV was facing an opponent that had not existed in 1991 when the Croatian war first erupted—the Krajina Serb Army (*Srpska Vojska Krajina*—SVK). Like its big brother, the Bosnian Serb Army, the SVK was an amalgam of two forces. The first comprised the local/regional Serb Territorial Defense units, which had made up a large percentage of the Federal/Serb forces fighting the Croatians during 1991. The second consisted of former Yugoslav People’s Army units, now manned entirely by Serbs, which had been “disowned” and left behind when the JNA had formally withdrawn from the area in May 1992.

Formation of the Army

The SVK was formed during spring/summer 1992 following the formal announcement of its creation on 19 March 1992. Although the JNA sent its non-Serb personnel home from the republic, it not only left behind the Krajina-raised officers of the JNA units but also continued to provide new JNA (later VJ) cadre to help organize and lead the new army. As with the VRS in Bosnia, Belgrade continued to pay these personnel and give them logistic support. As they had done with the VRS, the former Yugoslav officers modeled the new SVK in the image of the JNA. A Main Staff was created in Knin—initially under Major General Milan Torbica (later promoted to lieutenant colonel general)—and a new corps-brigade structure was formed, replacing the regional Territorial Defense operational zone headquarters.¹⁴ The weak command and control structures at the regional and brigade levels that had characterized the old TO during the 1991 war were stiffened with professional officers.

Political-Military Relations

The SVK senior leadership was often in conflict with RSK politicians, a situation that also prevailed in Bosnia. Despite their obvious professionalism and competence, former JNA officers were disdained by Serb nationalists, who detested the officers' "Communist" background and needed no excuse to criticize and harass them. General Torbica resigned in late October 1992 to protest the treatment of ex-JNA officers in the SVK and in particular the politically motivated criticism of an SVK engagement with HV troops that had occurred in July at the Miljevac Plateau, northeast of Sibenik, in which 48 Serb soldiers died.¹⁵ Newly promoted Major General Mile Novakovic, another ex-JNA officer (and veteran of the Croatian war in 1991 and the Bosnian war in 1992) took over Torbica's position.¹⁶ Novakovic also encountered problems with the politicians in the Krajina, particularly with then Minister of Internal Affairs Milan Martic. Martic—in the middle of a feud with President Goran Hodzic over control of the police—saw Novakovic and the Army as a rival for his police forces. This time it was the HV attacks at Maslenica and Medak that the political connivers used to undercut the Army chief's position. They were finally able to oust Novakovic in February 1994 when his patron, President Hodzic, was replaced by Milan Martic in a political triumph for the Krajina nationalists.¹⁷ The politicians found in Major General Milan Celeketic, another ex-JNA officer, a more malleable replacement for Novakovic's position.¹⁸ Novakovic became Martic's nominal national security adviser.

Organization

As organized by its new leaders, the SVK would when fully mobilized muster only about 50,000 troops—as compared to the 200,000-man Army of the Croatian Republic. It was organized into six regional corps:

- 7th North Dalmatian Corps, Headquarters in Knin.
- 11th East Slavonian-Baranja Corps, HQ Borovo Selo.

- 15th Lika Corps, HQ Korenica.
- 18th West Slavonian Corps, HQ Okucani.
- 21st Kordun Corps, HQ Vojnic.
- 39th Banija Corps, HQ Petrinja.

The six corps had 21 combat brigades, three corps artillery regiments, and a variety of ancillary units. The Main Staff also controlled an aviation brigade at Udbina Air Base (see Appendix B). The SVK boasted an impressive number of heavy weapons for its size and fielded more than 300 tanks, 100 armored personnel carriers or infantry fighting vehicles, and some 350 large-caliber field artillery pieces. This was six times the holdings of the comparably sized Bosnian Croat Defense Council (HVO).

During 1992, when the bulk of the SVK was demobilized, it stored all of its weapons under a "dual key" system, with both UN and Serb units maintaining nominal control of the weapons. In place of the regular forces, the RSK Ministry of Internal Affairs in 1992 had organized, with JNA help, a number of Special Police brigades, apparently one for each UN sector, to act as "border guard" forces along the UN sector boundaries. They were also to serve as a covering force in the event of a Croatian attack while the SVK mobilized its formations. When that attack came, at Maslenica, the SVK mobilized and deployed its units and weapons to the frontlines, and the dual keys went out the window.

Manpower: The Never-Ending Problem

As with the VRS, the SVK's primary strategic problem was the limited manpower it could call on to man its extensive frontline, which General Novakovic claimed at one point extended to 1,600 kilometers.¹⁹ With only 50,000 men available to hold this line, the SVK was desperately limited in mobility and flexibility; it had virtually no strategic or operational reserves.

to call on from the Main Staff or corps commands.²⁰ Only the 15th Lika and 39th Banija Corps had any formations not committed to frontline sectors opposite the HV, and even these two brigades were tied down opposite the Bosnian Army's 5th Corps around Bihać. When Bihać heated up during 1994, the SVK committed more than 7,000 troops to either direct combat operations in the enclave (in support of both the VRS and Fikret Abdic's rebel Muslim forces) or border security missions. This represented most of the brigade and corps-level reserves available to the SVK in UN Sectors North and South. Another substantial chunk of the SVK's 50,000 men was garrisoned in Eastern and Western Slavonia, which were not contiguous with the RSK's core area in UN Sectors North and South. Any forces transferred from these areas would have to travel a substantial distance through the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and/or Republika Srpska to reach the most threatened area. The lack of strategic depth in the RSK further exacerbated these manpower concerns. The republic was only 50 kilometers wide in some places, while even in Slavonia many key lateral lines of communications ran close to the frontlines, the loss of which would place entire regions in jeopardy.

Bosnian Serb and Yugoslav Army Support

In addition to its absolute shortages of manpower, the SVK's shortage of reserves put it in an increasingly vulnerable position as the HV's capabilities grew, making it more and more certain that a Croatian attack might simply roll over the RSK's brittle defenses. It therefore became even more essential that the SVK should be able to rely on the timely deployment of VRS and VJ combat formations from Bosnia and Serbia in the event of a major HV offensive. Unhappily for the SVK planners, the Bosnian Army was also improving its capabilities and threatening the VRS, while in Belgrade there was increasing unease about the international consequences of sending Yugoslav troops back into the Krajina. The prospects of reliable outside assistance became more problematic as time went on.

Although the SVK could not necessarily count on either army to come to its rescue, both continued to provide assistance and support to the Krajina Serbs. The VJ took the lead with its provision of officers and NCOs to help lead and organize the SVK; it also provided regular logistic support and continued to treat and pay some SVK officers as if they were still in the Yugoslav Army. Belgrade and the SVK jointly took control over the reformation of Fikret Abdic's forces, making them fit for battle by providing leadership and organization, and sending small numbers of combat troops and weapons from their own organizations. The VRS, too, occasionally deployed combat units, including battalion and brigade-sized formations, to bolster the SVK during 1993 and 1994, and sent a FROG-7 (LUNA-M) battery during 1993. The VRS also worked with the SVK to coordinate actions around Bihać and the Livno Valley, where the Serb armies had a mutual interest.

SVK Strategy and Doctrine

Knowing how difficult it would be for the SVK's limited forces to preserve its territory from a determined attack, the SVK Main Staff developed—probably with VJ help and coordination—a bold strategy designed to deter Zagreb from launching a major offensive against the Krajina. This strategy would make hostages of Croatian cities and strategic targets by employing the SVK's artillery and long-range rocket systems against them. HV Military Intelligence chief Admiral Domazet later called this "The Strategy of Real Threat."²¹ As Domazet understood it, the Krajina Serbs perceived themselves as engaged in a struggle for their very existence and regarded any means as justifiable if it improved their prospects for survival. The SVK put their deterrent strategy to work in the aftermath of both "Maslenica" and "Medak," hitting Croatian cities near the frontline with artillery fire and firing a long-range rocket (either a FROG or "Orkan" 262-mm rocket) in the direction of Zagreb. These demonstrations did not, in the end, deter the Croatians

from attacking the Krajina, but the strategy was to have some impact on the development of the HV's strategy and doctrine.

SVK combat doctrine more or less mirrored that used by the JNA/VRS during the 1991 war and the Bosnian war. Given its limited troop numbers, however, the SVK relied even more heavily on its heavy weapons advantages to stave off an attacker. As the Serbs did in Bosnia, the Army constructed trench and bunker defenses, backed by scores of mines, to protect its thin-stretched infantrymen and delay Croatian advances. Corps-level commands knew that any kind of defense in depth was denied them and that they would have to stop HV forces at the frontline because there were no corps-level combat formations to conduct major counterattacks or block holes. The limited strategic depth of the RSK itself forced a doctrine of forward defense on its armed forces. The more time the SVK could buy, the greater the possibilities of VJ and VRS reinforcements arriving to save the day.

Chapter 68 **The New HV—Doctrine, Training, and Force Structure, 1993-1994**

The Croatian Army in 1992 lacked focus. Although General Anton Tus, then the Main Staff chief, was a highly competent officer, he and the Main Staff do not appear to have developed a plan to forge an HV "system," a distinctive way of conducting business. The JNA was the JNA not just because the Yugoslav Government had designated it the "Yugoslav People's Army," but because over the 50 years of its existence it had developed a particular culture, a military doctrine, and a marked style of doing things. The HV likewise needed to create such a spirit so that all who served it did so with the consciousness that they were the HV, that there was a certain way the HV was going to work and fight, and that the mission of the HV was to retake the Republic of Serb Krajina and reintegrate its territory into the Republic of Croatia. That is what Bobetko and the members of his Main Staff set out to do when they were appointed in late 1992.

Training the Officer Corps

One of the Main Staff's first targets was the HV officer corps, which at the beginning of 1993 was still a disparate jumble of ex-MUP officers, former JNA regular officers, JNA reservists, and wartime volunteers. Below the senior command levels, however, even the JNA veterans generally lacked the professional training necessary to lead small units well or command large formations confidently. In addition, for both ideological and operational reasons, the senior political and military leadership of Croatia wanted to inculcate a new attitude and culture among HV officers and break cleanly with the "Communist" JNA past.²²

The HV had established an officers school in early 1992 for platoon and company commanders, but the course was very short.²³ With Bobetko's accession to power, he and the Main Staff revamped the officer and NCO school courses and extended them to three months.²⁴ They also set about creating a new command/staff school to train staff officers and senior field commanders.²⁵ The whole enterprise was unified as the "Petar Zrinski" HV University. Later, in 1994, the HV established an NCO school in Zadar exclusively for Guards units.²⁶

In his memoirs Bobetko places great emphasis on officer training and the establishment of the command/staff school, noting that in 1992:

We were weak . . . in the command structure, in the decisionmaking structures, as factors in whether someone is a good company or battalion commander, what elements he uses and how to prepare for defense or an ambush.

. . . our [combat] losses were excessive, . . . our command structure was weak, and . . . people did not know the basic elements. The basic precept was that we had to alter the situation exclusively by training people.

It was necessary to create the need and initiative for learning among the people. People arrived from the trenches having never sat with a book for three or four hours, unable to read a map or plot the situation, finding it difficult to orient themselves. Thus, there were plenty of questions; they had intuition and experience acquired on the frontline of the battlefield, but the basic task was to train them to be more resolute, to lead the Army better, to minimize casualties.²⁷

Regarding the command/staff school, Bobetko states that,

The third step was giving thought to a command/staff school. In terms of command structure, the highest positions that we had were filled by brigade commanders and chiefs of staff, so that if they had a “downward” structure consisting of schooled people who had undergone a course of three or six months, then it would certainly be possible to bring such an overall command structure to the level of an efficient, operational, and very effective unit.

I told the President this: “Without such a system, we can spend time, but we will not have efficiency; this period of neither war nor peace will pass very quickly, and I think that we should take advantage of it . . . After six months of schooling of those people . . . they were very good commanders and fought like lions on the battlefield. Before that they did not know even the elementary things.”²⁸

With the creation and strengthening of the HV's school system during 1993-94, an HV culture began to form that created a uniform body of officers who would be able to implement any warplan the Main Staff put together.

From Doctrine to Strategy

With the training of the officer corps on track, the Main Staff was drawing up strategic-operational plans to defeat the RSK and developing operational-level and tactical-level doctrine for the HV, determining

how the HV would fight. During 1996, Admiral Domazet published an excellent overview in the Croatian military journal *Hrvatski Vojnik* that systematically outlined the step-by-step process through which the HV developed its strategy and doctrine for defeating the RSK. Domazet's article, highlighted by General Bobetko's memoirs, illuminate what the Main Staff saw as the Serb threat and the steps it took to counter SVK capabilities and achieve the Croatian war aims.²⁹

The primary Croatian political objective, toward which all Croatian military strategy was bent, was the destruction of the Republic of Serb Krajina and the reintegration of its territory into Croatia. There were two qualifiers to this objective that profoundly influenced HV strategy and doctrine: ensure that the human costs of attacking the Serbs are contained at acceptable levels and that the “liberation” of the Krajina occurs in such a way as to preempt countervailing international criticism. These supplementary requirements made it essential that, once the strategic offensive commenced, the HV must achieve a rapid victory and eliminate the RSK in no more than a week.

These goals required the HV to create a force structure married to an operational-tactical doctrine of high-speed mobile warfare that could inflict a rapid, comprehensive defeat on the SVK's ground forces. It also had to devise active and passive measures of defense to counteract the SVK's strategy of reprisal and also constructed a systematic campaign of low-level attrition warfare calculated to wear down the entire RSK. By these means it was hoped and expected that, when the HV struck in force, total victory could be achieved within the brief timespan allotted to it.³⁰

The Croatian political and military leaderships appear to have decided on the attrition strategy after observing the effects that Operation “Maslenica” and Operation “Medak,” together with the extended low-level

shelling campaigns conducted by both sides, had on the resiliency of the RSK state and the SVK itself. Domazet writes,

... the Republic of Croatia needed to rapidly create a strong military force, one that would be able to affect the enemy by the very reality of its power so as to keep it in a state of tension, thereby exhausting and expending its military capability. Thus, over a lengthy period of time, (until the mandate of the UNPROFOR . . . expired, or under favorable general conditions that could be brought about), the strategic military prerequisites would be gradually created for an effective offensive operation in order to inflict a strong surprise blow, disrupt the enemy system of defense, shatter its army and all the quasi-governmental institutions, and undertake systematic and complete liberation of the occupied territories.³¹

To this end the HV ran a virtually constant campaign of reconnaissance-sabotage operations against the SVK and sought every opportunity to goad the SVK into raising its alert levels, seeking to force the Serbs to expend resources while wearing down their morale. Domazet states,

Systematic activities aimed at establishment and planned acceleration of the process of exhaustion and expenditure of enemy military capabilities were an essential ingredient of this . . . In essence, it was a question of planned imposition of the pace of deliberate activities, which had consequences for the enemy in the form of prolonged and excessive tension of personnel and purposeless exhaustion of materiel. Activities whose content and features were related to reconnaissance and commando operations, and indeed the very designation of that activity, had a particularly important role in the context of those efforts and kept the enemy defense system in constant tension. It is essential, that is, that the enemy was thus compelled to spread out his forces and put in a position where he could not clearly define the central point of defense, and he confronted the problem of a "broad front." . . . That realization had a particularly adverse effect on his morale.³²

Thus, from 1993 to the beginning of Operation "Oluja" in 1995, Zagreb continually tested and prodded the SVK, wearing it down and ripening it for defeat.

To defeat the SVK's "Real Threat" strategy, the HV worked to create intelligence collection assets to identify SVK artillery and rocket system locations and then train and equip its artillery and air units to suppress and eliminate them. Domazet indicated that the HV relied on aerial photography, primarily from unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV), and communications intelligence to provide the essential information. At the same time, HV artillery units and the nascent Croatian Air Force (newly equipped during 1993 and 1994 with 25 MiG-21 fighter-bombers) trained to use this information to target and destroy the SVK systems. The HV also trained its growing force of elite special operations units to conduct deep penetration missions aimed at disabling or destroying artillery and rocket batteries. In addition, since the Main Staff realized they could not hope to knock out every SVK artillery tube or rocket launcher, it worked to harden and protect potential targets of SVK retaliation strikes. The objective, as Domazet indicates, was to bring "... about conditions which would guarantee an 'acceptable' (rational) level of destruction and other losses. Because this removed the advantage on which the enemy was building his entire defense strategy."

Developing the Croatian Blitzkrieg

Both the attrition strategy and the defense against the SVK's Real Threat strategy were secondary to the development of the HV's ability to conduct a decisive strategic offensive. The HV needed to be able to conduct an offensive in one week that could

... liberate the occupied areas . . . based on the idea of rapid penetration along selected routes . . . in order to cut the forces of the enemy into smaller parts, to break up the defense system . . . and to reach the national border in order to prevent aid from arriving from the territory of Bosnia-Herzegovina or Serbia.³³

The main territorial objective of such an operation would be what the Serbs called their “strategic focus,” UN Sectors North and South—Banija (Banovina), Kordun, Lika, and Northern Dalmatia.³⁴

To undertake the offensive, the HV Main Staff developed a two-tiered force—an assault force of all-professional Guards Brigades, special operations units, and the Air Force backed by reservist-manned Home Defense regiments and reserve infantry brigades.³⁵ (A third tier, according to Domazet, consisted of elements dedicated to identifying and eliminating the SVK’s artillery rocket forces as described previously). The mission of the Guards Brigades was to

*... inflict a strong strike and penetrate the front in the chosen direction and to continue rapid penetration as deep as possible into the enemy order of battle, and then to switch to defense in order to secure the success and/or undertake an attack against parts of the enemy cut off or surrounded.*³⁶

The HV estimated that it needed at least six Guards Brigades for the planned offensive, and it actually formed seven.

While the Guards Brigades made the main drives, the reserve forces would be used for supporting attacks across the front to pin down SVK reserves and ease the advance of the Guards. As Domazet states, these attacks would have

*the purpose of drawing out and tying up the enemy’s forces and of preventing their lateral movement along the front, in order to close off those routes on which the strike of our forces would be inflicted in order to rapidly break through and penetrate to the depth.*³⁷

Additional reserve formations would provide direct support to the Guards along their attack axes.

Another key aspect of HV doctrine was its focus on the decapitation of enemy command, control, and communications in order to completely disrupt the SVK’s ability to maneuver its forces. The HV intended to use a combination of airstrikes, artillery fire, electronic jamming, and reconnaissance-sabotage operations to eliminate key command posts, radio relay towers, and other communications nodes.³⁸

When launched, the HV offensive would have the appearance of a blitzkrieg. Domazet says the attack would begin with

*.... a “maddening” fire strike of air, missile, and artillery forces, and with electronic measures after reconnaissance-commando teams had been infiltrated along the main directions of the attack in order to disorganize the enemy command and communication system and/or disable his missile-artillery strikes against cities and infrastructural facilities, to open up a passage in the defensive structure, thereby [creating] conditions for bringing in the striking force (motorized Guards Brigades) from their [approach march].*³⁹

As the Guards Brigades penetrated enemy defenses, they would bypass major pockets of resistance and push on quickly toward the Croatian state border. While some reserve units attacked along secondary axes in order to pin down flanks and potential reserve elements, other reserve units would follow in the Guards’ path to eliminate the formations they bypassed.*

Operational and tactical doctrine as sophisticated as this required a high degree of professionalization and training for its successful employment, but there is limited information about such training.⁴⁰ It appears, however, that in addition to its early focus on officer and NCO training schools the HV in 1994 began systematic drills of its command staffs and formations to inculcate the new HV doctrine throughout the Army.⁴¹ As with most regular armies, the HV training program for its professional formations—primarily the Guards Brigades and special operations units—was a building-block process working from individual training through small-unit field training exercises (FTX) up to battalion-level field exercises.⁴² The frequency of each type and level of exercises has not been reported, but the small unit training appears to have been almost continual, while battalion-size maneuvers probably

* This section on Croatian operational-tactical doctrine is discussed as theory rather than linked specifically to the exact warplans drawn up for Operation “Olja” (Storm). These campaign plans will be addressed in the section covering 1995. This theory is also applicable to all HV operations conducted during 1995, including those in Bosnia.

occurred every few months.⁴³ The HV does not appear to have conducted any brigade-size FTXs during 1994 or 1995, but its operations in the Livno Valley certainly provided the units engaged there with the equivalent experience. Meanwhile, corps, district, and brigade staffs carried out regular command post exercises that almost certainly rehearsed plans for contingencies and operations against the RSK. (General Bobetko has written that the HV Main Staff and the Bjelovar Corps District ran a full-scale staff and field rehearsal for Operation "Bljesak (Flash)"—the Western Slavonia campaign—three months before its execution in May 1995.)⁴⁴

HV reserve brigades and Home Defense regiments received far less training than the professional units, but regular callups of those manning frontline sectors opposite the SVK, as well as other reserve formations, helped to keep them militarily competent.⁴⁵ These exercises refamiliarized reservists with their weapons and equipment and provided some specialized refresher training. Few were able to conduct any genuine field training, however, and certainly no battalion-size exercises. General Bobetko's comments on their performance in 1995 make it clear that the HV reserve units were considerably inferior to the Guards Brigades.⁴⁶

Equipment quality played less of a role in the reorganization of the HV than did other factors. The way the HV fought was more important than the implements it used, since most of the HV's heavy weapons were the ones the Army captured from the JNA during its 1991 war. Since then the HV had acquired only a few additional systems, primarily some Argentine 155-mm artillery pieces and Romanian 122-mm multiple rocket launchers. In contrast to 1991, however, the HV had systematically redistributed its heavy weaponry to provide more uniform tables of organization and equipment for all its formations, particularly the Guards Brigades. The biggest purchases were for the Air Force, which at the beginning of 1992 had only three MiG-21s, some An-2 biplanes, and one Mi-8 helicopter. The Zagreb government bought about 25 MiG-21 fighter-bombers, some 30 Mi-8 transport helicopters, and eight Mi-24 helicopter gunships.⁴⁷ While these strike weapons were being added to the HV armory, purchases of items like boots, clothing, and helmets gave the Army a more uniform and disciplined appearance.

Chapter 69

The Diplomats Fail—Croatia Irredenta and the March 1994 Cease-Fire

After the Croatia-RSK cease-fire broke down in January 1993, UN and EU negotiators spent the rest of the year trying to reestablish the protocols agreed to in January 1992 as part of the Vance Plan. Their efforts failed to produce any compromise even at the level of the lowest common denominator, let alone on the larger political issues. In the aftermath of the Medak operation in September, however, active hostilities had declined in frequency, and by spring 1994 both sides were groping toward a cease-fire and perhaps even some confidence-building measures that they perceived were in their own interest.⁴⁸ On 16 March, Russian special representative Vitaly Churkin announced that he had brokered an agreement for talks between Croatian and RSK Government officials starting on 22 March. The two sides met again on 29-30 March, and, after extended negotiations, agreed to halt the fighting.⁴⁹

Despite the cease-fire, only moderate progress was made on other issues, and it was not until December 1994 that some modest confidence-building measures could be worked out. There had been no progress at all toward reaching an overall political settlement.⁵⁰ The original Vance Plan agreed to back in 1992 had deferred the disposition of the disputed UN Protected Areas to a final political settlement, and both sides continued to interpret the agreement according to their own state interests. The Croatians—correctly insisting that the international community recognized that Zagreb's sovereignty extended to all the Croatian borders—demanded that UNPROFOR disarm the SVK, permit Zagreb to reestablish its authority over the areas seized by the RSK, and allow displaced Croatian refugees to return to their homes. Even as the two sides were agreeing on opening the Belgrade-Zagreb highway, the Adria oil pipeline, and some water pipelines as evidence of their desire for a larger settlement, military events in Bosnia continued to overshadow the talks.⁵¹ First the SVK's joint assault with the VRS against Bihać drew threats from Zagreb to invade the Krajina.⁵² Then Croatia's military answer to the Serb offensive in the Livno Valley—Operation "Zima 94"—pointed to the solution Zagreb would choose in 1995.

^{*} See Section V, Chapter 63.

Endnotes, Section VI

¹ Rear Admiral Davor Domazet- "Loso," "The Military Aspect of the Strategic Determinants for Operations To Liberate the Occupied Areas of the Republic of Croatia," *Hrvatski Vojnik* October 1996, pp. 6-13.

² Much of this section is based on General Bobetko's often self-serving memoirs. Nevertheless, many of the points Bobetko makes regarding the reorganization of the HV are valid, although the overall importance of his role in fixing identified problems remains unclear.

³ Zagreb Radio 20 November 1992.

⁴ Janko Bobetko, *Sve Moje Bitke (All My Battles)*, Zagreb: Vlastita Naklada, 1996, pp. 364-365.

⁵ Zagreb Radio 5 December 1992.

⁶ Bobetko, *All My Battles*, pp. 366-367.

⁷ Analysis of the operation is based on the following sources:

- Belgrade Tanjug reporting, 17 January 1993-1 April 1993.
- Belgrade Radio reporting, 17 January 1993-1 April 1993.
- Zagreb Radio reporting, 17 January 1993-1 April 1993.
- Bobetko, *All My Battles*, pp. 362-363, 366-375.
- Paul Harris, *Cry Bosnia* New York: Interlink Books, 1996, pp. 81-83, section on "Arkan" in Benkovac.
- 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 HV "Zrinski" Special Operations Battalion.
- Andjelka Mustapic, "Units of Croatian Armed Forces: Slavonian Memoirs," *Hrvatski Vojnik* 26 March 1993, p. 13, article on the 3rd Guards Brigade.
- Gordan Radosevic, "Bite of the Cobras," *Hrvatski Vojnik* 17 June 1994, pp. 17-19, article on the 3rd Battalion/3rd Guards Brigade.
- Vesna Puljak, "'Thunders' From Banija," *Hrvatski Vojnik* 6 May 1994, pp. 19-21, an article on the 2nd Guards Brigade.
- Gordan Lasic, "Take Aim, But Do Not Fire," *Hrvatski Vojnik* 5 November 1993, an article on the Mixed Artillery Battalion/112th Infantry Brigade.
- Lidija Duvnjak, "Second Anniversary of the 53rd Marine Battalion," *Hrvatski Vojnik* 22 October 1993, p. 84, an article on the 53rd Naval Landing Infantry Battalion.
- Gordan Lasic, "Night Shadows," *Hrvatski Vojnik* 13 August 1993, p. 14, an article on the Reconnaissance-Sabotage Company/4th Guards Brigade.
- Damir Dukic, "The Scorpions in Defense of Croatia," *Hrvatski Vojnik* 4 June 1993, pp. 16-18, an article on the 114th Infantry Brigade.
- Andjelka Mustapic, "Cetina Fighter—Giants 'Under the Stars,'" *Hrvatski Vojnik* 18 June 1993, an article on the 126th Infantry Brigade.
- Gordan Lasic and Dejan Frigelj, "St. Krsevan and 112th Defending Zadar," *Hrvatski Vojnik* 18 June 1993, p. 14, an article on the 112th Infantry Brigade.
- Andjelka Mustapic, "The Knights of Ravnici Kotari," *Hrvatski Vojnik* 12 March 1993, pp. 10-13, an interview with Brigadier Mirko Sundov, commander 4th Guards Brigade.

⁸ Drawn from Belgrade Tanjug reports in February quoting SVK public announcements.

⁹ Igor Alborghetti, "In Peacetime Croatia Will Have Only 50,000 Soldiers!" *Zagreb Globus* 31 May 1996, pp. 15-17, 59, an interview with Corps General Anton Tus.

¹⁰ Gotovina took over the corps on 5 December 1992. Zagreb Radio 5 December 1992. Bobetko indicates in his memoirs that the Split Corps District HQ was incapable of undertaking such an operation. Bobetko, *All My Battles*, p. 367.

¹¹ Based on a review of Belgrade Tanjug, Belgrade Radio, and Zagreb Radio during January-April 1993.

¹² Bobetko, *All My Battles*, pp. 378-380. Bobetko's concerns that the SVK would launch a ground attack and attempt to seize the Gospic area or cut the lines of communication south along the Velebit Mountains appear to have been unfounded.

¹³ This account is based on the following sources:

- Bobetko, *All My Battles*, pp. 376-377, 380-384.
- Belgrade Radio 11 September 1993.
- Belgrade Tanjug 11 September to 15 September 1993.
- Zagreb Radio 14 September 1993.
- "Fighting Reported in Croatia Between Croats and Rebel Serbs," Reuters 9 September 1993.
- "Croats Said To Capture Rebel Serb Villages in Croatia," Reuters 9 September 1993.
- Steve Pagani, "Croatian Army Says It Captured Three Villages," Reuters 9 September 1993.
- "Krajina Serbs Shell Croatian Positions," Reuters 10 September 1993.
- Davor Huic, "Serbs Launch Fiercest [Attack] on Croatian Town in Two Years," Reuters 10 September 1993.
- Dan de Luce, "Fighting in Croatia Forces 500 Serbs To Flee," Reuters 11 September 1993.
- Davor Huic, "Blast Rocks Zagreb Suburb, Said Probable Missile," Reuters 11 September 1993.
- "Rebel Serbs Halt Croat Offensive Near Gospic," Reuters 11 September 1993.
- Davor Huic, "Suspected Missile Attack Rocks Zagreb, Injures Nine," Reuters 12 September 1993.
- Dan de Luce, "Serbs Halt Croats in Gospic; UN Fear Battle Yet To Come," Reuters 12 September 1993.
- "Croatian President Orders Troops To Halt Fighting," Reuters 12 September 1993.
- Dan de Luce, "Rebel Serbs Hold Ground Against Croatian Attack," Reuters 12 September 1993.
- "UN Says Serbs Threaten To Attack Targets in Croatia," Reuters 12 September 1993.
- Dijana Vrban, "Croat Army Wants Serbs Disarmed Before Withdrawal," Reuters 12 September 1993.
- "UN Force Commander Mediating Croat-Serb Truce," Reuters 12 September 1993.
- Steve Pagani, "Croatia's Rebel Serbs Threaten To Use New Weapons," Reuters 13 September 1993.
- Dan de Luce, "Krajina Serbs Caught On Hope by Croatian Offensive," Reuters 13 September 1993.
- Steve Pagani, "Krajina Serbs Shell Croatian Town," Reuters 13 September 1993.
- Dan de Luce, "Rebel Serbs Claim Gains Against Croats," Reuters 13 September 1993.
- "Serb and Croat Commanders Agree To Consider Truce," Reuters 13 September 1993.

- Dan de Luce, "Serbs Soldiers Still Trapped in Croat-Held Village," Reuters 14 September 1993.
- "Serbs Shoot Down Croatian Fighter Jet," Reuters 14 September 1993.
- Dan de Luce, "Croats Agree To Start Withdrawal From Serb Villages," Reuters 16 September 1993.
- "UN Troops Moving Into Villages as Croats Withdraw," Reuters 16 September 1993.
- Dan de Luce, "UN Eyeball-to-Eyeball With Croat, Serb Fighters," Reuters 16 September 1993.
- Dan de Luce, "Croatians Burn Houses Before Handing Over to UN," Reuters 16 September 1993.
- Dan de Luce, "UN Says Croatian Army Razed Serb Villages," Reuters 17 September 1993.
- Dan de Luce, "UN Major Says Croat Troops Killed Serb Villagers," Reuters 18 September 1993.
- "UN Says 66 Serb Bodies Found, Many Mutilated," Reuters 23 September 1993.

¹⁴ The authors were unable to incorporate fully in Volume I information from the recent book *Knin Je Pao U Beogradu (Knin Fell in Belgrade)* that covers the development and state of the SVK prior to Operation "Oluja" in August 1995. This book, written by Major General Milisav Sekulic, the former Chief of Operations and Training on the SVK Main Staff, sheds new light on the Krajina Serb Army, including the situation with Torbica. See also Belgrade Tanjug 4 June 1992. Torbica was the former commander of the JNA 37th (Uzice) Corps during 1991 and early 1992 when the corps was deployed in the Mostar area to guard JNA facilities during the Croatian war.

¹⁵ Lieutenant Colonel General Milan Torbica, "Persecution of Officers From Krajina," *Belgrade Borba* 20 October 1992, p. 12, a letter to the editor from General Torbica.

¹⁶ Belgrade Tanjug 28 October 1992 and 26 November 1992; M. Cetnik, "Change at Top of Territorial Defense of Krajina: Novakovic Replacing Torbica," *Belgrade Politika* 29 October 1992, p. 7.

¹⁷ Belgrade Tanjug 22 February 1994.

¹⁸ General Celeketic had earlier commanded the JNA/ VRS 16th Krajina Motorized Brigade with distinction in Western Slavonia during 1991 and in the Posavina corridor during 1992. S. Radulovic, "Who Is General Celeketic," *Belgrade Borba* 24 February 1994, p. 3; Filip Svarn, "In the House of the Three Milans," *Belgrade Vreme* 28 February 1994, p. 19; Radovan Pavlovic, "The Reason Why Torbica, Novakovic, and Celeketic Have Left," *Belgrade Politika* 27 May 1995, p. 7.

¹⁹ Jovanka Simic, "Intrigues Because of Politics," *Belgrade Vecernje Novosti* 15 October 1993, p. 2, an interview with Major General Mile Novakovic.

²⁰ Radovan Pavlovic, "The Reason Why Torbica, Novakovic, and Celeketic Have Left," *Belgrade Politika* 27 May 1995, p. 7.

²¹ Domazet-"Loso," *Hrvatski Vojnik* October 1996, pp. 6-13.

²² Bobetko, *All My Battles*, pp. 364-365, 508.

²³ Vesna Puljak, "Academy for Winners," *Zagreb Velebit* 27 December 1996, pp. 14-15.

²⁴ Defense Minister Gojko Susak stated in October 1995 that 2,700 personnel had graduated from the officers' school. Report by Kristina Matica Stojan on Defense Minister Susak's speech, "The Future of Croatia in Safe Hands," *Zagreb Velebit* 20 October 1995, pp. 5-9.

²⁵ The HV newspaper *Velebit* states that:

The mission of the school was (and is) to equip officers to command combined higher level tactical units and operational systems in combat, and to perform staff and other duties in Croatian military commands and Defense Ministry or General Staff departments and administrations.

"Fifth Class of Officers at the Command/staff School," *Zagreb Velebit* 4 October 1996, p. 11.

²⁶ Vesna Puljak, "Academy for Winners," *Zagreb Velebit*

27 December 1996, pp. 14-15.

²⁷ Bobetko, *All My Battles*, p. 503.

²⁸ Bobetko, *All My Battles*, p. 504.

²⁹ Domazet-"Loso," *Hrvatski Vojnik* October 1996, pp. 6-13; see also Vinko Sabrek, "The Croatian Air Force in Operation 'Storm' Part 2," *Hrvatski Vojnik* November 1996, pp. 56-59 and Marijan Pavacic, "Struggle Between David and Goliath," *Hrvatski Vojnik* July 1997, pp. 10-17, an article on the HV's UAV project and use during the war.

³⁰ Domazet states that:

From these initial premises, we had to derive meaningful responses to the fundamental determinants of the "Strategy of Real Threat" in this order:

1. How to neutralize the enemy attempt to take advantage of a "favorable geostrategic position and open a front from Baranja to Prevlaka";
2. What was a sufficient balance of power for a rapid offensive operation to liberate the occupied areas and how to attain it;
3. How to avoid the consequences of an initial strike and prevent as soon as possible continuation of the reprisal with the enemy's missile and artillery weapons;
4. By what mode of operation and in what directions to surprise the enemy and inflict blows on him, select the way that would disorganize his defense system most rapidly and guarantee a penetration to the borders of the state, prevent possible introduction of other strategic military forces, and bring about conditions for breaking up the "Army of the RSK" completely into separate parts.

Domazet-"Loso," *Hrvatski Vojnik* October 1996, pp. 6-13.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Domazet notes that, from April 1993 to May 1995, SVK units, particularly those in Lika and Northern Dalmatia, spent about 650 days at "increased level of combat alert awaiting attacks . . . from the forces of the HV" and about 300 days on alert because of alarms over HV recon-sabotage operations. Domazet-"Loso," *Hrvatski Vojnik* October 1996, pp. 6-13.

³³ Domazet-"Loso," *Hrvatski Vojnik* October 1996, pp. 6-13.

³⁴ Zagreb realized that it would be unable to generate sufficient forces to simultaneously assault all of the RSK at once, particularly if the Yugoslav Army intervened in Eastern Slavonia (UN Sector East), and, as a result, focused its primary planning efforts on first eliminating the "core" RSK areas in UN Sectors North and South, as well as West. Domazet-"Loso," *Hrvatski Vojnik* October 1996, pp. 6-13.

³⁵ The reserve infantry brigades were territorially raised formations manned with younger personnel who had finished their conscript duty and some middle-aged reservists. Most had been formed during the 1991 war. The HV began to form Home Defense (*Domobranstvo*) regiments in 1992; these also were territorially raised formations, virtually identical to the previous reserve infantry brigades. In fact, most were simply reserve infantry brigades that had been redesignated as regiments, that is, 137th Duga Resa Brigade was redesignated 137th Home Defense Regiment in 1994. However, there appears to have been little to distinguish the two types of formations. Part of the reason for the redesignation may have been to give more units the traditional *Domobranstvo* designator, which the Austro-Hungarians had first allowed to be used in the 19th century and which the Ustasha Government had continued the use of in World War II. In addition to the Home Defense regiments, the Croatians also had a number of independent Home

Defense battalions, most of which seem to have been comprised of older age categories and were truly used only for local defense. The HV also had three conscript training brigades—the 111th, 113th, and 123rd—formed from three of the 1991 territorial brigades, all of which were combat capable and more robustly equipped than either the Home Defense regiments or the reserve infantry brigades.

³⁶ Domazet-“Loso,” *Hrvatski Vojnik* October 1996, pp. 6-13.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Domazet-“Loso,” *Hrvatski Vojnik* October 1996, pp. 6-13; Vinko Sebrek, “The Croatian Air Force in Operation ‘Storm’ Part 2,” *Hrvatski Vojnik* November 1996, pp. 56-59.

³⁹ Domazet-“Loso,” *Hrvatski Vojnik* October 1996, pp. 6-13. See also Bobetko’s evaluation of the HV prepared in April 1995 for President Tudjman, Bobetko, *All My Battles*, pp. 385-389.

⁴⁰ Bobetko, *All My Battles*, p. 517.

Bobetko states in his 25 April 1995 evaluation for President Tudjman that:

The preconditions for such a decision were satisfied gradually through the following action: the training of all command staffs, both the command staffs of the corps districts and the lower command staffs, the command staffs of the Guards Brigades.

Through breaking in and training, and through demonstration exercises, all the variants for the most efficient use and most rational approaches to the execution of basic duties have been established. The basic experiences acquired in part through various training courses have been carried over to the basic command structures of the Croatian forces.

⁴¹ Bobetko, *All My Battles*, p. 387.

⁴² The HV appears to have differentiated between these FTXs and the “demonstration” exercises that the Main Staff also held. These seem to have been more orchestrated affairs designed more for show than as a real learning experience. Three demonstration exercises are known to have been conducted in 1994 and early 1995: “Bandira 94”—a battalion-size combined arms and joint AF-Naval exercise, “Poseidon 94”—an AF-Navy exercise, and “Mlinac 95”—a brigade-level river crossing exercise. Bobetko, *All My Battles*, p. 510. For samples of Croatian unit training, see the following *Hrvatski Vojnik* articles:

- Tomislav Prusina, “General Purpose Artillerymen,” *Hrvatski Vojnik* February 1995, p. 18, an article on mortar units in the 1st Battalion/3rd Guards Brigade.
- Vesna Puljak, “Units of the Croatian Army: The Lika Artillerymen Are Heard Far and Wide,” *Hrvatski Vojnik* 29 July 1994, p. 23, an article on mortar units in the 9th Guards Brigade.
- Vesna Puljak, “‘Thunders’ From Banija,” *Hrvatski Vojnik* 6 May 1994, pp. 19-21, an article on the 2nd Guards Brigade.
- Vesna Puljak, “‘Thunderbolts’ in Armor,” *Hrvatski Vojnik* 20 May 1994, pp. 13-15, an article on the Armored Battalion/2nd Guards Brigade.

⁴³ Bobetko states:

... since 1993 and 1994 the units had been gradually trained by battalion, while on the move; they had been involved in exercises, and those exercises were carried out in those regions and on topographical features where they might eventually execute their basic mission ... two years were devoted exclusively to preparing for such a complex operation.

Bobetko, *All My Battles*, p. 438.

⁴⁴ Bobetko, *All My Battles*, p. 402.

⁴⁵ In the directive for Operation “Oluja-1” (Storm-1) covering the Zagreb Corps District’s sector for “Oluja,” HV reserve and home defense units, “... through mobilization and calling in for training and military exercises, will be rotated every 45 to 90 days in keeping with the brigade/regiment resources.” Bobetko, *All My Battles*, p. 425. An article on the 137th Home Defense Regiment indicates that it conducted rehearsals for its role in Operation “Oluja.” Neven Miladin, “Where It Was Needed Most,” *Zagreb Velebit*

8 December 1995, p. 15. An article on the 145th Infantry Brigade also indicates that “the brigade used the period of more than a year of ‘rest’ for restructuring, and drilling for future actions, which was evident through numerous exercises and preparations for mobilization.” Neven Miladin, “Proven Throughout All of Croatia,” *Zagreb Velebit* 26 January 1996, p. 14.

⁴⁶ Bobetko, *All My Battles*, p. 438.

⁴⁷ Vinko Sebrek, “HRZ in Operation Storm,” *Hrvatski Vojnik* October 1996, pp. 46-49, an article on the Croatian Air Force.

⁴⁸ The two sides had agreed to a Christmas cease-fire in 1993, which they extended in January. It never fully went into effect in UN Sector South, however, and was not comprehensive. “Serbs and Croats Extend Cease-Fire in Croatia,” Reuters 13 January 1994.

⁴⁹ Davor Huic, “Croats and Krajina Serbs Sign Cease-Fire Accord,” Reuters 30 March 1994. The agreement included five main points:

- Immediate cessation of hostilities, with cease-fire on the confrontation line taking effect April 4 at 0900.
- Effective with signing, units are to be frozen in place for 10 km on both sides of the contact line, except for those movements necessary to execute the agreement, or those preapproved by UNPROFOR.
- Withdrawal of ground forces of both sides by one km from the confrontation line, to their respective ‘separation lines,’ to be completed by 0900 on April 8.
- UNPROFOR and ECMM [European Community Monitoring Mission] to monitor the area between the separation lines.
- By April 5 at 0900, mortars and AA artillery are to be pulled back at least 10 km from the confrontation line, heavy guns and tanks at least 20 km.

⁵⁰ Douglas Hamilton, “Croatia Signs Pact With Rebel Serbs,” Reuters 2 December 1994.

⁵¹ Douglas Hamilton, “Croatia Signs Pact With Rebel Serbs,” Reuters 2 December 1994. Negotiations over the confidence-building measures went poorly throughout the year until the December agreement. “Croatian Serbs Reject Agreement With Zagreb,” Reuters 18 November 1994.

Section VII

The Bosnian and Croatian Wars in 1995: The Long and Bloody Path to Dayton

Though none of the key players could know it at the start of the year, 1995 was destined to be the last act of their violent drama, closing the war not only in Bosnia but also in neighboring Croatia. Indeed, the two wars were to become so interlinked during the course of the year that by war's end they had essentially become a single conflict. In the last few months of the war, the Croatian Army (HV) would attack the Krajina Serb Army (SVK), partly to rescue the 5th Corps of the Bosnian Army (ARBiH). Thereafter, the Croatian Army along with the Croatian Defense Council (HVO) and the Bosnian Army would bring the Bosnian Serb Army (VRS) to the verge of collapse, while the Yugoslav Army (VJ) would threaten to defend the last vestiges of the Krajina Serbs in the eastern Slavonia region of Croatia. Thus, as the Dayton talks began, no fewer than six armies—HV, SVK, ARBiH, HVO, VRS, and VJ—would be at war or on a war footing within 100 kilometers of each other.

Chapter 70 **The Bosnian Army in 1995**

The Bosnian military establishment—having taken advantage of the January-May cease-fire agreement to give its exhausted soldiers a respite from the previous year's fighting—was better prepared for offensive operations in the spring of 1995 than ever before. By this time, the Bosnian Army could field a force of some 230,000 personnel, organized into six corps and about 120 maneuver brigades.¹ It was not so much that the Army had grown in overall size (which remained relatively constant from about mid-1993 onward), but rather that its capabilities had significantly improved. Three years into the conflict, the ARBiH was more experienced, more confident, somewhat better equipped, generally better trained, and apparently willing to fight for as long as it took to win back critical territorial objectives. Even though it still had to fight essentially the same war of attrition it had begun back in 1994, it was using a more efficient fighting force and improved tactics that it hoped would achieve greater gains at lower cost.

Organization

The ARBiH in 1995 consisted of six regionally based corps and one independent division, with a small number of special-purpose units directly subordinate to the General Staff. Each corps was numbered and had a specified area of responsibility: the 1st Corps in Sarajevo and some of the suburbs outside the city; the 2nd Corps headquartered in Tuzla, with responsibility for most of northeast Bosnia (and the isolated Srebrenica and Zepa enclaves); the 3rd Corps centered on Zenica, including the Maglaj-Tesanj finger and the western half of the frontline along the Serb-held Ozren salient; the 4th Corps in northern Herzegovina, covering the Mostar-Konjic-Jablanica area; the 5th Corps in the still-surrounded Bihać pocket; and the 7th Corps based in the Travnik area, facing toward the Serb-held Krajina region (which was the former home of most of the corps' fighting men). The surrounded Gorazde enclave in eastern Bosnia had the independent 81st Division directly subordinate to the General Staff.

The Army had made good use of the winter cease-fire of 1994-95 to effect a major change in its force structure below the corps echelon, beginning with the conversion of most of its "Operational Groups" (OGs)—semipermanent combinations of several brigades grouped by region or function—into permanent divisions. The ARBiH did more than just reflag the ad hoc Operational Groups and change the terminology. The conversion from OGs to divisions was accompanied by a redistribution of precious heavy equipment and some changes in combat doctrine. The new divisions were intended to improve mobility, logistics, fire control, and responsiveness by concentrating the ARBiH's scattered heavy weapons and transportation assets in a division-level mobile reserve. Whereas brigades had previously been operating with perhaps a single captured tank or artillery piece (and possibly no ammunition), these precious resources could now be

concentrated for greater effect wherever and whenever they were most needed for offensive operations in the division's area of responsibility. The new arrangements also improved the distribution of supplies and ammunition, which had always been a problem for the ARBiH.

The new divisions were not intended to be very mobile and, in fact, functioned as static regional combat commands much more than as maneuver formations. Most of the divisions were still sorely deficient in the specialized support elements—particularly the engineering, communications, and logistic functions—which would have been part of a comparable-sized NATO or Warsaw Pact unit. Nevertheless, the evolutionary transition from Operational Groups to divisions showed that the ARBiH leadership was trying to develop a more sophisticated force, with improved command and logistic structures.

Another part of the restructuring expanded the core of elite, offensively oriented “liberation” and “light” brigades to support the largely static “mountain” brigades, most of which were still based on former territorial defense formations. As Bosnian Army commander Delic stated in early March 1995, the latter types of units would serve as static, frontline brigades to defend specific territories. This made a virtue of the fact that such units were primarily composed of local conscripts and reservists and had comparatively little mobility or offensive capability.² The ARBiH’s maneuver brigades, on the other hand, were specifically designed for offensive purposes, with greater mobility and generally better equipment. Exemplified by the crack 7th Muslimski and 17th Krajina Brigades, these were all-volunteer units of experienced troops—usually drawn from the picked men of the static brigades—who were willing to serve wherever the Army directed them to fight. These were the legionaries of the new ARBiH.

The ARBiH also actively developed its special operations elements, which since 1994 had played a vital role as storm troops, infiltrating ahead of offensives to create breakthroughs for the main forces. These “reconnaissance-sabotage” forces were employed to infiltrate enemy positions and generally to disrupt enemy operations. Their purpose was to offset the

VRS superiority in command and control and heavy weapons by hitting opposing command posts, communications, and artillery forward observation posts. The ARBiH high command embedded this doctrine in the force structure by establishing a recon-sabotage battalion at the corps echelon and a company within each brigade. By 1995 many battalions even had organic recon-sabotage platoons, an indication of how the ARBiH had evolved organizationally.

Equipment

The Bosnian Army’s material situation had noticeably improved, thanks largely to the previous spring’s Croat-Muslim Federation agreement that again opened Croat-held territory on the coast for the transit of weapons into Muslim-held central Bosnia. By the beginning of 1995 most Bosnian Army units were adequately outfitted with uniforms, personal weapons, and ammunition—at least compared with the truly desperate days of 1992 and 1993. The ARBiH still had fewer weapons than people, however, and was forever short of supplies; ammunition, in particular, had to be carefully husbanded. The Croatian Government kept a tight hand on the spigot that controlled the flow of all military supplies to Muslim-held Bosnia. The Croats took a substantial percentage of these supplies as a “tax” on their passage and, still wary of their recent adversaries, categorically refused to allow most of the critical weapons—armor and field artillery—to pass.

The Croats’ selective arms embargo insured that the Bosnians would remain dependent on an almost entirely infantry-based army. In early 1995 all of the ARBiH—a force of nearly a quarter million troops—had only a few dozen tanks and perhaps a hundred heavy field artillery pieces of more than 100-mm caliber. This haphazard collection of captured vehicles and weapons was a hodgepodge of varying calibers and types, and each gun crew knew its ammunition reserves had to last for the remainder of the war. These gaping deficiencies in artillery and armor forced the Army to rely almost exclusively on mortars—especially 82-mm medium mortars—to provide its infantry with indirect fire support.

Capabilities

A significant operational consequence of the ARBiH's lack of artillery, armor, and vehicles was a limitation on the rate its forces could advance on the offensive. The ARBiH had been reminded on several painful occasions in 1993 and 1994 that even on foot its forces could not advance beyond the range of their indirect fire support, which was essentially that of the 82-mm medium mortar. Time and again, eagerness to regain lost ground and exploit all-too-rare breakthroughs had led ARBiH infantry beyond the short range of its support weapons and into the prepared killing zones of the far superior VRS artillery, which was followed by timely VRS counterattacks to which they could not effectively reply.

It was not until 1995 that the ARBiH really began to adopt operational-level campaign plans that were more consistent with the Army's firepower and abilities and that allowed it to challenge the VRS effectively and consistently on the battlefield. The infantry tactics themselves—infiltration, assault forces, and light infantry follow-up attacks—were essentially sound and had been worked out the year before. Whereas in 1994 overambitious corps- and division-level battlefield management had led to disasters at Bihać and the Ozren mountains, in 1995 more modest and systematically directed “bite and hold” advances would allow the ARBiH to achieve lasting gains in both theaters.

Operationally, the Bosnian Army had come far since its traumatic birth in April 1992, when it lacked organization, weapons, and practically everything else. Improved weapons supplies, formalized training, and the harsh lessons of combat had all been crucial factors in the ARBiH's improving capabilities. It still lagged far behind the VRS in staff work, logistics and supplies, and heavy equipment. If the ARBiH was clearly not the best fighting force in Bosnia, it was starting to become good enough to defeat its increasingly exhausted and overtaxed Bosnian Serb opponent.

Chapter 71 The HVO in 1995—Still Playing in the Minor Leagues

Organization

At the beginning of 1995 the Croatian Defense Council (HVO) had a nominal strength of between 40,000 and 50,000 troops. However, after the conclusion of the Croat-Muslim conflict the previous spring, the HVO had taken advantage of the opportunity to demobilize most of its conscripts and reservists and retain only a small standing force for local offensive operations. By 1995 no more than half the HVO's theoretical troop strength was actually in the field at any given time, a clear indication that the Bosnian Croats perceived little strategic threat to Herceg-Bosna. These HVO forces were organized into four “corps districts” comprising some 30 infantry brigades and regiments, several independent battalions, and assorted corps-level support elements.

The four HVO corps districts were organized geographically: the Tomislavgrad Corps District (formerly the “Northwest Herzegovina Operational Zone”) had responsibility for Croat-held western Herzegovina; the Mostar Corps District (formerly the “Southeast Herzegovina Operational Zone”) had responsibility for the Mostar area and Croat-held Herzegovina along the Neretva river; the Vitez Corps District (formerly the “Central Bosnia Operational Zone” had responsibility for the various Croat enclaves of central Bosnia; while the Orasje Corps District (formerly the “Posavina Operational Zone”) defended the Orasje pocket area and the small Croat-held areas along the south side of the Posavina corridor. In addition, there was also a tiny “Bihać Military District,” consisting only of the isolated 101st HVO Home Defense Regiment, fighting alongside the ARBiH 5th Corps in the Bihać pocket.

Using a system closely patterned after the Croatian Army, each HVO corps district consisted of one elite "Guards Brigade" and usually eight to 10 territorially based "Home Defense regiments." Each corps district also had a variety of its own specialized elements, generally including a corps logistic base, some kind of artillery unit, an air defense battalion, a military police battalion or company, and a communications company.

When directing battlefield operations, the HVO in some areas would establish intermediate command echelons below the corps district, including "operational groups" and "tactical groups." As in the VRS and ARBiH, operational groups were semipermanent groups of several brigades or tactical groups working together in a particular geographic area—such as the surrounded Vitez region. Tactical groups, by contrast, were more ad hoc commands of temporarily detailed units (frequently of battalion or company size) assembled under a designated commander for a particular combat action. (One example was "Tactical Group 1," which was drawn from small combat elements contributed by each of the HVO units in the Tomislavgrad Corps District and was collectively assigned to hold a particular section of the front in western Bosnia under an operational group.) These ad hoc arrangements complicated command and control and made for constant rotations of personnel, but also distributed the military and economic burden of operations throughout all of the HVO's units and across all of the communities of Croat-held Bosnia.

By the beginning of 1995, the HVO had clearly chosen to adopt a two-tier military structure. The backbone of this structure was to be the HVO's elite, professionally based formations—the special operations units, the four HVO Guards Brigades, the Main Staff and corps-level artillery units, and the specialist units like the military police battalions. Their better equipment, greater degree of training, and overall professionalism made these elite forces by far the most capable units in the HVO. Most of the HVO's manpower, however, still resided in the territorially based "Home Defense regiments" raised in each of the major municipalities in Croat-held Bosnia. Unlike the HVO Guards Brigades, the Home Defense regiments were made up of conscripts and reservists, distinctly

second-level forces of generally smaller size, simplified organization, far fewer heavy weapons, and very limited capabilities.

Equipment

By early 1995 most HVO units were adequately supplied with small arms, ammunition and uniforms, although logistic support sometimes broke down during operations. Zagreb was as lavish in supplying Croat forces as it was miserly with the Muslims, so most HVO units were better equipped than their ARBiH counterparts. Heavy weapons were the force's most serious material weakness. Even at the conclusion of the war, the HVO would have only about four dozen tanks (almost all T-55s and T-34s), about three dozen APCs, IFVs and light tanks (such as M-60 APCs, M-80 IFVs, and PT-76s), and around four dozen towed indirect-fire field artillery pieces over 105 mm (about half of these 130-mm M-46 guns and 122-mm D-30 howitzers). By way of comparison, the entire Bosnian Croat Army could probably field less firepower from heavy weapons than a single VRS armor-mechanized brigade, such as the 2nd Armored Brigade.

The HVO had decided in mid-1994 to make the most of its limited heavy weapons inventory by collecting most of its armor, APC, and artillery pieces and assigning them to its most professional units, the recently formed Guards Brigades. This consolidation had the twofold benefit of distributing the equipment to the professional soldiers who would be able to use it most effectively, and of concentrating the firepower where and when needed offensively instead of having individual vehicles or guns scattered across the long Bosnian front. More than three-quarters of the HVO's heavy weapons inventory went to the four Guards Brigades, the corps artillery units, the HVO's training center at Capljina, and the army-level Repair and Maintenance Battalion.

This consolidation left the rest of the force—specifically, the Home Defense regiments—almost devoid of serious firepower, so that the HVO Home Defense

regiments—like most Bosnian Army brigades—had only their organic mortar complement and corps-level artillery for indirect fire support. These regiments had already been stripped of their best officers and men to form the Guards Brigades, and the loss of their organic heavy weapons diminished their combat potential even further.

Capabilities

The bottom line in early 1995 was that the Bosnian Croat Army's efforts to improve itself had been largely ineffective, producing little real forcewide improvement over the preceding three years. The creation of the four Guards Brigades had greatly improved local offensive capabilities, creating a core of shock troops able to fight alongside the Croatian Army (HV), but at the expense of drastically weakening the rest of the Army in both firepower and troop quality. With a few exceptions, endemic weaknesses in the HVO's higher-level command and control left it still incapable of conducting complex, coordinated offensives. As Operation "Zima 94" had shown the previous winter, the HVO remained heavily reliant on the Croatian Army for its higher-level combat direction. It had also developed a nearly total dependence on Croatian Army heavy weapons for offensive support, especially during the western Bosnian campaigns in late 1995. Far from becoming a fully capable, autonomous fighting force, the Bosnian Croats' inability to overcome their substantial shortcomings in command, coordination, discipline, heavy weapons, and logistics left the HVO in 1995 the same kind of semi-independent force it had been in 1992. Though it could manage some local attacks on its own, during the major offensive operations of the year, it would function as a mere supporting auxiliary of the HV.

Chapter 72 The Rocky Road Toward Croat-Muslim Federation, March 1994–November 1995

Although the Bosnian Muslims and Croats had agreed to form an ARBiH-HVO "joint command" in the Washington and Split Agreements signed in 1994, transforming this ideal into reality was to prove slow, arduous, and fraught with difficulties. An obvious

convergence of interests fostered an increasing degree of military cooperation between their military commands, and by the time of the autumn 1995 offensives they were coordinating plans at the strategic level. The Croats and Muslims remained deeply suspicious of each other, however, and military cooperation remained carefully circumscribed and strictly governed by each faction's self-interest.

The overall record of Croat-Muslim military cooperation in 1994 had been mixed; in some areas there was still no cooperation at all. For instance, the HVO's Vitez Corps District commander and later Chief of the HVO Main Staff, Tihomir Blaskic, stated publicly a month after the cooperation agreement was signed that not only were the HVO's 110th and 111th Brigades not participating in the Bosnian Government attack in the Tesanj-Teslic area but also that his HVO troops had been explicitly directed not to cooperate with the Muslims.³

Even where the level of cooperation was better, it was poorer than advertised and less than effective. Although cited at the time as models of military cooperation, the HVO and ARBiH forces in the Kupres and Livno operations actually displayed very poor military coordination, and the operations revealed as much about the failings in the Croat-Muslim military alliance as it did about the successes. The November 1994 Kupres offensive was at best a "concurrent" operation of simultaneous but ill-coordinated HVO and ARBiH attacks. As such, it represented a largely unsuccessful attempt to coordinate actions by two separate militaries, not a true integration of forces for a joint attack. Most telling, the force that actually took the objective, the HVO, made no effort to share the spoils: Kupres remained closed to the Bosnian Muslims.

True, the HVO had supported Bosnian Army infantry attacks with its field artillery on occasion, as in the failed ARBiH offensive toward Donji Vakuf in November 1994, and HVO units appear to have offered marginal support during the ARBiH's unsuccessful attempt to break out from Sarajevo in June

1995. These were very much the exception rather than the rule, however, and neither the HVO nor the ARBiH was inclined to expend scarce artillery resources for the other force unless they would themselves benefit.

The establishment of a “Joint Military Headquarters” as part of the Federation agreement somewhat improved liaison and communication between the ARBiH and HVO, although it fell far short of the theoretical objective of a Croat-Muslim joint command that could actually issue orders to forces of either army. Coordination was also fostered at lower echelons, where some liaison officers were exchanged to improve cooperation. These genuine improvements in ARBiH-HVO relations nevertheless left fundamental disagreements about the ultimate structure and objectives of a Croat-Muslim Federation military organization. For the foreseeable future, integration beyond the level of local cooperation was unacceptable to either side.

The best that could be said about the arrangement was that military relations between Croats and Muslims were better than when they had been fighting a bloody civil war only months before. Under the umbrella of the ARBiH-HVO Federation there was still as much divergence of view about a Croat-Muslim military establishment as there had been in 1992 when, going their separate ways, they had collided with each other. In particular, this disagreement—an extension of the fundamental disagreements about the structure of a future Bosnian state—was expressed in the troubled drafting of the Federation Defense Law, the official document that was to lay out the organization, command relationships, procedures, and legal principles governing the new joint force.

Even though the Joint Military Headquarters was an extremely weak organization and Croat and Muslim brigades were only rarely to be found fighting side by side, the Croat-Muslim alliance nevertheless brought very real benefits in the common struggle against the Serbs. The cease-fire itself was of incalculable value, for by disengaging the HVO and freeing up sizable Bosnian Army troop reserves it made most of the offensives of late 1994 and 1995 possible. In more mundane terms, the greatest benefit of the Croat-Muslim alliance was probably in the realm of

transportation and logistics. Both armies eased restrictions on the movement of troops and supplies through each other’s territories, improving logistics and mobility for both forces.

Chapter 73

The “Red Generals” Refuse To Bow— Political-Military Relations and the Strategic Debate in Republika Srpska, 1995

Like an egg pierced at both ends, the Bosnian Serb military at the end of 1994 found itself under strong pressure from the Bosnian Army while suffering the negative pressure of its economic and political isolation from Serbia and Federal Yugoslavia. These pressures in 1995 would help weaken the fragile relationship between the political and the military leadership in the Republika Srpska (RS). A Belgrade *Vreme* article from August 1995 accurately assesses this conflict as taking place on four different yet interrelated levels.⁴ The first of these conflicts, at the “social” level, derived from the military leaders’ objections to the political and economic preference given by the SDS to well-placed businessmen whose war profiteering undercut the Army’s combat readiness. The second area of political difficulty was the little discussed regional conflict between the Banja Luka/Bosanska Krajina region of western Bosnia, which was more “Communist” or “socialist” in outlook, and the SDS-dominated Pale/eastern Bosnia area, which had a more “chetnik” flavoring.⁵ The third problem area was the longstanding ideological divide between the ex-Communist “partisans” of the VRS and the Serbian nationalist SDS “chetniks” (discussed earlier in Section III). This split would surface most notably in 1995 when the SDS hurled the “Communist” epithet at the VRS Main Staff when their battles over strategy became public. These three conflict areas became the battleground over political policy and military strategy in Republika Srpska between Slobodan Milosevic, VRS Main Staff Commander General Ratko Mladic, and his Main Staff on one side against Radovan Karadzic and the SDS on the other. At the fourth level, injected like a catalyst into the simmering chemistry of political-military debate, was what *Vreme* calls the “political line,” the struggle

between Milosevic and Karadzic over acceptance of the Western nations' "Contact Group" peace plan.

General Mladic and the VRS were ideal tools for Milosevic in his political battles with Karadzic; they were ideologically closer to Milosevic and formed the only Bosnian Serb power base outside of Karadzic's control. The SDS dominated every other major institution in the Republika Srpska, including the parliament, the police, Ministry of Defense, and industries. Only in the Banja Luka/Bosanska Krajina area, the regional rival to the Karadzic-controlled area of Pale and eastern Bosnia, did the VRS leaders enjoy a bloc of political support.

The opening shot in the battle between Mladic and Karadzic (and by proxy, Milosevic) came in April 1995. The Bosnian Serb Assembly met—at whose behest it remains unclear—at Sanski Most for a special session to discuss the political-military situation in Bosnia and Croatia. It met in the shadow of the ARBiH spring offensive and the fall of Mount Vlasic—the loss of which was widely seen as a debacle.⁶

In his scheduled briefing on the military situation, and particularly on military supplies, Mladic turned his verbal guns on the SDS, lambasting its support for "businessmen" who profited from the war yet failed to supply what the Army needed to win it and who ignored the plight of disabled veterans and the families of dead soldiers.⁷ The Belgrade magazine *Vecernje Novosti* states that Mladic

... pointed to the fact that the burden of war has not been equally shared in the RS and that even the state is trading in commodities of strategic importance for the Army, which left it above all without fuel, primarily oil.⁸

The deputies retaliated by blaming Mladic and the Army for the losses of Serb territory at Bihac, Vlasic, and Majevica. Mladic shot back, targeting Karadzic and the SDS for providing poor political guidance to the military and failing to set viable war aims.⁹ Then he fired his most powerful salvo pointblank at the politicians: unless these and other problems were dealt with, the Republika Srpska could lose the war. The

VRS would eventually go public with these charges in October 1995, after the Serbs had suffered major territorial losses in western Bosnia, in a *Vreme* article that recalled,

At the Assembly's session in Sanski Most on 15 April, the Main Staff highlighted the essence of the problem of the defense and supply of the Army and warned of what was to come... [and] that the assembly and state authorities failed to pay due heed to this, so that the problems increased, and events unfurled in an unfavorable way—something which the Main Staff drew to the attention of the Supreme Command [the Bosnian Serb equivalent of the National Security Council], the state authorities, and the Assembly several times.¹⁰

The debate apparently went on for 30 hours.¹¹ Karadzic and the assembly dealt with Mladic's charges by accusing him of attempting a coup against the political leadership. Only a small group of delegates from Banja Luka and Bosanska Krajina stood by Mladic.¹² At least one senior SDS official, Velibor Ostojic, openly proposed that the assembly reorganize the Main Staff to make sure the party-directed Supreme Command exercised full control over the Army.¹³ Attempts to remove three of Mladic's key advisers, however, failed.¹⁴

The private war between the Army and the political leadership smoldered on in the aftermath of the assembly meeting. The continuing disagreements ensured that little agreement on adapting Serb military strategy to the new situation would be reached between the Supreme Command and the VRS Main Staff for the rest of the year.

Military operations continued to be guided generally by the strategic plan that the Main Staff prepared and the Supreme Command approved in March, before the ARBiH offensive. In this directive issued on 8 March, the VRS was ordered—in addition to defending key sectors—to prepare several offensive operations. The most important of these, named "Sadejstvo 95," was

intended to seize a large portion of ARBiH-held territory north of Tuzla, which would force “the Muslim political leadership to recognize the factual situation on the war front and sign an agreement ending the war.” Another was a plan for a major operation to seize the Mount Igman-Bjelasnica area and cut off Sarajevo from central Bosnia, as the VRS had done in 1993. Two smaller operations were to serve as preliminary attacks for these strategic moves: “Spreca 95” to cut off and eliminate the Spna-Teocak salient east of Tuzla prior to “Sadejstvo,” and “Lukavac 95” to retake portions of the Bjelasnica-Treskavica area lost in 1994. The VRS also was ordered to strangle the enclaves of Zepa and Srebrenica in the Drina valley and capture them if their UN protectors withdrew. Operation “Zvijezda 95” was a plan to reduce the Gorazde enclave to a 3-kilometer radius around the town itself. The VRS was also directed to undertake planning for two other operations to cut routes through the Neretva River valley and to drive to the sea near Dubrovnik, although it remains unclear how much effort the Main Staff put into these less likely operations.

The VRS never got set for its offensive strategy, and many of the planned attacks never occurred. Bosnian Army operations during the spring and summer kept the VRS off balance and used up offensive reserve units in defensive operations. As the VRS found in late 1993 and early 1994, the ARBiH’s defenses remained tough, and the ARBiH had plenty of elite units in reserve to throw into a battle to stop a VRS penetration. When the VRS did carry out “Spreca 95” and “Sadejstvo 95”—its main attack of the year—in late April and early May against the ARBiH 2nd Corps, both failed with barely a whimper. The Bosnian Government retained the strategic initiative its Army had seized in 1994, and the VRS had to be satisfied with isolated Serb victories at Treskavica in May and Srebrenica/Zepa in July, and defensive successes around Sarajevo.

Instead, the Serbs had to fend off a reorganized and revamped ARBiH while resisting operations by the Croatian Army and its Bosnian Croat allies in the Livno Valley and Dinara Mountains. Under enormous pressure from these twin assaults, early in 1995, VRS forces were forced back around Bihac. Then in March

the ARBiH broke the country-wide cease-fire indiscriminately, striking the VRS at Mount Vlasic and Stolice in Majevica. More pressure came in May when the Croatian HV defeated SVK forces in Western Slavonia, sending thousands of Serb refugees pouring into the Bosnian Serb enclaves. VRS forces were too stretched to reinforce the SVK, and a retaliatory offensive against the HVO-held Orasje pocket failed miserably. HV troops also nibbled away in the Dinara region against hard-pressed VRS troops. By June the battered VRS was bracing for a long- heralded ARBiH offensive to relieve the siege of Sarajevo. VRS forces were able to halt the attack, but at a severe price in manpower and resources. The ARBiH refused to give up and continued to gnaw away at VRS forces south of Sarajevo around Treskavica over the next four months. One of the few bright spots in 1995 for the VRS, the seizure of the Srebrenica and Zepa enclaves, was quickly overshadowed by the HV’s capture of Glamoc and Bosansko Grahovo. Operation “Oluja” soon followed, and the Krajina Serb Army collapsed, bringing more refugees and dejected soldiers streaming into the Republika Srpska. The RS’s strategic situation changed overnight, widening the frontage the already thinly spread VRS had to defend.

As the VRS situation deteriorated during June and July, it appears that General Mladic and President Milosevic began working even more closely to find a way to achieve a permanent cease-fire and accept the “Contact Group” plan as a basis for negotiations. As an important prerequisite to negotiations, Mladic and Milosevic (together with Krajina Serb Army Chief of Staff General Mile Mrksic) also appear to have been coordinating military plans to clean up the post-Yugoslavia map and achieve important Serb strategic objectives.¹⁵ To this end Milosevic appears to have approved and supported (with some Serbian State Security and VJ special operations personnel) VRS plans to eliminate the three eastern enclaves—Srebrenica, Zepa, and Gorazde. Although the timing of this operation would have to depend on other events in Bosnia, the capture of the enclaves would finally secure the Drina valley, important to both the Bosnian Serbs and Milosevic because of its proximity to the

Yugoslav border.¹⁶¹⁷ SVK General Mrksic's July operation to knock out the ARBiH 5th Corps and restore Fikret Abdic to power in Bihać also appears to have been part of the overall Serb strategy to give the two western Serb states ample borders in any subsequent peace agreement. Unfortunately for the Serbs, Mrksic's operation triggered reactions in Zagreb, leading to the Croatian offensive that destroyed the Republic of Serbian Krajina (RSK) and eventually brought an end to the war at the expense of a considerable amount of Bosnian Serb territory.

The peace efforts pursued by Milosevic and Mladic culminated in their openly acknowledged meeting with the Russian Foreign Minister in Belgrade on 25 July.¹⁸ Karadzic's outrage at the meeting was reflected in a public statement that said,

*No authorized representatives of the Serb Republic had contacts at this time with the Russian delegation . . . The Parliament has designated a six-member delegation led by the President of the Republic as the only negotiators . . . All other officials, including Army officers . . . don't have the right to have contacts with foreign delegations without the [President's] authorization.*¹⁹

Intensifying Karadzic's fury was his military chief's almost certain collaboration in the open letter that Milosevic addressed on 1 August to Bosnian President Izetbegovic and General Mladic—but not to Karadzic—appealing for an immediate cessation of hostilities.

Karadzic quickly countered what he saw as an attempt by Milosevic, Mladic, and the VRS Main Staff to usurp political control over Republika Srpska. On 28 July, Karadzic finally declared a “state of war,” an administrative action designed to mobilize more fully the resources of the Republika Srpska behind the war, a step Mladic had been urging on the government for some time.²⁰ As part of this decision, however, Karadzic, in his position as “supreme military commander,” ordered Mladic on 4 August to assume the newly created role of joint coordinator of the VRS and SVK, while the VRS Main Staff was to be transformed into a General Staff directly subordinate to Karadzic.²¹ Karadzic insisted that his action was a

prudent military move prompted by the Croatian Government's offensive against its Serb enclaves; it is clear, however, that he had planned, well before the Croatian Army launched Operation “Oluja” against the RSK, to separate Mladic from his power base and halt his collaboration with Milosevic on peace terms. (The VRS and SVK had never had any major problems coordinating operations before the HV offensive). Mladic, backed by every general in the VRS, flatly rejected Karadzic's order, and Karadzic backed down and rescinded it a week after its promulgation.²²

With Mladic's refusal to obey Karadzic's orders, their sub rosa battle went public. The Milosevic-controlled Belgrade Radio broadcast a scathing condemnation of Karadzic's decision and touted Mladic as “the most willing to embrace . . . the Contact Group plan” and “halt the war.” The broadcast denigrated Karadzic and the Bosnian Serb political leadership as war profiteers and cowards who were serving the interests of the Croats and the Muslims by prolonging the conflict.²³ Karadzic responded with an open letter blasting Milosevic, claiming that he had “turned [his] back on Serbdom.”²⁴ The SDS Main Committee launched public attacks on General Milan Gvero, the senior VRS political officer and a key Milosevic backer, accusing him of spreading “socialist” influences in the Army and the state.²⁵ The SDS propaganda also sought to drive a wedge between Gvero and Mladic. The SDS then attacked “leftist” attempts to take over the RS, claiming that,

*. . . the revived Communist forces, gathered around the Yugoslav Left [headed by Milosevic's wife, Mira Markovic, and supported by General Gvero] are using methods of conspiracy and obstruction in order to topple the Serb Republic, just as they toppled the Republic of Serb Krajina through their fatal activity based on lies and rumors.*²⁶

This was a slam at both Milosevic and the Army. Mladic responded to the diatribes over Belgrade Radio and demanded that criticism of the Army and Gvero stop.

In late August the debate over ending the war intensified. The loss of the RSK and the potential for further Croatian Army intervention in Bosnia had led Mladic and the Main Staff to conclude that negotiations for a general peace settlement should begin while most of their territory was still intact. They also reiterated their view that Milosevic should be the one to lead any negotiating team, and they leaned hard on Karadzic to promise Milosevic this authority.²⁷ Karadzic yielded to the extent of going to Belgrade on 27 August to meet with Milosevic and the Federal Yugoslav Government.²⁸ He was accompanied by Bosnian Serb Assembly chief Momcilo Krajisnik and a bevy of generals representing the VRS: Mladic, Gvero, Tolimir, and Djukic, all of whom Karadzic had at one time or another tried to relieve. The VRS generals and Milosevic were like the jaws of a closing vise, and, by 29 August, Karadzic had agreed that in any peace talks Milosevic would head a joint delegation of FRY and RS officials. The delegation members would vote on any deal, with Milosevic having the tie-breaking vote.²⁹ Karadzic had lost.

This breakthrough agreement, however, was overshadowed by the air campaign launched by NATO on 30 August (after another mortar incident in Sarajevo on 28 August) to punish the Serbs for refusing to withdraw their heavy weapons from around the besieged city. Both Karadzic and Mladic had agreed that to pull out the heavy weapons was to invite a Bosnian Army ground attack, which almost certainly would have succeeded where the June offensive had failed. Both eventually agreed to withdraw VRS heavy weapons from around the city because of the even greater threat posed by Croatian and Bosnian forces in the west.

In fact, the Army's pessimistic view of the military balance on the ground and its insistence on the necessity of an early peace was confirmed in October when VRS forces were overwhelmed by Croatian, Bosnian Croat, and Bosnian Army forces. It was the Croat-Muslim ground offensive launched in late September that particularly drove Milosevic in his negotiations for a cease-fire with US envoy Richard Holbrooke. As the Serbs yielded more and more ground and Banja Luka was threatened, agreement became imperative. It finally came on 5 October, and by 20 October the fighting had stopped.

The battles between Karadzic and Mladic continued unabated, however. On 18 October Karadzic had tried to relieve four of Mladic's top officers, including the three who had accompanied him to Belgrade, blaming them for the territorial losses in western Bosnia—even though none of the four held command positions in the area.³⁰ Again he had to back down in the face of the VRS's refusal to comply. Karadzic's unrelenting campaign to bring down Mladic and impose SDS control over the military would outlast the war and gain temporary success in November 1996, but only after Karadzic himself had had to give up his government post under Western pressure.

Mladic and the military, however, would win the last battle. When the new President of the Bosnian Serb Republic, Biljana Plavsic, split with Karadzic and Krajisnik in 1997, she went on to appoint a new RS Government led by an independent, Milorad Dodik, who had supported Milosevic during the 1995 Serb political-military battles. The Defense Minister in Dodik's government was Mladic's former deputy, General Milovanovic, with other old-line officers—including one of the generals Karadzic had tried to fire—in firm command of the Army.³¹

Chapter 74

Dudakovic Takes the Initiative—The Battles Around Bihac City, January–February 1995

As the cease-fire that commenced at the beginning of 1995 took on its tenuous, four-month hold across the rest of Bosnia, there was little discernible change to the military situation around the still-surrounded Bihac enclave. In theory, both the Bosnian Army and the Bosnian Serbs were to agree to maps delineating the lines of confrontation, which were to be patrolled by UNPROFOR observer teams.³² In reality, fighting raged on the margins of the Bihac enclave throughout the duration of the January–May cease-fire. In the far north, General Atif Dudakovic's 5th Corps continued to battle the rebel Abdic forces, which were still heavily supported by the Krajina Serb Army (SVK) and small numbers of elite Yugoslav Army and Serbian State Security (RDB) special operations troops³³

in the Velika Kladusa area. Along the enclave's southern border, the Grabez plateau and the town of Bosanska Krupa remained contested. Bihac itself—as well as other key towns like Cazin—suffered periodic shelling by both Bosnian and Krajina Serb forces.

The very beginning of January saw concerted UN efforts to bring two additional parties onboard with the Bosnian cease-fire: the Krajina Serb Army from adjacent Croatia and Fikret Abdic's Muslim fighters acting as proxies for the Serbs. On the first of January, as the cease-fire took effect, the UN charged the Krajina Serbs with actions in Bosnia and demanded that the SVK withdraw its troops as "foreign forces." The Serbs countered with objections to the presence of Croatian Army regulars fighting in the Livno-Glamoc area, and criticized the UN for maintaining a double standard.³⁴

At first, prospects for a comprehensive cease-fire encompassing all the factions looked promising. On 2 January the UN announced that Fikret Abdic would honor the cease-fire agreement and sought to secure a Krajina Serb guarantee of responsibility for Abdic's forces.^{35 36} On 3 January the UN reported that the SVK had started a withdrawal of forces and equipment from the Bosnian side of the border.³⁷ These movements toward peace proved illusory: Abdic's forces never accepted any form of cease-fire arrangement, and SVK troops and heavy weapons remained engaged in Bosnia.

Klokot Reservoir and Mt. Pljesevica, January–February 1995

The most significant fighting near Bihac town in January was for control of the Klokot water plant, 4 kilometers northwest of Bihac and the source of the town's water supply.^{38 39} On 13–14 January a lightning surprise attack launched by government forces from the 501st Mountain Brigade recaptured the water reservoir and the villages of Klokot and Vetro Polje from the SVK 103rd Donji Lapac Light Infantry Brigade and the VRS 15th Bihac Infantry Brigade.⁴⁰ The Serbs retaliated by shelling Bihac town but ceded control of the reservoir and several square kilometers of territory after a failed counterattack.^{41 42} Further to the east there was intermittent fighting around Bosanska Krupa, where the ARBiH 511th Brigade fought combined VRS/SVK opponents.^{43 44} Exchanges of mortar,

artillery, and small-arms fire also continued along the Grabez plateau as they had for nearly three years.

On the first day of February a UNPROFOR spokesman warned that "whole units of the RSK Army are being deployed in the Bihac area," possibly for a Serb offensive against the Bihac enclave.⁴⁵ Two weeks later, UN officials reported that an additional 1,000 Bosnian Serb troops had been seen redeploying to the Bihac pocket after transiting Serb-held Croatia.⁴⁶ Despite the redeployment of more Krajina and Bosnian Serb troops, however, the feared Serb offensive never materialized. Instead, it was the Bosnian Army forces besieged within the enclave that attacked and made most of the advances during this period.

On 9 February—as Abdic forces were trying in vain to capture government-held Komarica hill southeast of Velika Kladusa,⁴⁷ VRS 2nd Krajina Corps forces positioned on Mt. Pljesevica moved forward in a bid to recapture the Klokot reservoir from the ARBiH 501st Brigade. Supported by SVK artillery fire, they advanced 2 to 4 km but failed to take their objective.⁴⁸ The ARBiH 5th Corps took back the initiative on 13–14 February, when the 501st Brigade (supported by the HVO 101st Home Defense Regiment) advanced to capture the villages of Zavalje and Sokolac and 572-meter Debeljaca Hill several kilometers southeast of Bihac.^{50 51} The offensive by combined ARBiH-HVO forces swept all the way to the Croatian border (held by the Krajina Serbs) along a 35-km-long segment and captured roughly 50 square kilometers of territory.^{52 53} Meanwhile, battles continued around Bosanska Krupa and along the other edges of the Bihac enclave, with neither side making any major gains.⁵⁴

Chapter 75 Abdic-Krajina Serb Operations in Bihac, January–June 1995

While Dudakovic was on the attack in the southern part of the Bihac enclave, in the north the vicious little inter-Muslim war continued. The Serbs (Milosevic, Mladic, and the Krajina Serbs) had successfully reestablished Fikret Abdic's Autonomous Province of Western Bosnia (APWB) in Velika Kladusa during their December 1994 operations. The Serbs and

Abdic's political objective now was first to create a more viable APWB and then extend Abdic's sway over the entire enclave.

To achieve these objectives, Abdic's Serb commanders—SVK General Mile Novakovic and Serbian RDB officer "Raja" Bozovic—planned a series of operations that would gradually take over the region. The first goal was to eliminate the 5th Corps salient just south of Velika Kladusa; the second, to seize the important town of Vrnograc, some 12 kilometers east of Velika Kladusa. The capture of Vrnograc would give Abdic control of the northern third of Bihać with almost the same amount of territory he had dominated at the height of his power in late 1993. With the territory around Velika Kladusa thus consolidated, APWB/SVK forces would move on Cazin-Todorovo and Buzim, the capture of which should lead to the almost certain defeat of Dudakovic and the 5th Corps.

Novakovic and Bozovic had at their disposal a force similar in composition to that which had executed the November-December 1994 operations around Velika Kladusa. Operational Group "Pauk" comprised the three brigades of Abdic's Muslims—probably 5,000 personnel in all—including two 1,000- to 1,500-man tactical groups from the SVK 21st and 39th Banija Corps, and some 500 fighters drawn from the elite formations of the VJ Corps of Special Units, the Serbian RDB Special Operations Unit "Red Berets," and Arkan's RDB-controlled Serbian Volunteer Guard (an element nicknamed the "Black Legion" under Arkan's deputy commander, Mihailo Ulemeš—"Legija").⁵⁵ These crack units, fielded in platoon and company-size groups, would provide the cutting edge for the APWB/SVK regular infantry. An SVK artillery group provided fire support from across the border with a battalion of SVK armor in direct support.

The keystone of 5th Corps' defenses was the 505th Buzim Mountain Brigade, flanked by the far weaker 506th Velika Kladusa Mountain Brigade (made of ex-APWB personnel and Velika Kladusa residents), and the 510th Liberation Brigade. These formations were augmented by pieces plucked from most of 5th Corps' other brigades for a total of 4,000 to 5,000 troops in defense of the area.⁵⁶ The remainder of 5th Corps was tied up with the small- to medium-scale offensive

operations against the VRS 2nd Krajina Corps on the Bihać city-Grabež plateau-Bosanska Krupa front.*

The battles between OG "Pauk" and the 5th Corps from January through June were hard-fought, slow-motion affairs eventually won by Serb infantry backed by superior firepower. APWB/SVK forces gnawed away at Dudakovic's men in over five months of almost continuous combat. (By contrast, while these troops were winning their painfully slow victories in the north, the 5th Corps was achieving small but rapid and cheap victories over the VRS in the south.) The first sizable attack of the new year—to eliminate the 5th Corps-held salient around Podzvizzd-Mala Kladusa—came in late January. OG "Pauk's" attack, however, gained hardly any ground in more than a week of fighting, and assaults made in the next week or so appear to have met with even less success. Abdic/SVK forces did somewhat better during the latter half of February, pressing the offensive southeast of Velika Kladusa toward the government-held villages of Pozvizd, Elezovici, and Sumatac.^{57 58} From mid-February to the end of the month, a stronger attack by Bozovic's troops won a northern chunk of territory near Podzvizzd before the 505th and 506th Brigades drove them out.⁵⁹ APWB/SVK units, however, did manage to hold on to small gains around Mala Kladusa in attacks coming from Johovica in the west.

March was the turning point in the battle for Podzvizzd. During the first week of the month, OG "Pauk" edged forward in the north, gradually taking territory from the stubborn 5th Corps defenders. By 21 March the Serb and rebel Muslim troops appear to have finally taken most of the Podzvizzd salient and were now pressing on to the next objective—Vrnograc. The drive on Vrnograc was two-pronged, moving northeast from Mala Kladusa and south from the Bosanska Bojna area. Fighting stretched into April. Again, the battles were slow, grinding pushes, with incremental gains. The most significant success came in mid-April when APWB/SVK troops took a series of villages,

* See Chapter 74, "Dudakovic Takes the Initiative: The Battles Around Bihać City, January-February 1995" and Chapter 79, "ARBiH 5th Corps Offensive Operations, March-June 1995" for a detailed discussion of these actions.

penetrating about a kilometer toward Vrnograc from the west. During May there appear to have been no major pushes, but some low-level clashes enabled the APWB to claim to have taken a couple of villages. The end for Vrnograc began in mid-June, and the 505th and 506th Brigade defenders finally succumbed to the unrelenting pressure from OG "Pauk" and pulled out of Vrnograc on 21 June. Over the next week, OG "Pauk" units pushed another 2 kilometers south before 5th Corps' defenses solidified. For now, major fighting between APWB/SVK forces and Dukic's troops was over. It would resume in July.

Chapter 76 **The Croatian-Serbian War Begins Again, January-June 1995**

The end of 1994 saw the situation in Croatia hovering between a military and a political settlement to the Croatian-Serb conflict over the existence of the Republic of Serbian Krajina. In December the two sides had agreed to an economic confidence-building agreement that included opening the long-closed Belgrade-Zagreb highway, as well as oil pipelines, electrical power grids, and waterlines. Countering this positive movement, the joint Krajina-Bosnian Serb counteroffensive in Bihać and the Croatian military response in the Dinara Mountains and the Livno Valley signaled that both sides still had irreconcilable interests that only force could settle.

Nevertheless, Western negotiators and the UN persevered in their effort to promote a comprehensive peace settlement between the Croatian Government and the Krajina Serb Government. At the end of January they presented to both sides the so-called "Z-4" plan, which called for the reintegration of the RSK into Croatia while providing for substantial Serb autonomy and the return of all refugees.⁶⁰ Zagreb tentatively welcomed the plan, but the Krajina Serbs refused to discuss it unless the Croatians renounced their intention to block renewal of the UNPROFOR mandate for Croatia.⁶¹

On 12 January, Croatian President Tudjman had announced that Croatia would refuse to renew the UN mandate.⁶² Persuading the Croatians to change their mind on this issue was to dominate diplomatic efforts

over the next two months. It also made RSK President Martic and the RSK Government far less willing to discuss any peace agreement, while making the implementation of the economic agreement more difficult. In fact, on 8 February the RSK Assembly voted to freeze action on the accord unless the UN forces were allowed to stay.⁶³ More ominously, General Bobetko, the HV Main Staff chief, had stated three days earlier that any closure of the Belgrade-Zagreb highway would bring a Croatian military response to reopen the road.⁶⁴

The war clouds appeared to lift on 12 March when Zagreb agreed to a new UN mandate that employed fewer troops but established UN border controls at the Bosnian and FRY borders to block any contraband shipments to the RSK.⁶⁵ The new force also had a new name, UNCRO, which stood for UN Confidence Restoration Operation. The good news faded quickly when Martic rejected UN controls over the RSK "border."⁶⁶ Then, less than a month later, Zagreb renewed its military operations in the Dinara Mountains, pushing toward Bosansko Grahovo, the gateway to Knin. Conflict was rapidly overtaking confidence building.

Chapter 77 **The "Skok" Operations—The HV Continues its Drive, Spring 1995**

Although Operation "Zima 94" officially closed in December 1994, HV/HVO and VRS/SVK forces continued to wage winter warfare in the Dinara Mountains bordering Croatia and Bosnia. The SVK 7th North Dalmatian Corps and the VRS 2nd Krajina Corps sporadically struck back at some of the HV troops deployed along the border, but the HV was able to consolidate its main positions and hold on to most of the ground taken during "Zima 94," including some just inside the RSK/Croatia.

General Ante Gotovina, commanding the HV Split Corps District, nevertheless worried that the HV salient in the Livno-Dinara area was too narrow and too vulnerable to a VRS/SVK counterattack. To remedy this, he ordered preparations for an operation to

widen the salient, which would also facilitate advances toward the HV's ultimate objective—Bosansko Grahovo, the gateway to Knin.

In mid-March, Gotovina's Operational Group "Rujani" (the former OG "Livno"), opened proceedings with attacks to seize key tactical points held by VRS/SVK units. During the period 14-18 March, elements of the 4th Guards Brigade and 126th Home Defense Regiment advanced up to 4 kilometers. The 4th Guards troops took and held two critical mountains, 1,831-meter Presedla and 1,777-meter Jankovo Brdo. The 126th Home Defense Regiment units, protecting the 4th Guards flank, cut a swath of their own in their continuing march along the border and inside RSK territory.

The main operation, "Skok-1" (Leap-1), came in early April. General Gotovina states that his goals were:

From the positions on Dinara achieved and held during the winter of 1994-1995, to use surprise, short attacks by the defensive forces to capture more favorable tactical positions . . .

To approach the enemy outposts west of Mount Dinara (in the Unista and Cetina region) [the first, a key pass on the Grahovo-Knin road and the second, an SVK artillery group area] and to place them under fire control.

To secure the left flank of the forces on Dinara in a timely fashion and to thwart enemy attacks from the direction of Kijevo-Unista [in the RSK], the goal being to regain the positions lost during the winter of 1994-1995.⁶⁷

The attack into the mountain border area would extend into RSK territory, with the primary axis divided into two phases requiring an advance of about 4 kilometers each. "Skok-1" was scheduled to take one to two days.⁶⁸

The operation began on 7 April with the 7th Guards Brigade replacing the 4th Guards Brigade and the 126th Home Defense Regiment again providing flank support, attacking to the left of the Guards. Rolling quickly over the VRS defenses, the 7th Guards advanced 5 kilometers into Serb territory to occupy

some 75 square kilometers of ground on a 15-kilometer front. And it had achieved its further aim of securing a salient pointing toward Grahovo.⁶⁹ While the HV was consolidating its gains from Operation "Skok-1," however, the situation in Western Slavonia began to deteriorate. A much larger HV operation would soon be under way.

Operation "Bljesak": The Capture of Western Slavonia

Opened to traffic in December 1994, the Belgrade-Zagreb highway was one of the major success stories of the common-sense December economic agreement between the Serbs and Croatians. The highway was a key strategic and commercial link between the Zagreb area and eastern Slavonia; without it, the two regions were only tenuously linked via an elongated route to the north that added several hours to the trip. Thousands of Croatian vehicles were able to travel the Serb-controlled stretch with relative ease up to April 1995.

The highway was important enough to Zagreb to justify a threat by General Bobetko to reopen the highway by force if the Serbs closed it. For their part, Martic and the RSK leadership were already anxious and defensive about the renewed UN mandate and potential UN border controls. So when Croatian customs officials began holding up Krajina Serb commercial truck traffic—particularly vital fuel tankers—at the exit from Serb-controlled UN Sector East (Eastern Slavonia), Martic in reprisal ordered the highway closed through Western Slavonia for 24 hours on 22/23 April.

Martic's action very likely brought President Tudjman's government close to a decision to eliminate the Serbs' troublesome encroachment by force. A tragic-comic chain of events gripping the highway less than a week later would push Tudjman over the edge. On 29 April a Croatian refugee stabbed and killed a Serb at a Croatian gas station in the town of Nova Gradiska, east of Serb-controlled territory. The Serb's enraged brother then opened fire on Croatian vehicles

along the highway and, despite UN warnings to Zagreb to close the highway, several more Croatians blundered into Serb territory and were fired on. Three were killed and five others were taken prisoner by Serb soldiers while the UN tried in vain to calm the situation. Zagreb had enough. In the early morning hours of 1 May, the Croatian Army launched Operation "Bljesak" (Flash) to retake not only the highway but all of Western Slavonia as well.

The HV Main Staff had finished its campaign plan for the recapture of Western Slavonia in December 1994. The operation directive declared that its objective was to "liberate Western Slavonia and break out to the Sava River . . .⁷⁰ To achieve this, HV forces were ordered:

Through rapid and energetic action by armored-mechanized and infantry forces along the highway from the direction of Nova Gradiska and Novska, cut off the enemy forces and liberate Okucani.

If the HV could do this they would indeed cut off all SVK forces north of Okucani from any reinforcement by the VRS.⁷¹ Then, in a second phase, HV and MUP Special Police forces would mop up whatever armed combatants remained in the area.

Brigadier Luka Dzanko's HV Bjelovar Corps District had overall command of the operation, but three Main Staff forward command posts would maintain a close watch on Dzanko and his forces, allowing rapid adjustments to be made by the Main Staff's acting chief, General Zvonimir Cervenko, and even by General Bobetko, who was in a Zagreb hospital.⁷² Each of the main axes, one from Novska and one from Nova Gradiska, were to be led by the equivalent of one Guards brigade augmented by MUP Special Police.⁷³ Home Defense regiments and reserve infantry brigades would support the attacks on the flanks and at the tip of the enclave near Pakrac to pin down SVK forces.⁷⁴ Artillery and multiple rocket launchers would target SVK command posts to disable the SVK command and control system at the outset of the attack and disrupt the Serb defenses.⁷⁵ Croatian Air Force (HRZ) fighter-bombers and helicopters would intercept SVK lines of communication to hamper the shifting of SVK reserves within the enclave and to bar

VRS reserves from entering it.⁷⁶ The total HV/MUP ground force probably totaled some 15,000 troops, with the main strike force numbering about 7,500 men.⁷⁷ HV commanders and units had been training for the operation since December and were already in position and primed to launch as soon as President Tudjman gave the order.⁷⁸

Krajina Serb Army forces in the enclave were Colonel Lazo Babic's 18th West Slavonian Corps, with three light infantry brigades, an armored battalion, and a mixed field artillery battalion, together with a few ancillary units and some Special Police.⁷⁹ These forces numbered about 4,000 to 5,000 troops when fully mobilized. Unlike the other SVK corps, however, the 18th Corps was in the habit of keeping only about 1,000 to 2,000 troops mobilized at any time and expected help from the VRS 1st Krajina Corps to reinforce its defenses, which proved to be a vain hope.

The HV attack struck the 18th Corps with almost no warning on 1 May, leaving it minimal time to call up its reservists or even deploy formations into blocking positions before the HV crashed through its defenses. Artillery fire and HRZ airstrikes created chaos and panic in the SVK rear but failed to destroy the defenders' only withdrawal route to Bosnia and Republika Srpska—the Bosanska Gradiska bridge.⁸⁰ Except for this, the HV campaign plan worked almost perfectly. On the Novska axis, elements from the 1st Croatian Guards Brigade; the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Guards Brigades; and MUP Special Police forces got astride the highway and quickly swept it clear while Special Police and the 125th Home Defense Regiment seized the town of Jasenovac.⁸¹ The defending SVK 98th Light Infantry Brigade was crushed. On the Nova Gradiska axis, a breakdown in command and communications delayed part of the attack, and troops of the 81st Guards Battalion, 5th Guards Brigade, and 265th Reconnaissance-Sabotage Company had to fight through the toughest SVK resistance, from the 54th Light Infantry Brigade. Even so, they reached the enclave's main town, Okucani, by 1300 on 2 May.⁸² As Okucani fell, 18th Corps soldiers and refugees south of the town fled across the bridge into Bosnia.

The capture of Okucani and the linkup of the two HV pincers ended the primary phase of the operation. Now it was time for HV and MUP troops to mop up the remaining elements of the SVK around Pakrac, including the bulk of the 51st Light Infantry Brigade, which was now completely cut off. As HV Home Defense units and MUP Special Police troops quickly attacked and pushed toward Pakrac, the senior SVK commander, Lieutenant Colonel Stevo Harambasic, realized that further resistance was pointless and formally surrendered what was left of his brigade—about 600 troops—on 2-3 May.⁸³ Hundreds more SVK personnel remained at large in villages bordering the Psunj mountains, east/southeast of Pakrac. On 4 May, General Bobetko gave Colonel General Petar Stipetic, head of Main Staff forward command post in Nova Gradiska, the job of organizing an action to clear the area and capture or eliminate these skulkers and potential guerrillas. Artillery and rocket fire would be used to flush the Serb troops from their hiding places and into a cordon of HV and MUP troops surrounding the area. The tactic was instantly effective, and by the end of the day some 1,500 personnel had surrendered to the HV/MUP.⁸⁴ MUP Special Police and some HV units mopped up holdouts and stragglers in the surrounding mountains over the next few weeks.⁸⁵

The Krajina Serb response was predictable and swift, for it was their policy to retaliate for any attack by shelling Croatian cities. On 2 May and again the next day, President Martic ordered SVK chief of staff General Celeketic to fire “Orkan” 262-mm rockets, fitted with cluster munitions, at Zagreb. The attacks killed six people and wounded 180, causing some panic in the city and outrage abroad. President Tudjman showed unusual restraint when he refrained from ordering retaliatory strikes against the Serbs. The successful surprise and conclusion of “Bljesak,” at a cost of 60 personnel killed in action and 186 wounded, had left the Croatians satisfied for now, and they claimed the SVK had lost over 400 dead.⁸⁶

Neither Belgrade nor the Bosnian Serbs appeared to have had the time or the ability to stop the HV operation. VRS air defense units shot down one HRZ MiG-21 that was attempting to hit the Bosanska Gradiska bridge, but no VRS ground forces were sent to assist the 18th Corps.⁸⁷ The Yugoslav Army did mobilize

some forces from the First Army and sent them to the border with eastern Slavonia in a gesture of force and belatedly sent a senior VJ General Staff officer, Lieutenant Colonel General Mile Mrksic, to take over the command of the SVK. Significantly, Mrksic had been one of the key commanders in the capture of Vukovar in 1991.⁸⁸

Operation “Plamen-95”: The VRS Attempts To Capture the Orasje Pocket, May-June 1995

In the aftermath of Operation “Bljesak,” and probably in retaliation for it, the VRS shifted its focus to the HVO-held Orasje pocket, which began some 10 kilometers northwest of Brcko. Not only would the capture of Orasje punish the Croats for their seizure of Western Slavonia but it would also help free up the northern side of the Posavina corridor. It is also possible that the VRS Main Staff had planned to eliminate the enclave as part of its plans to clean up the map in 1995 in preparation for accepting a peace settlement.

To carry out Operation “Plamen-95” (Flame-95)—which the Croatians referred to as Operation “Osveta” (Revenge)—and seize the Orasje pocket, Lieutenant Colonel General Momir Talic’s 1st Krajina Corps planned to employ Colonel Dragoslav Djurkic’s Tactical Group 5, which normally held the front opposite the HVO’s Orasje Corps District with about 6,000 troops drawn from four infantry or light infantry brigades. To spearhead the attack, Djurkic received another 2,000 troops from elite assault formations in the 1st Krajina Corps and other VRS corps, major elements drawn from the 1st Armored Brigade, and corps artillery units.⁸⁸ General Mladic and General Talic would together directly supervise Djurkic’s operation.

HVO Staff Brigadier Djuro Matuzovic, whose Orasje Corps District would receive the VRS attack, controlled one Guards Brigade and three Home Defense

⁸³ For details on Mrksic’s accession to command of the SVK and his plans to reorganize the force, see Chapter 88, “The Fateful Krajina Serb Offensive Against Bihać, July 1995.”

regiments—some 6,000 troops.⁸⁹ Because Matuzovic's enclave was extremely shallow, only 10 kilometers deep, the HVO had prepared a strong forward defense based on well-prepared bunkers and trenches because a VRS breakthrough anywhere could quickly wipe out the entire enclave. The fortifications were stiffened by the firm morale of the HVO defenders, all of whom either lived in the Orasje area or had homes further west in the Posavina that had been lost to the Serbs in 1992. HV artillery and multiple rocket launcher batteries across the Sava in Croatia provided the HVO with strong fire support.

The VRS operation began on 5 May with a strong artillery preparation.⁹⁰ The initial ground assault, however, was quickly beaten back, and the 1st Krajina Corps paused for five days. On 10 May a salvo of LUNA-M (FROG-7) surface-to-surface missiles signaled resumption of the offensive. The VRS renewed the offensive in three prongs spread across the enclave's frontline but concentrated on the central and southern sectors along the direct routes to the towns of Orasje and Vidovice. The Serb thrusts made some headway, particularly in the secondary attack in the north at Grebnice, but the HVO defenses held, and the Croat troops drove the attackers back. The VRS was to repeat this performance for the next month, hurling at least seven ground assaults at the defenses spaced between two and seven days apart. (Attacks on consecutive days are counted as a single attack). Most of the attacks were supported by strong mortar and artillery fire, with tanks in direct support. UN monitors counted 2,000 to 5,000 detonations during most of the assaults. One of the most successful attacks came on 14-15 May when VRS troops almost broke through to Vidovice (just as they had in late 1992), before elements of the 4th Guards Brigade and 106th Home Defense Regiment pushed them back to their start line.⁹¹ By 10 June the VRS had to give up and call a halt to the operation. The HVO, with no ground support from the Croatian Army, had decisively defeated a major Serb offensive.

The VRS failure at Orasje and Vidovice marked the effects of the decline in relative capabilities the VRS had suffered in three years of war. The Serbs conducted their operation competently, in keeping with VRS offensive doctrine, using armor and elite infantry

assault units to spearhead attacks with strong fire support. In contrast to 1992 and 1993, however, the VRS faced a well-organized foe manning well-fortified bunkers and trenches and supported by relatively large numbers of artillery, mortars, and multiple rocket launchers integrated into defensive fire plans. The VRS did not have enough firepower to break up these defenses and was unwilling to commit its weakened infantry to a do-or-die attack against the grimly motivated Croat defenders. VRS offensive operations against Croat and Muslim troops manning these types of defenses repeatedly failed during 1994 and 1995.*

Operation "Skok-2": The HV Rolls On

As the VRS operation against Orasje was winding down, the HV/HVO forces in the Dinara-Livno area began preparations for a new drive designated "Skok-2." The primary objective of the operation was to secure the main pass out of the Livno Valley and key mountains above Glamoc, which would put HV troops in a position to grab Bosansko Grahovo and Glamoc in the next HV/HVO bite.⁹² The HV/HVO apparently hoped that the attack would also help relieve the lingering Serb pressure on Orasje.⁹³

General Gotovina's plan called for a two-phased, two-pronged advance, supported by an attack along the border, inside the RSK. In the first phase, HV troops would seize the remaining VRS-held pocket in the Livno Valley at Crni Lug, then capture the entrance to the main pass exiting the valley toward Grahovo. Supporting attacks along the border would guard the left flank of this axis. In the second phase, HV/HVO units were to capture several key mountain tops directly north of the Livno Valley, severing the main VRS lateral supply road between Grahovo and Glamoc and leaving Glamoc surrounded on three sides.

The HV/HVO deployed about 5,000 troops for "Skok-2," centered around the 4th Guards Brigade, augmented with two additional Guards battalions, a

* For details on VRS operations in northeastern Bosnia preceding the VRS attack on Orasje, see heading "The VRS Shoots Its Bolt: Operations 'Spreca 95' and 'Sadejstvo 95'" under Chapter 78.

Home Defense battalion, and the 3rd HVO Guards Brigade.⁹⁴ They faced about 3,000 VRS 2nd Krajina Corps troops drawn from three light infantry brigades, plus about 500 SVK troops in a composite battle group from 7th North Dalmatian Corps.⁹⁵

The operation began on 4 June and lasted one week. On the first day, HV/HVO troops quickly seized their main objectives, with 4th Guards Brigade taking Crni Lug and the pass out of Livno. Over the period 6-10 June, elements of the HV 1st Croatian Guards Brigade (1st HGZ), 1st Guards Brigade, and 264th Recon-Sabotage Company methodically drove the second phase of the attack, making a step-by-step advance north from Livno and taking important mountains heights, including Veliki and Mali Sator (about 1,900 and 1,400 meters, respectively). The lateral road to the north of these positions was also cut. VRS/SVK forces responded with counterattacks against the 4th Guards on 6-7 June, as well as two airstrikes against HV units inside the RSK on 9 June. None of these measures, nor the huge "Orkan" rockets fired at 4th Guards targets, stemmed the HV/HVO advance.⁹⁶

Operation "Skok-2" capped the HV/HVO's preliminary operations designed to threaten Bosansko Grahovo and eventually Knin. General Gotovina states,

The three offensive battles known as "Zima 94," "Skok-1," and "Skok-2" were three separate actions by the HV and HVO and were planned and executed as such, but essentially they comprised one unified action.⁹⁷

With the completion of "Skok-2," the HV was now ready to take Bosansko Grahovo and then—Knin.

The 1995 Spring Offensive Begins in Earnest

Meanwhile, the Bosnian Army had not been quiet either. While the Croatian Army was driving a wedge into western Bosnia, the Bosnian Army was escalating the scope of its attacks against the Serbs in defiance of the country-wide cease-fire that ostensibly had prevailed since the beginning of the year. Already by early March, it was becoming clear that the truce was

a temporary phenomenon and not a step toward a permanent peace settlement, as some outside negotiators had initially hoped. UN Special Representative Akashi expressed the anguished anxiety of the peacemakers when he observed that "both sides are clearly undertaking military preparations in violation of the spirit of the agreement reached on December 31, 1994 . . ." He glumly warned that "a further deterioration of the cease-fire in coming weeks is almost inevitable."⁹⁸ As Akashi and others were coming to realize, both sides were using the truce merely as a breather for another round of fighting.

As this realization sank in, the international community began to stir itself with proposals to extend or at least maintain the cease-fire. This was a losing proposition for, despite some high-level diplomatic pressure from the Contact Group and Western governments, the cease-fire visibly began to fray during the month of March.

International diplomatic efforts fizzled out entirely, and the cease-fire broke down completely at the very end of March when the Bosnian Government took military action against the Serb-held radio transmitters atop Mt. Vlasic and Mt. Stolice. Both had been key objectives of the previous year's spring offensive, when the ARBiH had temporarily captured portions of them and the surrounding hills. As the bitter weather of the new year began to ease, the Bosnian Army was ready to try again.

Chapter 78 "Who Will Rule the Airwaves?"—The Contests for Mts. Vlasic and Stolice, 1995

The Bosnian Government shattered the cease-fire a full 40 days before it was due to expire with the spring offensive that dawned in the early morning hours of 20 March.⁹⁹ As in early 1994, the twin targets of the ARBiH attacks were the Serb-held radio transmitters atop Mt. Vlasic, near Travnik, and Mt. Majevica, east of Tuzla.

Mt. Vlasic: The Thrill of Victory

This time Brigadier General Mehmed Alagic's 7th Corps' operation against long-contested Mt. Vlasic and its radio relay station would be truly "massive" by Bosnian Army standards; just under 21,000 troops were allocated to the attack, and the preparations were long and detailed. Under General Alagic's close scrutiny, the 7th Corps began an intensive training program during the early weeks of the 1995 cease-fire that focused on coordinated offensive actions and winter operations. The corps rounded up 3,000 white winter camouflage uniforms and stockpiled hundreds of tons of ammunition, fuel, and food supplies. Barracks sprang up close to the frontlines, supported by new field hospitals, bakeries, and improved roads, all of them designed to conserve the troops' time and energy for more intensive training. Officers went back to school to achieve more uniform and professional standards, while soldiers honed their fighting skills in daily exercises and simulations. Staff officers broke the campaign plan down to the squad level to define individual responsibilities, and company officers rehearsed their men in individual tasks. After weeks in which the almost undivided attention of his Corps was focused on achieving just one objective, Alagic's attack force was as ready as it was going to be.¹⁰⁰

The ARBiH assault against the towering Mt. Vlasic peak began in the most forbidding weather conditions, with bitter cold, cutting winds, and high snowdrifts combining to impede movement and visibility. The seeming folly of the timing suggests that the 7th Corps actually planned to attack in these hellish winter conditions, reckoning that the Serbs would never expect it and that the dreadful fighting conditions would negate many of the Serbs' defensive preparations and material advantages. Near-zero visibility would permit Bosnian Army units to creep unnoticed through no-man's land while the deep snowdrifts cushioned the men's weight and allowed them to cross the Serb minefields unscathed.¹⁰¹

The attack on Mt. Vlasic (Operation "Domet-1," or "Reach-1") commenced at 0430 on 20 March with a brief but fierce artillery and mortar barrage against positions held by the VRS 22nd Infantry Brigade/30th Infantry Division. Handpicked infantrymen of the General Staff's Guards Brigade, the crack 17th Krajina Mountain Brigade, and the 727th Mountain Brigade surged forward in the darkest hours before

dawn to overwhelm the surprised Serb outposts.¹⁰² Next day the elite of the elite, the 7th Muslimski Brigade, was fed into the fight, pushing the advance forward and upward.

Even after the ARBiH released word of its sudden offensive, the direction of the fighting atop Mt. Vlasic remained unclear for days. Meanwhile, the Bosnian 7th Corps had mounted a secondary attack in the Komar mountains west of Turbe and around Donji Vakuf to divert VRS Major General Momir Zec's 30th Infantry Division/1st Krajina Corps reserves from the main objective of the Bosnian attack.^{103 104} Behind the fog of war and winter storm, only the mounting numbers of fleeing Serb refugees suggested that the Bosnian Army must be gaining the upper hand. By 25 March, UN relief officials reported that more than 1,200 Bosnian Serbs had evacuated the town of Imljan, some 12 km northwest of Mt. Vlasic, and that more were fleeing.¹⁰⁵ They also believed the Bosnian Army had taken the television tower atop 1,933-meter Mt. Paljenik in the Vlasic mountain range, but severe weather and the combatants' restrictions on the UN's movement prevented them from confirming this.¹⁰⁶ Other reports suggested that the HVO was actively assisting the offensive, almost certainly with artillery. Behind the reporting blackout and the impenetrable weather, vicious fighting continued for days as Alagic's 7th Corps stormed up the mountain, lashed by late winter blizzards and temperatures as low as 13 below zero Farenheit.

The outcome of the battle for Mt. Vlasic remained uncertain until 4 April, when General Alagic announced his troops were holding a victory celebration at its summit.^{107 108} While Alagic had undoubtedly captured the Mt. Paljenik summit and some 50 square kilometers surrounding it, there were reports that the retreating Serbs had destroyed the object of the fighting, the communications facility, rather than let it fall into Muslim hands.¹⁰⁹ Even so, Bosnian television broadcast images of jubilant Muslim troops cavorting in deep snow on the mountain's peak, celebrating one of the signal ARBiH victories of the war.¹¹⁰ The capture of the peak was strikingly visible evidence of the Army's improvement and gave a huge boost to government morale. In the longer term, it would also be seen as a first step taken by the ARBiH-HVO on the road to the territorial redemption of Donji Vakuf and Jajce.

The Bosnian Army's capture of long-contested Mt. Vlasic was also a significant measure of the improvement in ARBiH capabilities relative to their Serb opponents. Although the victory was, in the end, one of infantry slogging through terrible terrain to win the battle at close quarters—the ARBiH's basic tactic since the beginning of the war—its execution differed from previous campaigns by visible improvements in equipment, planning, organization, and execution. UN military observers and Western journalists reported better equipped Bosnian Army units now taking the field, their soldiers bearing adequate small arms and ammunition, flak jackets, helmets, and radios.¹¹¹ Observers also noted changes in Bosnian Army tactic toward more mobile, offensive operations made possible by such things as improvements in brigade organization, more experienced planning staffs, greater ability to coordinate simultaneous operations, and better training of individual soldiers.¹¹² UN officials noted, for instance, that the ARBiH offensives on Vlasic and Stolice had begun with separate battlefield actions 100 km apart kicked off within minutes of each other—visible evidence that the ARBiH had finally mastered the art of directing complex, simultaneous operations in separate locales.¹¹³ The Bosnian Army still fell short of its Bosnian Serb opponents in weaponry, operational planning, and battlefield execution, but the gap in capabilities between the two sides had narrowed tremendously since the first dark days of early 1992.

Mt. Stolice: The Agony of Defeat

At the same time Alagic's ARBiH 7th Corps launched its campaign to take Mt. Vlasic, Brigadier General Sead Delic's ARBiH 2nd Corps kicked off its own attack along a broad front in the Majevica hills east of Tuzla. Under the command of its 25th Division, the 2nd Corps employed some 6,000 assault troops from six elite liberation and light brigades, backed by 8,000 troops from four of the 25th Division's sector holding mountain brigades, plus a handful of supporting tanks and artillery pieces.¹¹⁴ The main thrust was aimed at 916-meter Mt. Stolice (the site of the long-sought Stolice radio and TV transmitter) along with the nearby 700-meter elevation of Banj Brdo, both held by the VRS 2nd Majevica Light Infantry Brigade.¹¹⁵ Secondary attacks, however, were blossoming like crocuses along the entire line stretching from Celic to Teocak.

In contrast to its charge up Mt. Vlasic, the ARBiH sustained exceptionally heavy casualties on the first day of the Stolice offensive, as VRS artillery took a particularly heavy toll on advancing government infantry. There were fierce, close-quarters battles around the peaks surrounding Mt. Stolice—Banj Brdo, 870-meter Mt. Kolijevka, and Mala Jelica hill—as the Bosnian Army sought to encircle Stolice in a pincer attack from the southwest and southeast.^{116 117} Driving snow and severe cold slowed the government advance late in the afternoon and all but halted the offensive the following day.¹¹⁸ Intense fighting resumed on 23 March, however, with UN observers reporting over 2,700 detonations in under 24 hours despite continuing bad weather.¹¹⁹ UN officials were hampered by severe restrictions on their movements in the battle area but by 24 March were making cautious statements that the government forces appeared to have advanced. A UN spokesman stated that the fighting was very close to the tower, while Bosnian Serb President Karadzic promised a Serb counteroffensive.¹²⁰ The following day, UN authorities stated that the ARBiH had captured some 50 square kilometers of territory surrounding the Stolice transmitter, but the Bosnian Government conceded that it had not captured the tower itself.^{121 122} Both the ARBiH and VRS admitted to heavy losses in the fighting.¹²³

The Bosnian Serbs retaliated for the two Muslim offensives on 25-26 March with artillery barrages against Muslim-held cities across Bosnia and, more practically, a counterattack aimed at relieving the garrison surrounded on top of Mt. Stolice.¹²⁴ Thanks to elite MUP Special Police troops, the "Panthers" from the VRS 1st Bijeljina Light Infantry Brigade, and the 3rd Military Police Battalion, the counterattack succeeded in breaking the encirclement.¹²⁵ The level of fighting decreased over the next few days, partly because of heavy spring snows blanketing everything on the mountains, while the Bosnian Serbs hung on to the Mt. Stolice summit through a tenuous supply link running across a small stream.¹²⁶ Hoping to bleed off Serb reserves by broadening the front, Delic's ARBiH 2nd Corps mounted additional secondary attacks in the Piperi-Lukavica area to the northwest and the Priboj area to the northeast, but the entrenched Serbs hung on and held out.^{127 128} Eschewing a frontal

assault, Delic's 2nd Corps forces kept trying to complete their encirclement of the peak while calling on the Serb garrison to surrender the radio relay station intact, all to no avail.¹²⁹

On 4 April, having captured Mt. Vlasic, ARBiH again tried to take the Stolice tower by storm when milder weather allowed fighting to flare once again in the Majevica area.^{130 131} Government troops again managed to surround the summit but were still unable to wrest control from the Serb garrison.¹³² Having beaten off a series of ARBiH 2nd Corps attacks, the Bosnian Serbs were ready to counterattack on 6 April.¹³³ The VRS "Panthers" and 3rd Military Police Battalion, together with elite MUP Special Police assault troops, backed by field artillery fire, again launched a coordinated assault that recaptured Banj Brdo and another nearby peak the following day, effectively lifting the Bosnian Army blockade of Stolice.^{134 135}

By mid-April it had become evident that the attempt to capture the strategic Stolice site had been another costly infantry-only attack that had fallen just short of success, and again the price of failure had been high. Sead Delic's 2nd Corps had suffered hundreds of casualties, many of them from frostbite, sustaining losses at a rate that even the ARBiH's largest corps could not sustain. Thereafter the 2nd Corps infantrymen would make occasional probes, and exchanges of shelling continued all along the line, but the ARBiH would not mount another infantry campaign against Stolice for the remainder of the war.¹³⁶

Analysis and Conclusions

While the battle for Mt. Vlasic had ended in victory, Mt. Stolice had been an expensive defeat. In neither case had the margin of success or failure been great. In the case of Stolice, a few key factors—perhaps most important, a critically timed snowstorm, superior Bosnian Serb firepower, and the presence of a small but telling number of elite Serb infantry forces—had combined to give the Bosnian Serbs the battlefield edge. As one exhausted Bosnian Serb soldier interviewed near Stolice told a Slovene reporter at the time,

To tell you the truth, we would have lost Majevica if it had not been for that snowstorm. The Turks [Bosnian Muslims] were bothered by

the bitter cold. The cold hindered them more than our bullets . . . The Muslims are fools: snow 2 meters high, and they attack?! How can one conduct an assault then? We shot them like rabbits . . .

The peak and the relay tower on Stolice were saved by the police, their elite unit [for instance, the MUP Special Police detachment committed to the counterattack]. If not for it, the Turks would have seized all of Majevica by now . . . [The adjacent peak of] Konjic was liberated by the Special Forces, not by us fighters. After all, what do we know except to shoot blindly? They are professionals. They know that they will hit what they aim at. We common soldiers are different: we sip a little brandy, we smoke a little . . . Feel free to write that the Serbs would have lost Majevica and then probably also the corridor between Serbia and themselves if it had not been for that Special Police unit.¹³⁷

In the end, neither the Bosnian Army nor the Bosnian Serbs owned the Stolice radio tower. On 30 August the Serb-held communications node was demolished by a NATO airstrike.¹³⁸ Just a few months later, under the terms of the Dayton Agreement, both Stolice and Banj Brdo were transferred to the Muslim-held side of the line when the new Inter-Entity Boundary Line was shifted by several kilometers in that area. For the Bosnian Government, the stroke of a pen eventually won more than the hacking of a sword.

The VRS Shoots Its Bolt: Operations "Spreca-95" and "Sadejstvo 95"

Despite the pressure from the ARBiH operations at Vlasic and Stolice, the VRS Main Staff forged ahead with what was supposed to be its "war-winning" offensive operation of 1995—Operation "Sadejstvo 95" (Joint Action 95). The objective was to defeat the ARBiH 21st and 22nd Divisions of the 2nd Corps in the Brcko-Gradacac-Doboj-Gracanica box, thereby widening the Posavina corridor and removing the threat to Doboj. More important, the RS Supreme Command and the VRS Main Staff hoped that a defeat like this would force the Bosnian Government to sue

for peace. The VRS 1st Krajina Corps was to spearhead the attack, supported by the East Bosnian Corps. Preceding the main attack, a preliminary operation to cut off and eliminate the Sapna-Teocak salient, "Spreca- 95," was to be a joint East Bosnian and Drina Corps operation under the overall command of the East Bosnian Corps. The VRS Main Staff was to supervise the two operations.¹³⁹

The VRS launched "Spreca 95" at the same time that the ARBiH was making its latest and last attempt to take Stolice. The VRS East Bosnian and Drina Corps began the operation by 4 April—although it may have started in late March—against the southeastern side of the salient.¹⁴⁰ The VRS's opponents were the reinforced 24th Division of the ARBiH 2nd Corps and one brigade of the 25th Division.¹⁴¹ In two weeks of fighting, VRS troops managed to inch forward near the villages of Sapna and Vitinica but failed to wrest permanent control of the key high ground from the ARBiH defenders.¹⁴² Another advance in May, simultaneous with the VRS offensive against Orasje, also petered out and failed to achieve the VRS objectives.¹⁴³

Despite the failure at Sapna-Teocak, the VRS went ahead with the main effort, "Sadejstvo 95." It appears that the 1st Krajina Corps did not play a major role in the attack in spite of the original plan; it remains unclear why, but concern over the successful ARBiH attack at Vlasic may have drawn off the 1st Krajina Corps' reserves. This also may have prescribed the scope of the operational objective, limiting it to an expansion of the Posavina corridor around Brcko. As a result, Major General Novica Simic's East Bosnian Corps pushed ahead with its attack near Brcko on 19 April, hitting the HVO-held Boderiste sector, 8 kilometers south of Brcko town. Presumably, the corps' initial objective was the key ARBiH-held village of Brka, the capture of which would widen the corridor by another 3 kilometers. The VRS probably hoped they might be able to reach Gornji Rahic, which would widen the corridor by a total of 8 kilometers. The Serbs may have hoped, too, that the HVO-controlled sector would be more weakly defended than the ARBiH 21st Division/2nd Corps lines directly in front of Brka itself, which had proved impenetrable the previous year.

Heavy fighting raged over the next 10 days as VRS assault units led by the 1st Bijeljina Light Infantry Brigade "Panthers" managed to penetrate HVO defenses at Boderiste. The VRS forces as a whole, however, were unable to break out of this lodgement. By 26-27 April, the ARBiH 21st Division, which had been supporting the 108th HVO Brigade, was able to mount a strong counterattack with major elements of the elite 211th Liberation Brigade plus troops from the local 215th Mountain Brigade. The attack wiped out the VRS gains and, although the offensive sputtered on for a few more days, it had been effectively defeated.

The VRS defeat was the Serbs' last effort at a war-winning offensive to break the Bosnian Government's will. The limited gains made by the operations and the limited press coverage they received indicates how badly the attacks failed. VRS forces—despite their advantages in armor, artillery, and other heavy weapons—were almost completely unable at this point in the war to break through ARBiH positional defenses in the Bosnian Government's core territory of northern and central Bosnia (or most HVO defenses, as Orasje demonstrated). The VRS was unable to defeat the ARBiH's fortifications, and ARBiH troop reserves allowed the ARBiH to block any penetration the VRS made. The shift in the military balance between the ARBiH and the VRS that began in early 1994 was now complete.

Chapter 79 ARBiH 1st and 5th Corps Offensive Operations, March-July 1995

While the ARBiH forces elsewhere in Bosnia were breaking the country-wide cease-fire with their late March offensives, the 5th Corps was preparing to continue the series of "bite and hold" attacks it had begun in January against the VRS 2nd Krajina Corps on the Grabez plateau and in the Plješevica Mountains near Bihac city. There was relatively little fighting in the Bihac-Bosanska Krupa area during March, as combat was concentrated in the northern area against the Abdic/SVK forces. Instead, the major development in Bihac at the time was the mysterious disappearance of

HVO Major General Vlado Santic, the commander of the battalion-sized Bosnian Croat unit in the Bihać enclave. Santic was abducted by three military policemen from the ARBiH 502nd Brigade on 8 March and never was seen again. A joint Croat-Muslim commission investigated the kidnapping and, although the three Muslim soldiers were arrested, the Croats rejected the Bosnian Army's explanation that the incident was no more than a settling of personal and perhaps criminal scores.¹⁴⁴ ¹⁴⁵ Happily, the crisis did not escalate, and Croat-Muslim relations returned to normal with the appointment of a new HVO commander for the area, Colonel Ivan Prsa.¹⁴⁶

Sporadic and inconclusive fighting resumed on the southern side of the Bihać enclave at the beginning of April, with the Serbs making weak efforts to break through government lines on the Grabež heights and the Grmusa-Srbljani plateau.¹⁴⁷ On 7 April—as the 5th Corps was being pushed back around Vrnograc to the north—the Bosnian Army and HVO countered with a small joint operation to sever a Serb-held road link west of Bihać connecting the towns of Donji Lapac and Licko Petrovo Selo. The operation was a success, pushing back elements of two SVK 15th Lika Corps brigades from positions they had regained in Bosnia and allowing the government forces to reestablish their defense line along the Croatian border. The Serbs retaliated by shelling the Bihać safe area.¹⁴⁸ ¹⁴⁹

Three days later the 501st Brigade made another small push south and west of Bihać, capturing the hilltop south of Veliki Skocaj from the VRS composite 1st Serbian Brigade and attacking the Krajina Serb-held radar installation atop Mt. Plješevica with rocket launcher fire.¹⁵⁰ Back-and-forth fighting continued in the Mt. Plješevica area into early May, with the two sides jockeying for control of some of the secondary peaks. The Serbs grimly hung on to the summit and the radar installation that crowned it.¹⁵¹ ¹⁵² The SVK/VRS forces even hit Veliki Skocaj with an airstrike by two Krajina Serb aircraft on 29 April.¹⁵³ ¹⁵⁴ Meanwhile, UNPROFOR threatened retaliation—even a NATO airstrike—for the Serbs' continued nuisance shelling of the Bihać safe area.¹⁵⁵ International attention was diverted elsewhere after Croatia's Operation "Flash" against UN Sector West a few days later, and nothing came of the airstrike threat.

Operation "Una 95"

In the middle of May, while Bosnians elsewhere began to focus on new fighting around Sarajevo, the center of the fighting around Bihać was to shift from southwest of the town to its eastern approaches as Dudaković launched what had been codenamed Operation "Una 95." First, elite reconnaissance-sabotage troops infiltrated some 5 kilometers behind enemy lines and waited for zero hour when they would begin sabotage and disruption operations in the enemy rear. With scarce 5th Corps artillery reserves diverted to support the operation, on the afternoon of 12 May Dudaković's Cazin-based 503rd Mountain Brigade launched its offensive on the Grabež plateau against (probably) the VRS 3rd Petrovac Light Infantry Brigade, with supporting operations further east around Bosanska Krupa against the 11th Krupa Light Infantry and 1st Novigrad Infantry Brigades. Effective execution of the attack plan, combined with surprise, resulted in the capture of 56 square kilometers in under 24 hours.¹⁵⁶ These ARBiH gains helped somewhat to protect Bihać from VRS shelling and gave the Muslims control over part of the Bihać-Bosanska Krupa roadway.¹⁵⁷ ¹⁵⁸

Operation "Zora 95"

The 503rd Brigade's success in Operation "Una 95" was to set the stage for a follow-on operation, "Zora (Dawn) 95." Elements of the veteran 501st and 502nd Mountain Brigades led the advance, supported by the 5th MP Battalion and the 510th Liberation Brigade. They faced the VRS 15th Bihać, 17th Kljuc, and 1st Drvar Light Infantry Brigades of the 2nd Krajina Corps. The 501st and 510th Brigades breached the VRS 1st Drvar Brigade line near Grabež village on the first day of the attack. The 502nd Brigade's frontal attack to the south against the 17th Kljuc Brigade failed, but then the 502nd shifted a battalion to the north through the hole cut by the 501st and 510th Brigades and plunged into the 17th Kljuc Brigade's rear, sending its troops fleeing toward Ripac.¹⁵⁹ ¹⁶⁰ As of 17 May, Dudaković had again captured Ripac, but this time he advanced more cautiously than he had the pre-

vious year and avoided the overextension that had led to disaster in October.¹⁶¹¹⁶² Instead, on 18 May—a little under a week after the commencement of “Una 95”—Dudakovic began consolidating his recent gains. According to UN officials, 5th Corps forces had begun to fortify newly taken positions southeast of Bihać, were mopping up surrounded pockets of Serb forces, and had achieved a net gain of several dozen square kilometers.¹⁶³¹⁶⁴¹⁶⁵

A several-day pause in the 5th Corps offensive brought a temporary halt to military activity around the embattled Bihać enclave, and a surprising calm pervaded the area. Indeed, a UN spokesperson issued the unusual statement on 21 May that, “It’s completely quiet . . . almost nothing happening anywhere.”¹⁶⁶

Ivanjska and Cojluk, July 1995

The 5th Corps broke the quiet on 3 July with another limited offensive, Operation “Trokut (Triangle) I,” this time east of Bosanska Otoka, in the Ivanjska-Glodna-Corkovaca Mountain area. Troops from the 502nd, 505th, 510th, and 511th Mountain Brigades drove the VRS 1st Novigrad Infantry and SVK 33rd Dvor Infantry Brigades from positions that VRS/SVK forces had held since 1992 north of the Una River.¹⁶⁷ A week later, on 10 July, the 511th eliminated the last remaining VRS bridgehead across the Una River, recapturing the Cojluk area near Bosanska Krupa from the 11th Krupa Brigade.¹⁶⁸ Although the 5th Corps now had the initiative, the Krajina Serb Army would soon take it back.

Mt. Treskavica, Spring 1995

ARBiH offensive operations on Mt. Treskavica also resumed on 16 April 1995, concurrent with the assaults on Mounts Vlasic and Stolice.¹⁶⁹ While Mehmet Alagic’s 7th Corps undertook the Mt. Vlasic attack and Sead Delic’s 2nd Corps took carried out the Mt. Stolice attack, Brigadier General Vahid Karavelic’s 1st Corps renewed its attack at Mt. Treskavica to sever VRS-controlled north-south lines of communication through Trnovo and simultaneously secure jumpoff points to reopen its own supply route through Trnovo to the isolated Gorazde enclave.

The VRS Sarajevo-Romanija and Herzegovina Corps both would bear the brunt of the ARBiH operations on the Treskavica-Trnovo front. The Sarajevo-Romanija Corps fielded the same formations it had during late 1994—an attached 1st Krajina Corps brigade, a battalion of attached Drina Corps troops, plus elements of one of its own brigades—covering the area from Sarajevo to Trnovo town.¹⁷⁰ The Herzegovina Corps deployed a single brigade in the Treskavica area, northwest of Kalinovik.¹⁷¹ Total VRS forces probably numbered about 3,500 to 4,000 troops. Both corps could call on Main Staff and corps-level reserves to counterattack from southwest of Trnovo.¹⁷²

Fierce battles fought in heavy snow and bitter cold weather (temperatures ranging as low as -22 degrees F.) went on for the next several days.¹⁷³ UN observers, barred from the area, were unable to report which side was gaining.¹⁷⁴¹⁷⁵ On 20 April, however, the Bosnian Government triumphantly announced that soldiers of the 1st Corps’ 14th Division had captured the highest summit of Mt. Treskavica—2,086-meter Djokin Toranj,¹⁷⁶ 30 km southeast of Sarajevo.¹⁷⁷¹⁷⁸¹⁷⁹ These newly captured positions threatened Mladic’s birthplace of Kalinovik with artillery fire, and optimists on the government side predicted that the way would soon be opened to Trnovo and Gorazde.

The VRS, however, was not about to let this long-contested peak remain in Muslim hands. Fighting had slowed by 26 April, but the VRS were assembling forces for a counterattack.¹⁸⁰ Herzegovina Corps forces—supported by Sarajevo-Romanija Corps elements and the 2nd (Zvornik) and 9th (Foca) Detachments of the MUP’s elite Special Police brigade¹⁸¹—began striking back shortly thereafter and claimed the recapture of the crucial Djokin Toranj summit on 4 May.¹⁸²¹⁸³ The ARBiH 1st Corps struggled unsuccessfully to regain control of the peak for the next few days, making attack after attack to dislodge the Serbs.¹⁸⁴¹⁸⁵ All their efforts failed and, by 11 May, UN military observers were reporting the withdrawal of Bosnian Army forces from territory they had gained around the summit.¹⁸⁶ The fighting did not cease entirely; the ARBiH continued to shell the Serb-held summit and periodically flung infantry forward in attempted breakthroughs for the remainder of May

and the first half of June.^{187 188 189} It was to resume with full intensity soon enough, as the ARBiH attempted to crack the siege of Sarajevo.

Chapter 80

The Sarajevo Breakout Attempt, June 1995

Background

On 27 January 1995 the city of Sarajevo officially marked its 1,000th day under siege. Its residents had already endured one of the longest sieges in modern history, and still the artillery shells and mortar rounds and sniper bullets rained down, as unpredictable as the weather.¹⁹⁰ Sarajevo had been surrounded for longer than the famous 900 days of World War II Leningrad, and the Vietnamese Army encirclements of Dien Bien Phu and Khe Sanh seemed short by comparison at 56 and 77 days respectively. As 1995 began another dismal year, no one in or out of Sarajevo could estimate for how many more months—or even years—the siege might continue.

It was a strange sort of siege, in strictly military terms. For most of the three and a half years since Serb armed forces had isolated the capital from the rest of Bosnia an international airlift had brought food, fuel, and medical supplies into the city. Although frequent interruptions of the relief flights and the occasional overland convoys tightened the belts and hollowed the cheeks of its citizens, they were able to endure far longer than if they had been truly cut off by a conventional siege. Simply put, international humanitarian assistance managed to sustain the city throughout the war and thwart the Serb objective of a starvation-induced capitulation. International intervention also spared the city from more than a year of incessant artillery fire, thanks to the UN-imposed ban on the emplacement of Serb heavy weapons within a 20-kilometer circle around the city's center. Although this restriction was frequently flouted, the exclusion zone vastly reduced the volume of shelling into the city for most of 1994 and the early part of 1995. As a conventional military operation, the siege of Sarajevo was a distinct oddity: a city surrounded that still received supplies routinely from the outside, and the besieging force at times banned outright from attacking the city.

In fact, the intensity of fire directed at downtown Sarajevo was never as great as televised images led many observers to believe. Some sections of the city were laid waste, and numerous buildings were destroyed; yet other sections (indeed, some entire neighborhoods) were relatively unharmed but failed to merit the scrutiny of drama-seeking television crews. Statistically, the volume of fire directed into urban Sarajevo was far less intense than in most sieges of most cities during the past century. The Bosnian Serbs ringed the city with only 600 to 800 heavy weapons of all types, of which only about 200 were artillery pieces or tanks; the rest were heavy and medium mortars. Before the February 1994 cease-fire, on an average day, approximately 300 artillery or mortar rounds were fired into the city. The most intense shelling day was probably 22 July 1993, when the UN recorded 3,777 artillery and mortar impacts. On days when the NATO exclusion zone was actually in effect, only a scattering of shots might be fired, or sometimes none at all.¹⁹¹ By contrast, Groznyy, a city generally comparable in size to Sarajevo, first came under attack in early 1995. Within a short time, major portions of the Chechen capital were literally pounded to pieces by a Russian Army frustrated by its inability to locate and destroy a few thousand defenders, leaving tens of thousands of civilian residents dead in the rubble of their homes.

These historical comparisons in no way detract from the heroism and stoicism of Sarajevo's defenders and residents, some 10,000 of whom died between 1992 and 1995. The fact that the suffering was less awful than the siege of Leningrad or less devastating than the capture of Berlin does not mean that Sarajevo's battles were neither awful nor devastating. As an event in military history, however, the siege deserves some careful scrutiny and comparisons.

The Military Situation and the Opposing Forces

On the surface, the force balance in the area might appear to significantly favor the Bosnian Army. The ARBiH 1st Corps had some 26,000 troops inside the city, together with another 33,000 arrayed in central

Bosnia facing the siege's outer wall. The 1st Corps faced only some 13,000 Bosnian Serb Army (VRS) troops surrounding the city and holding the outer wall. Whereas the VRS Sarajevo-Romanija Corps devoted more than 600 artillery pieces, tanks, and heavy and medium mortars to the siege, the Bosnian Army's 1st (Sarajevo) Corps had only a ridiculous collection of 10 to 20 artillery pieces of half a dozen types, with little or no ammunition, and maybe 100 or so assorted mortars to support its lightly armed infantry forces. In this, the strengths and weaknesses of the opposing forces around Sarajevo reflected the differing capabilities of their parent armies.

Like the Bosnian Army as a whole, the ARBiH 1st Corps had a great deal of manpower but very little equipment, a composition that gave the corps defensive staying power (especially in an urban setting) but very limited offensive capability. Sarajevo's defending forces were ill equipped even by ARBiH standards—almost entirely cut off from outside military supplies and deprived of access to the military training areas and programs by then available to the rest of the Army. Starved of equipment, desperately short of ammunition, and with little training, the Bosnian Army forces in Sarajevo lacked the ability, weaponry, and logistic follow-through to advance into the teeth of prepared Serb defenses. Despite the 1st Corps' significant numerical advantage in troops and the support of a highly motivated population, there was simply no hope that it could sustain a drive that not only would break through but also would dislodge the enemy forces and raise the siege.

The Bosnian Serb Army's Sarajevo-Romanija Corps, conversely, had ample numbers of field artillery pieces and mortars ringing the city, reflecting the VRS' overwhelming advantage in firepower. With this material superiority, the VRS could apply military and political pressure by pounding the city's urban center or beat back infantry attacks with concentrations of artillery fire. For entirely different reasons, however, the Serb besiegers also lacked a true offensive capability. Throughout Bosnia—at Sarajevo, Mostar, Gornji Vakuf, and elsewhere—artillery barrages had wrought great destruction but in and of themselves had never succeeded in forcing defending units to either surrender or evacuate. Always, it had either been a successful but costly infantry assault or the clear threat of

imminent infantry attack that had allowed the Serbs to actually occupy contested towns. While defensive artillery fire consistently enabled the VRS to thwart Muslim offensive attempts, the Bosnian Serb Army still lacked the manpower to do more than maintain the existing confrontation lines in an essentially defensive posture. Serb commanders knew the alternative would have been unacceptable: a bloody, manpower-intensive infantry assault into Sarajevo along the lines of Stalingrad, Vukovar, or Groznyy, a contest that would have pitted all of the ARBiH defenders' strengths against all of the VRS attackers' weaknesses. Even at the outset of the campaign against the Bosnian capital in 1992, a Bosnian Serb Army that was much stronger than the defending Muslims had neither the forces nor the willpower to occupy significant portions of the city itself. The VRS Sarajevo-Romanija Corps therefore generally contented itself with holding its trenchlines opposite those of the ARBiH while harassing and terrorizing the city with artillery, mortar, and sniper fire.

These strategic realities had made the confrontation lines around Sarajevo essentially static for practically the entire war. Almost from the start, both sides had constructed elaborate trench complexes to protect their frontlines, further contributing to the static nature of the siege. The Bosnian Army had made a few crucial territorial gains in June and December 1992, but most of the intense fighting and territorial adjustments had taken place at the margins, where small contests had been fought for control over local areas of particular tactical value. The military limitations of the two forces—combined with the UN-imposed heavy weapons exclusion zone and the ostensible demilitarization of the city—had combined to produce a tactical stalemate, a battle frozen in place.

The Strategic Context

A stalemate might have been acceptable to the Serb besiegers, but the situation was becoming increasingly unacceptable to the city's residents and the Bosnian political leadership. After more than three years under the gun, both literally and figuratively, morale within

the city was finally beginning to flag. More than once, the Bosnian Government proclaimed to all that breaking the siege of Sarajevo had become a top priority and that the ARBiH was determined to do so before the next winter began. Sarajevo's Mayor, Tarik Kupusovic, told correspondents that the city's residents could not survive a fourth winter of the siege, and, in May, Bosnian President Izetbegovic would vow publicly that the siege would be lifted—politically or militarily—by 25 November. The offensive, when it finally came, would be heralded by similar public statements by senior Bosnian military officers.^{192 193 194 195}

The attitude of this domestic audience was of vital importance, for both political and military reasons. When all was said and done, the Bosnian Army—especially in Sarajevo—was a citizen army, not an all-professional, regular force. If these citizens lost their will to fight, whether from exhaustion or from despair, the ARBiH would cease to exist. The political and military realities therefore compelled the ARBiH General Staff to make at least a credible effort to raise the siege of the capital sometime in 1995.

There was another crucial audience to consider—off the Bosnian stage, but no less important: the international community. Serious doubts were being raised in a number of Western capitals that the Bosnian Government and the ARBiH were viable forces worth sustaining diplomatically, economically, or militarily. From the Bosnian Government's standpoint, it was thus absolutely vital to convince the international community that the Bosnian Army was still in the fight.¹⁹⁶ By 1995 one could well argue that the ARBiH was *already* on the winning side of a war of attrition. Wars of attrition produce few battlefield victories, however, and, without visible successes, the Bosnian Army was having difficulty convincing either domestic or foreign audiences that it was not on the edge of collapse.

A breakout from Sarajevo, however slim its chances of military success, promised substantial political rewards. If the Bosnian Government could somehow make good on its vow to break the siege of its capital—perhaps only by establishing a narrow land route a few kilometers long—it could portray this as a

victory to its citizens at home and its supporters abroad. If the Bosnian Presidency's long-promised relief to Sarajevo's quarter-million residents could be accomplished by military means, then Bosnians everywhere might be persuaded that the government's attrition strategy was finally starting to reap dividends. Internationally, the government could trumpet the city's "liberation"—achieved without the benefit of international assistance—as evidence of the state's viability.

A convergence of reasons, all centered on morale, thus drove the ARBiH toward a breakout attempt from Sarajevo sometime in mid-1995. The "what" having been established, the next question became "how."

The Battle Plan

A can is always opened from the outside.

—Bosnian Proverb

With these considerations in mind, the Bosnian Army appears to have begun planning for a Sarajevo breakout attempt in the late spring of 1995. In fact, rather than break *out* of the city, the staff planners apparently concluded that a more promising strategy might be to try to break *in*. The final plan called for a combination of attacks from within the city and toward the city, with the largest efforts coming from outside.

Everyone recognized that if the Bosnian Army sought to break the siege of Sarajevo it would most likely be one of the largest government offensives of the war, an all-out, costly battle of daunting scope and difficulty. The government's preparations to break the siege would be its most ambitious offensive effort to date, and its employment of troops from no fewer than four corps represented a quantum leap in the size and complexity of ARBiH combat operations. What was in doubt was the Army's ability not only to advance but to hold ground against Bosnian Serb counterattacks, something it had only rarely been able to do.

The campaign plan that the ARBiH General Staff and the 1st Corps devised called for a phased attack to first sever key VRS supply routes to the Sarajevo-Romanija Corps's units deployed both around the city and facing ARBiH positions in central Bosnia.¹⁹⁷ As a result, the Bosnian Army's primary attack routes for the first phase would be north, southeast, and south of the city, cutting or threatening the VRS's three major supply routes: one linking Serb-controlled Ilijas and Hadzici to Vogosca and Serb-held territory northeast of Sarajevo, another connecting Pale to the Serb-held suburbs of Lukavica and Ilidza, and finally the route connecting Pale with Serb-held Herzegovina via Trnovo and Kalinovik. The ultimate objective was to cut off Serb populations—both military and civilian—west and south of the city's center, which would count as a signal victory for the Bosnian Army and give the government significant leverage in its dealings with the Serbs.

If successful, the first phase would weaken the Serbs' ability to resist a second phase designed to create the actual corridor linking Sarajevo to central Bosnia and relieve the siege. To achieve this second phase, the Bosnian Army would have two major options. One option would be for ARBiH troops from central Bosnia and the city to link up northwest of Sarajevo, along a line from Visoko-Ilijas-Vogosca. The other most promising direction for a corridor would be to the southwest, possibly attacking along a front from Hadzici to Hrasnica and seeking to open a connection into Dobrinja west of Sarajevo airport. Either route would require an advance astride 15 to 20 kilometers of Serb-held roadway, securing enough territory on either side to prevent the Serbs from interdicting traffic with direct fire.¹⁹⁸ From the ARBiH General Staff's force disposition, it appears that the Visoko-Ilijas-Vogosca route was the option selected.

This is undoubtedly what the Bosnian Army planners hoped for, an overland corridor that could bring food, troops, and military supplies into Sarajevo. Realists within the ARBiH may instead have visualized "liberating" the city over time with a series of smaller offensives. Even the ARBiH planners may have recognized that they were unlikely to achieve their ambitious objective in the next few weeks and might make only limited gains outward along lines of communication,

seizing a few key terrain features along the way. Even a limited advance would leave the government forces in better positions for later attempts to break the siege.

Preparations

After a political decision most likely made in mid-April, military preparations for the battle began in mid-May. More fighting flared as the ARBiH 1st Corps probed Bosnian Serb positions, seeking better positions for further attacks and hoping to confuse enemy perceptions of where the main axes of attack would be. There was particularly sharp fighting in mid-May on the contested Debelo Brdo heights—a key position overlooking the Serb-controlled road from Lukavica barracks to Pale. In the coming month there would be even larger and sharper confrontations here.

By mid-June 1995 it was clear that the ARBiH was undertaking a massive troop buildup—by Bosnian standards—outside and even inside the city. UNPROFOR observers and others were certain that a full-scale offensive was imminent. UN spokesmen announced on 13 June that the Bosnian Army had assembled 20,000 to 30,000 troops in the Visoko-Breza area northwest of the city, while UN observers reported that Bosnian Government forces had moved more medical facilities, including field hospitals, into the area. The Bosnian Army also began restricting UNPROFOR movements—a sure giveaway that government forces were trying to conceal troop movements or offensive preparations—but this did not prevent observers from counting units from four ARBiH corps in the largest ARBiH troop concentration yet seen. Some troops—perhaps a few thousand—may even have been brought into the inner city from outside through the tunnel under the airport. The UN was also reporting VRS preparations in the same area to counter these deployments.¹⁹⁹

All told, after the troop buildup the ARBiH had the 60,000 troops from the 1st Corps—not all of which would or could be used as assault troops—reinforced

with as many as 10,000 to 15,000 elite shock troops drawn from eight to 11 brigades of the General Staff, and 2nd (Tuzla), 3rd (Zenica), and 7th (Travnik) Corps.²⁰⁰ In addition, Brigadier General Ramiz Drekovic's 4th Corps had some 5,500 troops conducting a secondary attack south of the city toward Kalinovik. Even some HVO artillery from Kiseljak may have contributed to the attack in a largely political gesture. These forces were arrayed along the three primary attack routes as follows:

- North: (Breza/Visoko-Ilijas-Semizovac-Vogosca route): one operational group (eight to 11 brigades from the General Staff, and 2nd, 3rd, and 7th Corps) and the 16th Division (five brigades).²⁰¹
- Southeast: (Pale-Lukavica road): 12th Division (11 brigades, including defenses of Sarajevo city).²⁰²
- South: (Sarajevo-Trnovo-Kalinovik road): 14th Division (eight brigades)²⁰³ and 4th Corps (five brigades).²⁰⁴

The bulk of the 1st Corps's heavy weapons were normally deployed in Sarajevo city, but the other supporting corps probably contributed some of their limited armor, artillery, and mortar assets to supporting the attack.

Defending on the Serb side were roughly 13,500 troops of the Sarajevo-Romanija Corps, organized into one mechanized brigade, five infantry brigades, three light infantry brigades, and a mixed artillery regiment, plus additional support troops.²⁰⁵ The corps was reinforced with an additional 1,000-man composite light infantry brigade from the Drina Corps either just before or during the battle.²⁰⁶ In addition, the VRS Herzegovina Corps deployed some 3,000 in the Trnovo-Kalinovik sector, facing elements of both the ARBiH 1st and 4th Corps.²⁰⁷ Both the Sarajevo-Romanija and Herzegovina Corps would be reinforced with another 500 to 1,000 troops of the 65th Protection Motorized Regiment (the Main Staff's elite bodyguard formation), a 1,000-man composite infantry brigade from the Herzegovina Corps, and 500 MUP Special Police troops during the battle for use as "intervention" (counterattack) forces.

The Breakout Attempt—The Battle Begins, 15-16 June

The battle commenced in the early morning hours of 15 June, when the Bosnian Army began shelling the Serb-held suburb of Ilijas northwest of the capital. The Bosnian Government declared a general alert, extended the country-wide nighttime curfew by two hours, and closed down shops in the city. Serb authorities sounded sirens and summoned more troops for the coming battle.²⁰⁸ The UN played down initial reports of fighting, but by midday it was clear that a major battle had begun. UN spokesmen reported intense fighting north of the city and counted more than 1,600 artillery detonations along UN Route "Python" with rounds coming in at a rate of five or six a minute.²⁰⁹

President Izetbegovic's office issued a proclamation that evening that "The world had been doing nothing to prevent an obvious catastrophe . . . Under these circumstances, the Army was ordered to act to prevent the strangulation of the city . . ." Bosnian Serb President Karadzic characterized the Bosnian Government action as a "last-ditch effort to change the situation on the ground." The European Union's new peace envoy, Carl Bildt, took a gloomy view of the prospects for a diplomatic settlement in the near future: "At the moment there isn't a political process . . . At the moment we're heading toward war."²¹⁰

The Bosnian Army kicked off its campaign to break the siege with a flurry of short-range attacks by the 12th Division inside the city against key points to gain better positions for future operations.²¹¹ These were intended to interdict Bosnian Serb Army lines of communication, probe for weaknesses, and tie down Serb forces before the main operation was launched from outside the city. These local attacks were generally successful at the start. Meanwhile, government forces undertaking the main operations made important tactical advances along all three of the primary attack routes, including, cutting the Serb supply line (UN Route Python) north of the city, threatening other Serb-held road links south toward Trnovo and Kalinovik, and nearly severing the road link from Lukavica east toward Pale.

The first and primary objective for the operation was to cut UN Route Python northwest of Sarajevo. Python—which continues north to Olovno and eventually to Tuzla—was the lifeline for VRS forces deployed around the Ilijas, Hadzici, and Ildza in the Serb-held regions west of Sarajevo. When the ARBiH cut the road in its initial attacks on 16 June it achieved a major if momentary success.²¹² Assault brigades from the ARBiH 2nd and 3rd Corps, supported by the ARBiH 16th Division, captured a swath of territory from the VRS 1st Ilijas Brigade in the Cemerska Hills (the Ravni Nabozic feature) and continued their advance across the road to the south and east.²¹³ If the Bosnian Army could cut the route, while seizing the Ilijas-Semizovac-Vogosca road, it would at one stroke provide Sarajevo with an excellent north-south supply corridor while threatening the Serb forces west of the city with encirclement themselves.

Southeast of the city, Bosnian Army 12th Division/1st Corps forces also made significant gains against the VRS 1st Sarajevo Mechanized Brigade, threatening the main road connection between Pale and Lukavica in an effort to cut off the Serb-held suburbs southwest of the city, while limiting the Sarajevo-Romanija Corps's ability to shift its troop reserves.²¹⁴ On 16 June, government troops seized the long-contested Debelo Brdo ridge line and the Sharpstone feature—both high positions overlooking Serb lines of communication. Later that day, they continued their advance past Debelo Brdo, taking positions on Mt. Trebevic and threatening the route with artillery and sniper fire. This road—UN Route “Tuna”—was the only one that ran along the southern edge of the city, eventually reaching the VRS Lukavica barracks. Having been pounded relentlessly by Karadzic’s artillery for over three years, Bosnian Army forces now gleefully repaid the Serbs with artillery rounds fired into Pale from their newly won positions on 17, 18, and 19 June—shelling the Bosnian Serb capital for the first time since 1992.

Approximately 20 kilometers south of the city, Brigadier Zaim Imamovic’s 14th Division/1st Corps and Brigadier General Drekovic’s 4th Corps kicked off their portion of operation three days earlier, on 12 June. Their objective was to seize Trnovo (1st

Corps) and Kalinovik (4th Corps) thus severing the Sarajevo-Trnovo-Kalinovik road and limiting the VRS’s ability to reinforce its troops around Sarajevo itself. On 12 June four brigades of the 14th Division—the 109th and 181st Mountain Brigades and the 145th and 182nd Light Brigades—once again claimed the capture of Djokin Toranj and the surrounding territory from the VRS 1st Guards Motorized Brigade.²¹⁵ The adjacent forces of the 4th Corps also claimed to have simultaneously seized a swath of territory in the Treskavica, south of Djokin Toranj, in the direction of Kalinovik.^{216 217} The 14th Division and the 4th Corps elements continued to expand on these gains, pushing from Mt. Bjelasnica toward Trnovo against the VRS 12th Kotorsko and 4th Drina Light Infantry Brigades and deeper into the Treskavica against the 1st Guards, seizing numerous peaks and villages.^{218 219} ARBiH troops advanced to within a few kilometers of the Serb-held town of Trnovo and briefly came to within 6 kilometers of Kalinovik.²²⁰ Although the Bosnian Army was unable to actually cut the Serbs’ north-south supply line (UN Route “Viper”), it was in a position to interdict Serb traffic along the route with mortar and sniper fire.

There was also heavy fighting both east and west of Sarajevo airport on 16 June. Bosnian Army 12th Division forces apparently launched attacks against the VRS 1st Ildza Infantry Brigade toward both Stup and Nedzarici but made only limited gains. The 12th Division also seized several key tactical points around the city’s perimeter, as the ARBiH placed additional pressure on the Sarajevo-Romanija Corps to fix its reserves in place.²²¹ An attack by elements of the 14th Division against the VRS 1st Igman Infantry Brigade near Hadzici fared better, taking key high ground overlooking the town and possibly breaking through the first Serb defense lines.

UN Responses to the Situation

As the Sarajevo battle began, the UN was still negotiating its way out of the crisis that had erupted on 27 May when the Serbs took some 377 UNPROFOR personnel hostage in response to a NATO airstrike on

the Pale ammunition depot.* UNPROFOR commanders were understandably cautious after the nightmare of a hostage situation that had not yet been completely resolved and were disinclined to respond vigorously to military actions by either of the two armies. (The Bosnian Serb authorities eventually released the last 26 UN hostages on 18 June, two days after the Sarajevo battle had started.) Even if the Serbs did not take more hostages or directly challenge UNPROFOR forces in retaliation for Bosnian Army actions, they could have sought to indirectly pressure the Bosnian Government by again harassing and obstructing UN personnel. The VRS could have increased its harassment of resupply convoys—especially to the eastern enclaves—or completely blocked vehicle and air traffic into Sarajevo. Fortunately for UNPROFOR, the situation did not turn into another hostage-taking catastrophe, and there were no major repercussions for UN relations with any of the Bosnian factions. Nevertheless, UNPROFOR kept a low profile while battles raged on all sides, quietly reporting from most of its observation posts and checkpoints and maintaining their monitoring routines wherever possible.

The peacekeepers abandoned the Sarajevo Weapons Collection Points between 16 and 18 June, after both government and Serb soldiers flouted UN weapons restrictions on the first day of the battle; the UN action may even have been a quid pro quo for the Serbs' release of their last hostages. In any case, both Bosnian Government and Bosnian Serb forces removed many of the heavy weapons from the UN Weapons Collection Points around Sarajevo as soon as the battle began, and the positions were left unguarded. Bosnian Government forces withdrew most of the heavy equipment from the Marshal Tito barracks site inside the city, as well as several guns from the Kosevo tunnel collection point. Bosnian Serb forces fired at least 100 rounds from the Osijek Weapons Collection Site west of the city on 16 June. They also used at least three captured UN light tanks from the Lukavica Barracks area—seized from the French three weeks earlier during the hostage crisis—in fighting on 16 June.

* See Annex 60: UNPROFOR in 1995: From Vacillation to Retaliation to Peace Implementation for a more detailed narration of the UN hostage crisis.

If UNPROFOR personnel weathered the renewal of hostilities rather well it was at least partly due to the fact that UN forces in and around Sarajevo had already been pulled out of the most vulnerable positions around Sarajevo in response to the May-June hostage debacle. Bosnian Army soldiers did confine 560 Canadian troops to their barracks in Visoko, however, and detained eight UN Military Observers in the town. All were released without incident a few days later, but this second round of UNPROFOR detentions—this time, by the Bosnian Muslims—made for a few testy moments.

The Tide Begins to Shift: 17-22 June

After the first couple of days, the outcome still hung in the balance, although things still looked fairly promising for the heavily bolstered ARBiH 1st Corps. Having absorbed the ARBiH's first punch, the VRS was already preparing to swing back. Even by late on the 16th, the second day of the attack, the offensive was beginning to slow as the VRS discerned ARBiH lines of advance and Serb resistance began to stiffen.

Initial Bosnian Serb responses to the ARBiH offensive were relatively restrained, with shelling primarily directed at areas of confrontation rather than population centers. The first VRS counterattacks stalled Bosnian Army advances in some areas but did not retake significant amounts of territory. The thinly stretched VRS was very selective about the time and place of its counterattacks in the Sarajevo area. Wisely, the VRS first responded with artillery against the ARBiH infantry forces conducting the assaults, wearing the Muslims down and leaving them weakened and vulnerable to later Serb moves.

Over the next few days, however, the military pendulum continued to swing in the other direction as the Muslim attack lost momentum along all three of its main attack routes and as the VRS Main Staff, Sarajevo-Romanija Corps, and the Herzegovina Corps gathered their forces for a counterstroke. Fighting was intense and inconclusive for several days, with key terrain changing hands and each side gaining ground

in some areas and losing ground in others. Overall, though government forces gave up bits of captured territory to Serb counterattacks on 17-18 June, the ARBiH still held most of the key terrain features it had taken.

VRS forces from the 3rd Sarajevo Brigade blocked Bosnian Army attacks on 17 June near Rajlovac—northwest of the city—and then advanced to retake part of the territory lost along UN Route Python. The VRS also stopped Bosnian Army efforts to advance around Hrasnica and along the road to Pale. The Sarajevo-Romanija Corps regained control over the Pale-Lukavica road itself, although Bosnian Army positions atop the recently captured heights on Debelo Brdo allowed ARBiH forces to fire on Serb vehicles along the way. VRS infantry also reversed Bosnian Army gains on the nearby Moj Milo hill ridge line south of the city on 17 June, retaking at least one trench position.²²²

Between 18 and 22 June, the VRS appears to have focused on checking further ARBiH advances while it marshaled its own elite forces for a counterattack. Stiffening VRS resistance halted several more ARBiH offensive probes, after which the Serbs launched a counterattack late on the 20th along the Debelo Brdo ridge line, overlooking the Serb supply route from Pale to Sarajevo. The focus of fighting shifted on the following day to the western suburbs of Hadzici, Ilijas, and the area around Visoko.

Bosnian Serb Countermoves

The main Serb counterattack commenced on the 22nd as elite MUP special police troops combined with elements of the VRS 3rd Sarajevo Brigade to force the ARBiH lines back in bitter fighting northwest of the city in the Cemerska Hills. At the end of the day, the Serbs had regained control of UN Route Python, a critical accomplishment that robbed the government forces of their most important gain of the previous few days and halted their most powerful spearhead from lifting the siege. For a time, the ARBiH had completely blocked the Serbs' northern supply route, but this was no longer the case.

On 28 June, VRS 1st Ilijza Brigade forces counterattacked against the western suburb of Stup—one of

the few areas where the Serbs were able to employ their armored forces as maneuver units—seizing several derelict industrial facilities in heavy street fighting, incrementally driving ARBiH troops back. Counterattacks from the 102nd Motorized and the elite 143rd Light Brigade recovered the lost ground, but any hope of taking additional territory was gone.²²³

The 1st and 4th Corps' attacks around Trnovo and Treskavica also had lost momentum by the beginning of July. The VRS Main Staff committed elements of the crack 65th Protection Regiment to the battle around Trnovo, driving 14th Division troops away from positions overlooking the highway by 26 June.²²⁴ Meanwhile, the VRS Herzegovina Corps's composite brigade, together with MUP Special Police troops, again rallied to recapture the crucial Djokin Toranj peak in late June.²²⁵

By about 28 June it was clear that the ARBiH commanders had decided to suspend the Sarajevo offensive indefinitely while they reconsidered their strategy and options. Essentially, the Sarajevo offensive had been stopped dead in its tracks in some areas, been rolled back with partial gains in others, and in no place seemed likely to successfully interdict Serb supply lines. Casualties had far exceeded expectations and were continuing to mount. It was time to call a halt. For the foreseeable future, Sarajevo would remain under siege.

Mt. Treskavica, July-October 1995

Despite the failure of the ARBiH's Sarajevo operation, battles between the ARBiH 1st and 4th Corps and the VRS Herzegovina Corps continued to seesaw back and forth across Mt. Treskavica for the rest of the war. The VRS counterattacks at Trnovo and Treskavica in late June raged on in a series of fierce battles beginning on 4 July and continuing almost to the end of the month.^{226 227 228 229} The battered ARBiH troops, having progressively lost territory for nearly a month, made a successful counterpunch on 24 July, retaking several villages south of Mt. Treskavica and again advancing toward Kalinovik.²³⁰ A composite brigade from the VRS Herzegovina Corps²³¹—once again spearheaded by elite MUP Special Police reinforcements—forced the Bosnian Army back with a counterattack from 1 to 3 August.^{232 233 234}

Exhausted but undaunted, the Bosnian Army launched its last effort in the Mt. Treskavica area on 3 October, with a major Herzegovina-wide offensive directed initially at the Serb-held town of Krupac along the Sarajevo-Trnovo road, but extending further south toward Glavaticevo and Mt. Prenj.^{235 236 237 238} Bosnian Army 1st and 4th Corps troops initially regained control of three key elevations on Mt. Treskavica following vicious close-quarters battles, but the Bosnian Serbs succeeded in containing the advance and in pushing the government troops back by the following day.²³⁹

After still more days of bitter struggle, the Bosnian Army on 10 October was able to announce that it had achieved significant success, including the occupation of several elevations on Mt. Treskavica and the capture of a substantial amount of Serb equipment.²⁴⁰ The proclamation was good for no more than a day and a night, for the Bosnian Serbs mounted a last counter-stroke spearheaded by the Sarajevo-Romanija Corps's 4th "White Wolves" Recon-Sabotage Detachment and retook much of the territory claimed by the government the very next day.^{241 242} The ARBiH managed, however, to finally retain the bloody ground on the heavily contested Djokin Toranj—or as the Muslims call it, Mala Caba. In this, the last major battle of the war in the area, the ARBiH's veteran 14th Division Commander, Zaim Imamovic, was killed.²⁴³

The heroic efforts of the Bosnian Army troops notwithstanding, their lack of adequate artillery and armor support doomed most of the ARBiH's Mt. Treskavica offensives to limited and temporary gains. Exhausted government troops frequently found themselves unable to hold onto the valuable territory they had gained at such great expense in the face of skilled counterattacks by elite Bosnian Serb Army and MUP Special Police troops supported by an overwhelming advantage in heavy weapons firepower.²⁴⁴ In the end, government forces retained some of their hard-won gains in the areas south of the capital but had been unable to push on toward the key towns of Kalinovik and Trnovo. On Mt. Treskavica and the surrounding heights, the Bosnian Army was to find the price of victory was high . . . and a only a partial victory, at that.

Aftermath and Analysis

We're a much better army after three years of fighting, but we still don't have the tanks and artillery the Chetniks have . . . If we smashed through, we would have to hold the ground we take, and that would be very difficult unless the Serbs ran away. Every soldier would rather die liberating the city than defending a stinking trench, but this could be suicide.

—An experienced Bosnian Army officer four days before the start of the offensive²⁴⁵

The ARBiH General Staff's campaign plan was well conceived, focusing its initial moves on isolating and weakening VRS forces around the city by severing their supply lines, before moving to create the corridor linking central Bosnia and Sarajevo. The overall effort did not succeed because of the VRS's effective defensive doctrine, which relied on extensive minefields and the VRS heavy weapons superiority to break the attack's momentum; this was followed by the judicious commitment of elite infantry units at key moments to eliminate ARBiH territorial gains. As a result, the Sarajevo breakout attempt must be regarded as a costly failure, expensive in lives and potentially diverting precious elite troops from other battles elsewhere. Casualties were unquestionably very high. The official Bosnian Army journal *Prva Linija* stated in July 1995 that the Bosnian Serb forces around Sarajevo had suffered 200 killed and 600 wounded during the battles—a perhaps slightly inflated but credible figure. What the journal fails to mention is the numbers of casualties the Bosnian Army sustained in the same battles, which were undoubtedly several times higher. Between mid-June and mid-July 1995, the Bosnian Army may well have lost over 1,000 killed and 3,000 or more wounded in the battles around Sarajevo and Trnovo—a steep price in blood by any standard.

This bloody effort seems especially wasteful knowing what we know now—that the war would end with a

cease-fire only four months later, that the siege would never actually be lifted by force of arms, and that the whole of Sarajevo city (even including most of the Serb-majority neighborhoods surrounding the urban center) would be awarded to the Bosnian Federation anyhow under the terms of the peace settlement. In retrospect, the attempted breakout operation can be seen as a needless and tragic expenditure of manpower and resources—one of the Bosnian Army’s many offensive efforts that came heartbreakingly close to success but was ultimately driven back to end as a costly defeat.

At the time, however, neither the Bosnian political leadership nor its military commanders nor the thousands of residents of Sarajevo knew that a peace settlement was just around the corner. It is crucial to view the failed Sarajevo breakout effort in that context.

Most people fully expected the war to go on for another year or more. To stay in the war, the Bosnian Government leadership had to convince both its own citizenry and the international community that the Bosnian Army was not on the verge of defeat, that the war effort (costly though it might be) would ultimately produce tangible results, and that victory—however far away—was nonetheless visible on the horizon.

From a political standpoint, therefore, even a failed effort to break the siege might still be considered a strategic victory, even though a serious military defeat. As long as Sarajevo could convince the international community (most crucially, Washington) that the Bosnian Army was still a viable and determined fighting force and could convince the Bosnian Muslim population that the Army was indeed battling to relieve the country’s besieged populations—which it eventually would do, though perhaps in many incremental steps—the breakout effort was worth the price. Viewed in this light, the hugely expensive Sarajevo breakout effort may have been a worthwhile gambit.

Since the war ended only a few months afterward, it will always remain conjecture whether the Bosnian Army might ever have lifted the siege, perhaps in a series of small advances, or whether the battle lines would have remained essentially frozen in place. Having failed to open a secure corridor on its first try, the ARBiH could have tried a series of limited offensives to seize strategic territory that might have completed a

connection to the city in the late fall. Even if the Bosnian Army had succeeded in opening one of the overland routes into the city, it probably would have had difficulty maintaining the corridor, and traffic would have been vulnerable to Bosnian Serb artillery and sniper fire. Given the massive forces employed in the June breakout attempt and their more productive employment elsewhere in Bosnia in the later summer and fall, it seems most likely that the siege of Sarajevo would have dragged on for still more months or years. As events later showed, the most effective way to raise the siege was to end the entire war—and that would not be accomplished by storming the hills around the capital. In the end, the siege of Sarajevo was broken not on Mts. Zuc or Igman but rather on the battlefields of western and northeastern Bosnia, and ultimately at Dayton.

Chapter 81 **The Fall of Srebrenica,** **July 1995—Bosnia’s Darkest Hour**

Background and Overview

According to Yugoslavia’s last prewar census, the entire Srebrenica municipality (*opština*)—the town and its dependent villages and farms—had some 37,000 residents, of which three-quarters were Muslims and one-quarter were Serbs.^{246 247} Within the town, the largest community in the sparsely populated municipality, the ethnic percentages were about the same: at the time of the 1991 census, Srebrenica registered 5,746 residents, of which 64 percent were Muslims, 28.4 percent were Serbs, 0.6 percent were Croats, and the remaining 7 percent were “Yugoslavs” or other ethnic groups.^{248 249}

The town’s history stretches back to Roman days, when the Caesars would have known the mining village as Domavium or Argentaria. Slaves from across the Empire worked the mines, smelted the ores, and produced the silver ingots that were then floated down the Drina river on barges and eventually minted into coins bearing the Caesar’s likeness. By the twilight of

the Empire, that same Drina river would mark the physical, administrative, and psychological boundary between West and East. In 395 A.D., when the sons of the Emperor Theodosius formally split the Empire into two halves, the Drina was used to demarcate the boundary between them. Whether by accident or consequence, the Drina would divide empires, religions, and cultures for more than 16 centuries thereafter.²⁵⁰

Perpetually situated on the edge of empires, Srebrenica was to change hands constantly in those centuries to come. Like most of Bosnia, the Drina valley did not fall clearly under the sway of either the Latin-dominated Catholic west or the Byzantine (later Greek) Orthodox east. A succession of minor princes and lesser kings reigned over the region as the various empires of Croats, Hungarians, Serbs, Bulgarians, and others expanded and contracted like rising and receding tides.

Of the many empires that ruled Srebrenica over the years, it was the Ottoman conquest in 1463 that was to have the most lasting consequences for modern history, etching deep religious and cultural patterns into eastern Bosnia and slowly altering the demographic mix so that, even after the Turkish tide had receded, the region had become predominantly Muslim. In 1995 the Serbs set out to erase the Muslim majority with a single stroke.²⁵¹

Thanks to its relative isolation, the town suffered only the briefest Serb occupation at the very start of the conflict in April 1992 and had remained in Muslim hands thereafter. The geography of the area helped make the town defensible: the hilly terrain is overlooked in places by high mountains (several peaks near Srebrenica reach nearly 1,000 meters) and the heavily forested slopes are cut through by streams and river valleys such as those of the Drina and the Jadar. This cut-up terrain could help offset Serb advantages in armor and screen small bands of Muslim soldiers as they prepared ambushes and smuggled supplies through Serb lines into the town. The town's valley location, however, also represented a serious liability: in Serb hands, those high hills and mountains would allow besiegers to observe Muslim activities and fire down into the town at will.

When Naser Oric took command of Srebrenica's defenses in April 1992, he was a policeman from nearby Potocari in his twenties. (Some claim that he had briefly served as one of Serbian President Milosevic's bodyguards.²⁵²) Oric had foresightedly confiscated the police station's rifles, grenades, and ammunition when the Serbs—following the same chilling pattern they had employed to deadly effect in Bijelina, Zvornik, and Foca—issued an ultimatum ordering all Muslims to surrender their weapons by 17 April. Although forced to abandon the town as Serb artillery fire rained down on their homes, Srebrenica's Muslims took their weapons and the police armory with them, and Oric was able to form and lead a small resistance band that employed classic partisan tactics against the Serb occupiers. Within a week of the town's capture, Muslim snipers firing from the woods began to pick off individual Serbs. Soon hit-and-run ambushes began to cut down Serbs in clusters, culminating in a large attack on a Serb convoy on 18 May. Without a single Muslim casualty, Oric's troops wiped out 28 Serbs, including Goran Zekic, whom the Serbs had just appointed the new mayor of Srebrenica. When word of the ambush spread, the Serb population of Srebrenica decided to flee the town and its environs. A triumphant Naser Oric reoccupied Srebrenica in one of the first Muslim battlefield victories of the war.²⁵³

The rare victory at Srebrenica was like a magnet to the Muslim population of the Drina valley as refugees flooded in from ethnically cleansed areas such as Zvornik and Bratunac, soon to be followed by armed Serbs converging on the Srebrenica lowlands. With the collapse of Muslim defenses in neighboring regions in 1993, still more refugees filtered into the surrounded town from Konjevici Polje, Jadar, and other villages in the countryside as the Serbs tightened their noose.* By the end of 1994 the population of urban Srebrenica had swelled from its a prewar total of 6,000 residents to about 25,000, of which only

* See Section III, Chapter 28, "Battles on the Drina, Round One: April to December 1992" and Section IV, Chapter 36, "Battles on the Drina, Round Two: December 1992 to August 1993," for a narration of the fighting in and around Srebrenica in 1992 and 1993.

about 2,000 were original residents. In the villages and hamlets contained within the larger area of the Srebrenica enclave, there were an additional 19,000 or so people, of whom only 8,500 or so were original residents. Thus, by mid-1995 the population within the Serb-surrounded enclave had more than tripled to roughly 44,000 people occupying an area of roughly 144 square kilometers.^{254 255}

Over time, Naser Oric's Srebrenica became a Hobbesian world of black-marketers and gun-toting quasi-military commanders. For a tiny fraction of the population (including, of course, Oric himself) life was not too bad and very profitable as black-market trades in fuel and goods brought deutsche marks into the hands of a select few. For the vast majority of the populace, life was miserable indeed. The threefold increase in the town's population had led to massive overcrowding (according to UNHCR, an average of 12 people were living in every habitable room in the town),²⁵⁶ destitution, and disease. Food was constantly in short supply; the surrounded enclave could not begin to produce enough food for three times its former population, and UN relief supplies were constantly being blocked by the Serbs. For these displaced and destitute denizens, Srebrenica was a squalid, armed refugee camp, crammed with thousands of people with nothing to do, no place to go, and no way to get out. This reality was only a very small aspect of the Srebrenica landscape, and people outside the enclave perceived it in different ways for different reasons.

For the Serbs, the town's chief value was economic and strategic. Ever since Roman times, the chief resource of the area has been its mining industry. Its Roman-era name, *Argentaria*, meant "silver mine," and the modern name came from the word *Srebren*, which was similarly derived. The silver mines had long since closed, but an important bauxite mine operated just outside the southwest corner of the enclave. The mine was owned by Rajko Dukic, a Serb who was reportedly an associate of Bosnian Serb President Karadzic and a prominent figure in the Serbian Democratic Party. The bauxite mine, still held by the Serbs, supplied the Birac aluminum plant in Zvornik but could not be fully exploited because the Muslims controlled a small segment of the road leading through it. Thus, there was a financial incentive for the Serbs to capture at least the southwest part of the enclave.

Srebrenica's strategic location was what made it most important, however. Only 15 km from the Serb border at the Drina river, Srebrenica was more than just an irritant. The little town was a constant security threat to Serb-held eastern Bosnia and its vital lines of communication and resupply. Srebrenica, Zepa, and Gorazde were three bones in the throat of the Republika Srpska. According to one estimate, more than 3,000 Serb soldiers and civilians had been killed or wounded by Bosnian soldiers from the Srebrenica area since the war began.²⁵⁷

For the Muslims, Srebrenica's chief value was psychological. The little town and its local hero, Naser Oric, had become nationally recognized symbols of resistance, expanded into folklore and song. Economically and militarily, the Srebrenica and Zepa enclaves were essentially unsustainable, but their political value as islands of Muslims still resident in eastern Bosnia was immense. So long as a Muslim population still held out in the Drina valley, the Sarajevo government could lay claim to at least part of the valley in any map-based settlement of the conflict. Conversely, if the Bosnian Serbs could clear the map and occupy the territory, their presence on the ground would almost certainly make the entire valley Serb at the end of the war.

For the international community, the eastern enclaves had become emblematic of the inherent problems of the several peace plans and the UN safe areas. The enclaves were to be awarded to the Muslims under all of various peace plan proposals largely because the international community could not bring itself to actually partition the country and reward the Serbs by codifying the results of their ethnic cleansing of the Drina valley. When the enclaves were made three of the six UN safe areas in April-May 1993, the UN assumed some sort of responsibility for the enclaves' fates—but exactly what responsibility was never agreed to or made clear.

Thus, by early 1995 the importance of the three eastern enclaves had for other reasons become more significant than just Srebrenica town, minuscule Zepa village, and Gorazde town. Although militarily

indefensible, economically unsustainable, and if anything a political liability, the Bosnian Government could not or would not give them up. The Bosnian Serbs were equally determined to take the enclaves to achieve their fundamental war aim of an ethnically pure state in eastern Bosnia, and they needed to do this soon to free up desperately needed troops for military actions elsewhere. For the UN, the safe areas had become embarrassments that it could neither properly defend nor justifiably abandon.

The Safe Areas: A History

Given the number of troops we have, the level of protection we are able to provide is very limited . . . That is why we were tasked with deterring attacks and not defending “safe areas” because we didn’t ever receive the number of troops necessary to defend them . . . At the time the “safe areas” were set up the level of deterrence was really quite high . . . but over time and with experience, the Bosnian Serbs learned the limit of the combat power available to deter attacks.

—UN Spokesman Lt. Col. Gary Coward, 13 July 1995²⁵⁸

It has never been asked of the United Nations forces to defend the safe areas and the means to do so have never been approved . . . but with the aid of NATO we can deter attacks on the safe areas.

—UNPROFOR Commander Gen. Bernard Janvier, 28 July 1995²⁵⁹

You are now under the protection of the United Nations . . . I will never abandon you.

—Gen. Phillippe Morillon, UN Commander in Bosnia, to the residents of Srebrenica, 12 March 1993²⁶⁰

On 16 April 1993—following a widely publicized Serb artillery barrage on 12 April that killed 56 civilians (including 15 children) and wounded dozens more^{261 262 263}—Srebrenica became the world’s first

UN “safe area,” defined by United Nations Security Council Resolution 819 as an area that “should be free from any armed attack or any other hostile act.”²⁶⁴ Not even the resolution’s drafters knew exactly what this meant. Indeed, the phrase “safe area” itself was a vague compromise indicative of the Security Council’s uncertainties: the stronger and more familiar term “safehaven” (already used in Iraq) was rejected because it implied a degree of protection for the area under international law. Shortly thereafter, Security Council Resolution 824, passed on 6 May 1993, extended the same protection to Sarajevo, Tuzla, Zepa, Gorazde, and Bihać. The parameters of this protection were defined—partially—with the subsequent passage of UN Security Council Resolution 836, on 4 June 1993.

Under the terms of the UNSC resolutions as finally written, the Srebrenica area was to become a demilitarized zone. The Bosnian Army forces in the Srebrenica enclave were supposed to turn in all their weapons at UN-supervised control points, while UNPROFOR was supposed to enforce a permanent cease-fire around the enclave, supervise the enclave’s demilitarization, and respond to any Serb attacks. Neither provision really came to pass as originally intended. According to UNSC Resolution 836, Bosnian Army troops were clearly allowed to remain within the enclave, but were supposed to be disarmed. A handful of weapons were turned in to the UN-monitored weapons collection point in the town, but thousands of Muslim soldiers and hundreds of weapons remained in the enclave and visibly outside UN control. Meanwhile, the cease-fire held, after a fashion, in the sense that fighting generally died down. Firing incidents, raids, clashes, and outright attacks occurred frequently and regularly throughout the entire duration of the UN mission, with both Serbs and Muslims at fault at different times.

Partly as a result of the ARBiH’s refusal to demilitarize the enclave, relations between the UN’s Dutch Army enforcers and the Bosnian Army were often strained.^{265 266} Each side saw the other as failing to live

up to its obligations. The Bosnian Army essentially did not trust the UN to guarantee the enclave's safety and was critical of the weak UNPROFOR responses to Serb violations including shelling the safe area and blockading the entire enclave. The Dutch, on the other hand, faulted the ARBiH for refusing to disarm and even more so for mounting periodic raids out of the safe area in clear contravention of the Security Council resolutions. Relations reached a crisis point in January 1995 when the Bosnian Army announced restrictions on UN movements in an area called the "Bandera Triangle" located in the western part of the enclave, where Serb forces had moved right up to the edge of the enclave. The Dutch ignored the prohibition and sent in three patrols, whereupon the ARBiH began seizing and holding Dutch soldiers. Some 100 Dutch personnel were taken hostage between 27 and 31 January. The situation was resolved, after a fashion, and the Dutch never reentered the restricted zone after their people were released. Relations between UNPROFOR and the ARBiH in Srebrenica were now permanently strained, while the attitude of the enclave's population in general went from essentially positive to distinctly negative after the Dutch battalion allowed the Bosnian Serbs to occupy a UN position (OP Echo) in early June, compounding fears that, when push came to shove, the UN would not stand up to the Serbs.

It was becoming clear over time that some things were distressingly *unclear*: what exactly were the UN, the international community, or the peacekeepers on the ground supposed to do if one or both of the parties simply defied the UN resolutions? Within the enclave, the UN guidance on demilitarization was at best ambiguous. Although the safe area was supposed to be demilitarized under UN supervision, the Dutch battalion was never authorized to use force to disarm ARBiH soldiers or gun-toting Muslim civilians, nor was it allowed to enter or search houses without consent. (The Dutch peacekeepers probably had little enthusiasm in any case for forcibly disarming ARBiH troops or proactively seizing weapons within the enclave.) A basic inconsistency had become evident: the UN force was supposed to demilitarize the town so that it would not become a target for attack, but the Dutch soldiers were not empowered to do anything about standing violations of the demilitarization.

The inconsistencies in the UN regime were even more apparent regarding the appropriate response to outside attacks on the safe area—an anomaly that would in time contribute to tragedy. Paragraph 5 of UNSC Resolution 836 stated that UN troops were "to deter attacks against the safe areas," and paragraph 9 of the same resolution authorized UNPROFOR troops "in carrying out the mandate defined in paragraph 5 above, acting in self-defense, to take the necessary measures, including the use of force, in reply to bombardments against the safe areas by any of the parties or to armed incursion into them or in the event of any deliberate obstruction in and around those areas to the freedom of movement of UNPROFOR or of protected humanitarian convoys." Paragraph 10 expanded this to include the potential use of airpower "in and around the safe areas." Moreover, UNSC Resolution 770 in 1992 had previously authorized UN member countries, "acting under Chapter VII [peace enforcement] of the Charter of the United Nations . . . to take nationally or through regional agencies or arrangements [for example, NATO] all measures necessary to facilitate in coordination with the United Nations the delivery . . . of humanitarian assistance."

The resolutions were imprecisely permissive in their wording, and still less clearly prescriptive. The bottom line on the use of force to defend the safe areas remained, perhaps deliberately, unclear. UN troops were clearly supposed to "deter" attacks and could defend themselves if attacked—but the text was ambiguous on what they were supposed to do in the event of "armed incursions" or "deliberate obstructions." How the term self-defense could or should be applied was essentially left to anyone's interpretation: whether to return fire only if the peacekeeping troops were themselves brought under attack or whether a vigorous UN response that could include the use of NATO airpower would be used to halt an armed incursion into the safe areas.

When the safe areas policy was first advanced, UN planners estimated that some 34,000 peacekeepers would be required to properly implement the new UN resolutions. As proposals evolved, the international community—primarily the Western governments that

had pushed for the safe areas policy in the first place—proved unwilling to assume the staggering human and financial burdens of a 34,000-troop commitment of indefinite duration. Opting instead for a much cheaper plan colloquially known as “safe areas lite” the member nations instead contributed about 7,600 troops for the defense of the six safe areas.²⁶⁷ Of these forces, just over 1,000 were actually assigned to the defense of the three eastern enclaves and not even these nominal strengths were actually attained. When it came down to implementing the Security Council resolutions, grand ideals were definitely not translated into great deeds.

Chapter 82 Srebrenica—The Military Forces

The Bosnian Army in Srebrenica

At first glance, the ARBiH appeared to have a fairly credible fighting force in the Srebrenica and Zepa enclaves. Organizationally, the Bosnian Army’s grandly titled 28th Division was responsible for the defense of both Srebrenica and Zepa. For this mission the Division had inside the Srebrenica enclave the 280th, 281st, 282nd, and 283rd Brigades (each assigned to defend a particular segment of the enclave’s perimeter) along with the 284th Light Brigade and the independent 28th Mountain Battalion as a mobile reserve and reaction force. The defense of nearby Zepa fell to the 285th “Zepa” Brigade. All told, the 28th Division probably had some 6,000 troops available at any given time, with a paper strength of about 12,000 fully mobilizable troops—a far greater number than the relatively undermanned VRS Drina Corps could spare to contain them.²⁶⁸ The numbers did not tell the whole story, however.

The 28th Division’s available manpower total was essentially irrelevant, as there were far too few weapons to arm even the 6,000 troops on active duty. The Srebrenica and Zepa garrisons—cut off from central Bosnia since 1993 and reachable only by helicopter—had received only minimal supplies of weapons or ammunition.²⁶⁹ As in Sarajevo’s most dire moments, critical battles had often been decided by almost medieval makeshift weapons fashioned from welded iron pipes stuffed with raw gunpowder and nails and metal

scraps. Probably only one-third to one-half of Srebrenica’s 6,000 troops carried weapons of any kind, and, of these, hundreds had only hunting rifles and an assortment of antiquated or ill-maintained small arms.²⁷⁰

After the UN weapons collection point was established, the ARBiH in Srebrenica appears to have had a single functioning artillery piece: a 76-mm M-48B1 “mountain gun” with 40 rounds of ammunition. The crew of the lone field gun was under strict orders not to fire lest the enclave’s demilitarized status be jeopardized. The 28th Division also appears to have had a single Chinese-manufactured TF-8 “Red Arrow” anti-tank guided missile launcher. Its presence was at best symbolic, since no one was quite sure how to operate the Red Arrow, and it eventually was discovered that a broken trigger mechanism made it useless.²⁷¹

A couple of covert helicopter flights from government-held central Bosnia had brought a meager assortment of weapons and munitions into the Srebrenica and Zepa enclaves between January and May 1995. They totaled “approximately 300,000 rounds of ammunition, 44 rocket-propelled grenades, six light mortars, 60 mortar grenades, 100 AK-47 semiautomatic (sic) rifles, a half a dozen Motorola walkie-talkies, and cartons of cigarettes and salt.”²⁷² These minuscule additions did little to redress the paucity of military equipment in the enclave. Neither the weapons nor their ammunition came close to being adequate in numbers or in types for a serious defense of the town.

The forces in the two enclaves had perforce been excluded from the improvements in organization and training that had advanced the military capabilities of the ARBiH elsewhere in Bosnia. Bosnian Army brigades elsewhere had evolved from masses of armed people into organized units with better officers, better planning and staff work, better training, and better weaponry. The Bosnian Army brigades in Srebrenica in 1995 were essentially still masses of armed men fighting their own war in the only way their leader had learned. The procedural and material improvements that had increased the capabilities of Bosnian Army forces elsewhere had not made it to cut off Srebrenica.

Finally, when full battle was thrust on the 28th Division, not even its charismatic leader or the division staff would be present to provide the fighting drive and leadership that for three years had helped compensate for its many deficiencies. As VRS tanks drove north toward the small town, Naser Oric was not to be found in Srebrenica nor anywhere nearby. He and all of his senior and most experienced staff had left the enclave in April under cover of night for Tuzla, apparently under orders to catch up with the rest of the Army in a command training course. Three months later, Naser Oric was still there, and only 28th Division Deputy Commander and chief of staff Ramiz Becirovic and one of the five brigade commanders had returned. Srebrenica's defenders lacked not only weapons and training but now the leaders who had organized and led them.²⁷³

The Bosnian Serb Army—Preparations for Operation “Krivaja 95”

Srebrenica lay within the area of responsibility of the VRS Drina Corps, which would exercise overall command of the operation against the enclave that would commence at midyear. The commander of the Drina Corps at the beginning of July 1995 was Major General Milenko Zivanovic, but he was on the verge of retirement and would be replaced by his chief of staff, Major General Radislav Krstic, as soon as the main operation was completed. Krstic rather than Zivanovic, in fact, exercised direct command of the attack from a forward command post east of Srebrenica. The tactical group headquarters that normally controlled the formations guarding the enclave appears to have played no role in the attack and probably was dissolved sometime prior to the assault. Furthermore, a VRS Main Staff forward command post occupied by General Mladic himself would supervise Drina Corps actions from 10 through 13 July.²⁷⁴

Since 1993, VRS forces in Bosnia had had little success in attacking Bosnian Army fixed defenses, and its commanders were properly respectful of the Muslims' defensive positions. The isolated ARBiH force in Srebrenica, however, was a different proposition; mostly demobilized, it had few defensive fortifications and almost no sources of supply, and so offered much

less of a challenge. The VRS appears not only to have felt confident about attacking the enclave but even saw little need to muster the kind of heavy armor and artillery force that the 1st Krajina Corps employed in its attempt to capture the Orasje pocket in May 1995.

In preparing for Operation Krivaja 95, its codename for the assault on Srebrenica, the VRS reinforced the estimated 1,500 troops in the area—the 1st Bratunac Light Infantry Brigade, 1st Milici Light Infantry Brigade, and Skelani Independent Infantry Battalion—with several units drawn from other Drina Corps brigades, plus the VRS Main Staff and Ministry of Internal Affairs (MUP). The corps directed that the 1st Zvornik Infantry Brigade form a tactical group headquarters with an infantry battalion, the “Drina Wolves” special operations detachment, and an armor-mechanized company to spearhead the main attack. The corps also dispatched elements of the 2nd Romanija Motorized Brigade—probably one to two infantry companies and a tank platoon—and troops from the 1st Birac Infantry Brigade—again probably one to two infantry companies—to take part in the attack. The VRS Main Staff contributed the 10th Sabotage Detachment and elements of the Military Police Battalion from the 65th Protection Motorized Regiment. The corps was to have one infantry company from the 1st Vlasenica Light Infantry Brigade and most of a battalion-size detachment from the MUP Special Police Brigade in reserve. Elements of the 5th Mixed Artillery Regiment would provide additional fire support. There is some evidence that a few Yugoslav Army (VJ) or Serbian State Security Department (RDB) special operations troops may have been present, possibly from the VJ 63rd Airborne or 72nd Special Operations Brigades and the RDB Special Operations Unit (“Red Berets”). The Serb forces allotted to the operation totaled about 3,000 troops with about 10 tanks and APCs, six to 12 field artillery pieces or multiple rocket launchers over 100 mm, 40 to 50 mortars, recoilless rifles, and 76 mm artillery pieces.

UNPROFOR in Srebrenica: Dutchbat-3

On the day the Serbs launched their attack, the Dutch peacekeeping battalion assigned to safeguard Srebrenica had a nominal assigned strength of 730 troops under the command of Lt. Col. Ton Karremans, a 46-year-old career soldier. Serb refusals to allow the replacement of troops who had rotated out or returned home had cut the unit to only 370 men on the day of the attack—barely half its assigned strength. Subtracting a company on detached duty, this left a UN garrison of only 310 peacekeepers in and around Srebrenica.^{275 276}

In addition to the Dutch peacekeeping battalion, there were three UN Military Observers (UNMOs) in Srebrenica: one observer each from Ghana, Kenya, and the Netherlands.²⁷⁷ They were not formally affiliated with the Dutch peacekeeping battalion or under Dutchbat command. Also serving in the enclave at the time, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), and Médecins sans Frontières (MSF) each had a small number of doctors and humanitarian relief workers in the enclave.

Like most national contingents in UNPROFOR, Dutchbat-3 was a composite unit. The backbone of the force—about half of the total—was drawn from the Dutch Army's 13th Airmobile Infantry Battalion and were regular combat infantry. The rest of the UNPROFOR battalion—individuals from approximately 50 other Dutch Army units—were specialists in logistics, support, medical, and other functions.²⁷⁸ In theory, Dutchbat-3 was a highly modern mechanized infantry battalion equipped with some 30 YPR-765 armored personnel carriers (essentially, M113 APCs), six TOW antitank missiles, and six 81-mm mortars. The reality, however, was very different.^{279 280}

The truth was that the Serb blockade had reduced the battalion's supplies of food, fuel, medicines, weapons spares, and ammunition to the point where the unit was almost nonoperational. According to the UN resolutions, the Serbs were explicitly prohibited from obstructing either UNPROFOR's freedom of movement or international humanitarian aid convoys. In practice, the VRS routinely did both. Sometimes only

slightly better off than the town's local population, the Dutch troops almost always lacked fresh food, electricity, and fuel; lack of gasoline made most of their patrols walking ones. By July they had been living on combat rations for a month and had approximately 12 days' reserve of drinking water. Deprived first of their helicopters and then the use of their vehicles, the Dutch battalion had for most practical purposes gone from airmobile to immobile.

A modern army is hugely dependent on supplies and parts and can deteriorate rapidly if deprived of both. For a variety of reasons the Dutch UN battalion in Srebrenica had stocked only 16 percent of its operational requirement of ammunition. By the time of the Serb offensive, the effects of the blockade had left crucial weapons systems like the TOW and Dragon antitank missiles unreliable; unused, ill-stored, and unreplaced, these weapons and their ammunition were suffering from accumulated moisture. The Serbs certainly had no intention of letting in any more.²⁸¹

The Dutch repeatedly emphasized their battalion's worsening situation within the enclave at the highest levels of UNPROFOR. As far back as May, the Dutchbat commander reported that, as a result of the Serb blockade, he could no longer regard his battalion as operationally effective. The UN higher command saw little it could do. In its view, supplies had to go in overland, and the Serbs controlled the transit routes, so any replacements of people, materiel, or even consumables for the Dutchbat were dependent on either Serb goodwill or the UN's willingness to use force to ram supply convoys through. Neither Serb goodwill nor UN willingness to apply force were in great supply in the first half of 1995. A proposal to airdrop supplies into the enclave without the Serbs' consent was rejected as impractical.

Organizationally, Dutchbat-3 had four subordinate companies: the headquarters, headquarters and support company (HHC); and Alpha, Bravo, and Charlie Companies. In terms of infrastructure, the Dutch battalion had two main bases within the Srebrenica enclave. The battalion headquarters was collocated

with Charlie Company and the logistic unit at an abandoned car battery factory in the town of Potocari, somewhat north of Srebrenica town. Charlie Company was assigned responsibility for monitoring events in the northern part of the enclave. Bravo Company was based in Srebrenica itself, taking over the site of a former textile mill and assuming responsibility for the southern portion of the enclave.²⁸² Alpha Company, though still part of Dutchbat-3, was stationed at Simin Han, in the government-held “Sapna Thumb” area east of Tuzla. Alpha company therefore played no role in the events around Srebrenica in 1995. The headquarters, headquarters and support company’s primary function was general battalion-level support, including administration of the attached field dressing station and medical facilities. In addition, Dutchbat-3 had within the enclave a reconnaissance platoon, two security platoons, an engineer platoon, a military police detachment, an explosive ordnance detachment, and two teams of forward air controllers (FACs).

The two main bases at Srebrenica and Potocari served as the administrative and logistic heart of the battalion, but the 13 observation posts (OPs) surrounding the enclave were supposed to be its eyes and ears. These OPs, each identified by a letter designator (for example, observation post “F” or “Foxtrot”) were situated at roughly equal intervals along the enclave’s 50-kilometer perimeter, usually atop a hill. Intended to be visible rather than defensible, each OP was painted white and flew a large UN flag. All were sandbagged and had .50-caliber heavy machineguns; a few also had TOW or Dragon antitank missiles or 81-mm mortars. The weak military positions of the OPs, their inadequate defensive construction, marginal armament, and small troop contingents made them militarily indefensible in the event of any serious confrontation with a properly armed Bosnian Army or Bosnian Serb opponent.²⁸³

At any given time, about 95 of the battalion’s troops were assigned to man the OPs, an average of seven soldiers per post. Their assignment was to monitor, record, and report any military activity along the enclave’s boundary: artillery explosions, firefights, troop movements, or anything else of note. Given the vulnerability of their positions and the weakness of the peacekeeping forces within, there was not much

more they could do.²⁸⁴ Meanwhile, both armies flouted different portions of the UN resolutions.

Lacking an understandable mission, adequate numbers of troops, or even functional equipment, the Dutch battalion felt less and less capable of doing more than observing and reporting events in and around the enclave. In early April 1995, one of the Dutch peacekeepers became UNPROFOR’s 56th combat-related fatality when an artillery shell hit his observation post. The unpunished incident underscored the vulnerability of the soldiers in the OPs, and their morale plummeted.²⁸⁵ As the soldiers’ time of trial approached, the convergence of their declining capabilities and their muddled mandate was setting them up for disaster.

Chapter 83 The Battle, 6-11 July 1995

The Eve of Battle: Events and Explanations

To support its mid-June attempt at a breakout from Sarajevo, the ARBiH General Staff directed the Srebrenica garrison to make raids against the surrounding Serb areas in hopes of distracting the VRS and drawing off Serb forces from the ring around Sarajevo.²⁸⁶ In retrospect, this was probably an unwise move; it did nothing to reduce the forces besieging the capital and seems to have infuriated the Serb military leaders. The order generated a minor and little-noted attack that was to have far-reaching consequences: on 26 June 1995, ARBiH forces from the Srebrenica safe area made a guerrilla raid on the Serb village of Visnjica just outside the enclave’s boundaries. Taken by surprise, the town’s residents abandoned it and then watched as Muslim soldiers burned their homes and stole their cattle. When Serb forces arrived at the scene, the Bosnian Army troops promptly withdrew, killing one VRS soldier and wounding three Serb civilians in the process.

The Visnjica raid may or may not have been the proximate cause of subsequent events in Srebrenica, but it certainly appears to have been the catalyst. From a purely military standpoint the raid’s significance was

negligible: the battle was small, the town was not held, and casualties were few. The political and historical consequences, however, were to prove enormous: the gadfly sting would spur the VRS into wiping out not only the military provocation posed by Oric and his urban guerrilla raiders but also the town of Srebrenica itself and all it represented.²⁸⁷ Early in July, General Mladic sent an outraged letter to the UN, charging that Muslim forces from within the enclave had repeatedly violated the UN safe area provisions to cause the deaths of more than 100 Serb civilians.²⁸⁸ For a whole variety of reasons, in this one little corner of a vicious sidebar struggle in a wider civil war, the conflict had become more than purely military. Politics had become personal, and the Serbs had scores to settle.

Much speculation has been focused on why the VRS chose with seeming deliberation to mount an all-out attack on the UN safe area of Srebrenica and then permit or direct the massacre of its population. The first decision seems to have been grounded in sound military and political considerations that had little or nothing to do with any particular Muslim provocation. At General Krstic's trial in The Hague, prosecutors for the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) presented documents bearing directly on the operation. They showed that the political guidance for the year issued to the VRS on 8 March 1995 by the Bosnian Serb Supreme Command under President Karadzic included directions for the Drina Corps to block any communications or movement between Srebrenica and Zepa and,

By planned and well-thought-out combat operations, create an unbearable situation of total insecurity with no hope of further survival or relief for the inhabitants of Srebrenica and Zepa .

The directive also instructed the VRS and other state organizations to use bureaucratic means to block UNPROFOR and the international community from supplying the enclaves.

If successful, the campaign planned by the VRS would achieve the Serbs' core political-military objectives of wiping the three Muslim-held blotches from the map of eastern Bosnia, securing solid control over

the Drina valley, safeguarding east-west lines of communication, and improving the Serbs' geopolitical position for a final peace settlement with whatever land they could grab. If the campaign seems to have been properly grounded in military objectives, however, the Serbs' execution of it, especially the massacres that were permitted, appears to have been largely personal. Raw revenge for events dating back to 1992 seems to have been the motivation for mass atrocities that would outrage Western governments, provoke decisive responses to subsequent Serb actions, and leave the Serbs with the adverse political-military consequence of an imposed peace settlement.

The prevailing explanation for the VRS attack is that it was spurred by growing pressure for a favorable geographic outcome in the peace settlement that by then most everyone could see glimmering at the end of the long, dark Bosnian tunnel. This undoubtedly was a major motivation behind the attack. All sides recognized the reality that possession of land on the battlefield would largely dictate who held what at the end of the war. The Bosnian Serbs therefore had a powerful incentive to clear the board of the ARBiH pawns remaining in eastern Bosnia: Srebrenica, Zepa, and Gorazde. An unbroken hold over the entire Drina valley would give the Bosnian Serb statelet a secure boundary with Serbia itself, anchoring it firmly to the mother republic and cementing the two halves of "greater Serbia."

A second (but only secondary) practical reason for the attack would have been a desire to at least neutralize the Bosnian Army forces in the eastern enclaves and so release the 6,000 or so troops tied down around Srebrenica, Zepa, and Gorazde.²⁸⁹ This also appears to have been a logical motivation, given the near exhaustion of Serb manpower reserves that had already forced the VRS to start stripping the Drina Corps of its reserve elements. The release of several thousand troops in the Drina valley would have allowed the VRS to shore up dangerously weak segments of the main confrontation line, rotate tired units, conduct

* For an analysis of Bosnian Serb war aims, military strategy, and political-military relations, see Chapter 73, "The "Red Generals" Refuse to Bow: Political-Military Relations and the Strategic Debate in Republika Srpska, 1995."

limited offensives elsewhere, or create a more robust mobile reserve to counter the increasing number of ARBiH attacks.

Others have also theorized that the impending arrival of UNPROFOR's new Rapid Reaction Force (RRF) spurred the Serbs—who may have feared that the RRF would soon preclude further action against the safe-havens—into a preemptive strike. This may have been a factor, but hardly a deciding one. Despite some rhetoric to the effect that the RRF was a further manifestation of UNPROFOR's alleged anti-Serb bias, the Serbs do not appear to have been overly concerned that its presence would greatly constrain their conduct of military operations. UNPROFOR had been almost wholly ineffective, even NATO airpower had affected events only at the margins, and there is no strong evidence that the VRS viewed the RRF's heralded but much-delayed arrival as a fundamental change to the situation. Indeed, it was the Muslims and Croats who were visibly concerned about the RRF constraining their military options, rather than the Bosnian Serbs, and it was the Croat-Muslim Federation that was creating administrative obstacles to the RRF's advent.²⁹⁰

All of these factors probably contributed to the VRS decision to attack, but it appears to have been the 28 June raid that crystallized the Bosnian Serbs' determination to wipe out the enclave once and for all. The ICTY presented Drina Corps documents indicating that the initial planning order for the attack on Srebrenica, issued to the corps' subordinate echelons on 2 July, was based on the directives promulgated by the Supreme Command and VRS Main Staff in the spring. The objective of the Drina Corps, according to these documents, was to “split apart the enclaves of Zepa and Srebrenica and to reduce them to their urban areas” and “. . . . create conditions for the elimination of the enclaves.” In essence, the corps was to eliminate opposition in the territory surrounding the towns, compacting the large number of displaced civilians so tightly into the central urban areas as to make them uninhabitable, and forcing the UN to evacuate them.

The Bosnian Serbs' twin goals of clearing the map and relieving their besieging troops would explain the

²⁹⁰ See Annex 60, UNPROFOR in Bosnia, 1995: From Vacillation to Retaliation to Peace Implementation for additional details on the UN Rapid Reaction Force and the difficulties it was facing at this time.

strategic planning for the VRS operation to capture Srebrenica. Pent-up desires to punish the Muslims for the Visnjica village raid might have sharpened the broader military and political motivations and adequately explain both the nature and the timing of the attack—but not the subsequent massacre of the town's male population. Finally, an unreasoning sense of outrage and revenge precipitated by the Srebrenicans' obstinate resistance—and all of the previous raids, ambushes, and attacks launched from an ostensibly demilitarized enclave under UN protection—might well have driven both the timing of the attack only a few days after Visnjica and the subsequent massacre of the town's male population.

6 July 1995: The Offensive Begins

The Bosnian Serb campaign to eliminate the enclave kicked off with heavy shelling in the very early morning of 6 July. At about 0315, rockets began soaring from the launchers of the VRS 5th Mixed Artillery Regiment north of Srebrenica and slamming into the town. By 0500, four UN observation posts in the southeast corner of the enclave (Delta, Foxtrot, Kilo, and Sierra) were reporting heavy infantry fighting all around them. Ominously, though, it was not only small-arms fire they were hearing but also the detonations of mortars, artillery, and tank guns.²⁹⁰

There had been few visible indications that the VRS was preparing an early attack on Srebrenica. On 5 July, the day before the attack opened, some Dutch troops reported that the Serbs were repositioning some heavy weapons. Others noted Serb soldiers with white ribbons tied to their shoulders, a common unit recognition symbol employed for avoiding friendly-fire incidents during offensive operations.²⁹¹ Neither the Dutch battalion nor its higher UNPROFOR headquarters were aware of any significant reinforcements brought into the area, however, much less any VRS plans to mount a major offensive to capture the enclave. Similar troop movements had been recorded around the enclave dozens of times in the past, and the VRS was constantly adjusting its forces all across Bosnia. There was no special indicator that would par-

ticularly distinguish these reports from the hundreds of reports filed over the months and across the country. Until the guns began to fire, no one thing or even combination of things told UNPROFOR that now was the time and Srebrenica was the place.

The most intense fighting began to shape up around OP Foxtrot, perched on one side of 836-meter Mt. Javor, just outside the boundary of the southeast corner of the enclave. The Drina Corps' main assault came here in the southeast and was led by troops and armor from the 1st Zvornik Brigade and its Drina Wolves special operations unit, together with troops from the 10th Sabotage Detachment and the 2nd Romanija Motorized Brigade. The attack on OP Foxtrot itself was supported by at least three VRS tanks, two field artillery pieces, and a multiple rocket launcher, which were either actively firing or within firing distance. By early afternoon, artillery shells were hitting just outside the OP, and then two Serb tanks fired directly at the OP from pointblank range. Although entitled to return fire, the Dutch peacekeepers in OP Foxtrot concluded it would be much safer not to do so. They had considerable justification for their decision. OP Foxtrot had a lone TOW antitank guided-missile launcher in its inventory, but the Dutch had mounted it in a tower on top of the OP, where its night-vision scope and positioning made it excellent as an observation tool but virtually useless as a weapon. The tower itself had taken several hits, and no one had much confidence that the old and weathered TOW system would be effective. The short range of the two Dragon antitank missiles made their use a last-ditch act of desperation.

Unwilling to hazard the consequences of returning fire directly, the Dutch battalion commander raised the possibility of air support with the UNPROFOR Chief of Staff in Sarajevo—Brigadier General Cees Nicolai, by happenstance also the senior-ranking Dutch officer in UNPROFOR. Nicolai told Lt. Col. Karremans that UNPROFOR was very reluctant to authorize air support, especially in view of the prevailing diplomatic situation. At that very moment Carl Bildt, the European Union's chief negotiator, was discussing with Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic the possibility of mutual diplomatic recognition by Yugoslavia and Bosnia. A diplomatic breakthrough suddenly seemed

possible after months of fruitless talk and might be the first step toward the outright conclusion of the Bosnian war. Nobody wanted to jeopardize the talks by antagonizing the Serbs with NATO military action at this time, and the anxieties of the hostage-taking debacle of only four weeks ago were still fresh in everyone's mind. Neither UNPROFOR nor NATO had yet figured out how to deal with the hostage-taking threat, and there were legitimate fears that, if UNPROFOR responded to the shelling of OP Foxtrot with air support, the Serbs might take the whole Dutch battalion prisoners, seize the undefended enclave, and maybe even round up UN personnel all over Bosnia. At UNPROFOR headquarters in Sarajevo it did not seem worth jeopardizing the diplomatic talks and perhaps the whole UNPROFOR mission in Bosnia for the sake of seven peacekeepers in one observation post.

Fortunately for the Dutch soldiers hunkered down in OP Foxtrot, the weather worsened late in the day and heavy rains began to obscure visibility. The firing in and around their outpost tapered off and lapsed into a respite—but it was only a respite.

7 July 1995: The Lull Before the Storm

Friday, 7 July 1995, was to be Srebrenica's last day of relative peace. Dense, heavy fog reduced visibility to the end of a gunsight and made combat operations all but impossible. The Serbs may also have paused anyway to reposition their forces or to take stock of the international reactions to the previous day's attack. As the Dutch recorded the few artillery detonations heard during the day, they and others allowed themselves to hope that perhaps the VRS was not ready to press an offensive after all.

Despite the vulnerable positions and harrowing experiences of his men, Lieutenant Colonel Karremans, in the report he composed for UN headquarters on the evening of 7 July, was still cautiously optimistic. On the basis of what he had seen thus far, Karremans believed that the VRS attacks in and around OP Foxtrot had been "attempts to provoke and intimidate the

A[R]BiH and Dutchbat." He concluded that, although the VRS would try to "neutralize" the Bosnian Army forces in the Srebrenica enclave, "in the long term" the Serbs lacked sufficient infantry and would "not be able to seize the enclave in the short term."²⁹²

Karremans' line of reasoning was still defensible, even (as it turned out) on the day before the main Serb offensive began. For one thing, the attack on OP Foxtrot did not look all that different from the Bosnian Serb attack on adjacent OP Echo only a month before on 3 June. At that time, the VRS had attacked the UNPROFOR OP with small arms, mortars, and anti-tank weapons, forcing the Dutch to abandon a similar strategic position in the southeast of the enclave while the Serbs occupied a square kilometer or 2 of important territory around Zeleni Jadra. It was therefore reasonable to conclude that the Serbs were probably mounting an operation limited to gaining control of the vital south road, which would connect Bratunac and Vlasenica and allow them to fully exploit the bauxite mine a little further to the west.

Relevant to Karremans' conclusions was the fact that neither he nor his higher headquarters in Sarajevo and Zagreb had yet seen the buildup of forces that everyone believed would signal a Serb campaign to take the enclave. In this they were overlooking the crucial consideration that neither the forces required nor the distances involved in a Serb move to overrun the enclave were very great. This would not be Operation Barbarossa or the Normandy invasion, with hundreds of thousands of troops and vehicles massed against a border awaiting orders to start. When the battle for Srebrenica was in fact joined, the infantry advance was accompanied by probably no more than 10 tanks and APCs supported by six to 12 field artillery pieces and a number of mortars—most of them deployed around the enclave beforehand in a mountainous, forested region that made cover and concealment of weapons and troop movements almost a trivial concern.²⁹³ Moreover, the line of advance from Serb-held OP Echo through all of Srebrenica town to the UN compound was no more than 8 kilometers or so—a couple of minutes' driving, or an hour's brisk walk. By the time it became apparent that a real attack had in fact begun, it was already too late to do anything about it. There was neither time nor space enough for

the UN or the ARBiH commanders to establish a fallback position.

As for calling in air support for Srebrenica, the UNPROFOR decisionmakers had to take into account UN directive 2/95 of 29 May, which remained in effect. In this instruction, French General Bernard Janvier, UNPROFOR's top commander, had directed that "the execution of the mandate is secondary to the security of UN personnel" and that force was only to be used as a last resort.²⁹⁴ With such explicit marching orders still on the books despite the escalation of threats to the UN mission, UNPROFOR planners believed they could not call in large-scale NATO air-strikes on behalf of the Srebrenica safe area unless these strikes could first be justified as necessary for the defense of the UN peacekeepers.

The cumbersome, slow, and much-hated dual-key procedure for authorizing air support would be radically changed *after* the fall of Srebrenica, in large measure because of the failings of the system evidenced during the attack and the horrific consequences that were in some measure the result. On 7 July, however, the established procedures were what everyone in UNPROFOR had to work with. The potential for confusion, delay, and ineffectiveness inherent in these procedures would become all too evident in the next few days.

Saturday, 8 July 1995

As dawn rose misty on the morning of 8 July, it remained uncertain whether the Serb attack would be renewed. During the middle of the night the Dutch had recorded 275 more artillery detonations around the enclave, but only scattered shots were noted here and there during the morning hours. It was not until a little after noon that the unfortunate OP Foxtrot again came under VRS attack. Shells began exploding close enough that it was obvious that the UN observation post was the intended target. About 20 Serb soldiers were seen approaching the UN position on foot when, at about 1345, a Serb tank round smashed directly into

one wall of the OP and demolished a portion of it. Two more tank rounds slammed into the OP a couple of minutes later. All doubts about the seriousness of Serb intentions had been removed.²⁹⁵

As fighting raged around the OP, its senior noncommissioned officer, Sergeant Frans van Rossum, radioed Dutchbat headquarters for permission to withdraw himself and his troops from a clearly untenable position. The higher command readily agreed that van Rossum should evacuate the position as soon as an opportune moment made it safe to do so.

Unfortunately, no such moment presented itself. Just when the Dutchbat troops thought the fighting had let up enough for them to climb into their YPR armored personnel carrier and retreat back to the UN compound, one of the soldiers noticed a Serb T-55 tank not more than 100 meters away with its main gun leveled straight at them. Unable to argue with this kind of weaponry, the Dutchbat troops decided that surrendering their weapons and negotiating with the Serbs was the better part of valor and the best of a bad set of choices. After some tense moments while the 10 or 20 VRS troops—probably from the 1st Zvornik Brigade or “Drina Wolves”—rummaged through the OP and their possessions, the disarmed Dutch troops managed to talk the Serbs into letting them return to Srebrenica in their armored vehicle. All seemed surprisingly well, but events were about to take a tragic turn just a few moments later.²⁹⁶

On the road back to Srebrenica, at the base of Mt. Javor, the Dutch vehicle from OP Foxtrot encountered a makeshift roadblock set up by a Muslim soldier and three armed civilians, their purpose being no less than preventing the Dutch troops from abandoning their position. Several of the Dutch Battalion’s observation posts—including OP Foxtrot—had previously been Bosnian Army positions, sometimes located in tactically key positions. These positions had only reluctantly been turned over to the UN under the terms of the April 1993 safe area agreement. The ARBiH was now both furious and afraid that it would end up surrendering its few good defensive positions, first to the UN and then to the Bosnian Serbs, without even a fight.

Finding his exit route blocked, Sergeant Van Rossum radioed Bravo Company commander Captain Jelte Groen in Srebrenica and asked for guidance. The company commander inquired whether the Dutch troops could see any antitank weapons that could threaten their APC. When van Rossum replied in the negative, the Captain ordered him to drive through the barricade and make his way back to Srebrenica.

Van Rossum told the YPR’s crew to button up the vehicle and proceed. As they were closing their hatches, a loud noise inside the compartment signaled that they had already been attacked by the Muslim soldier. Private First Class Raviv van Renssen slumped to his knees and then to the floor, a gaping wound surrounding a hole in his skull behind the left ear. The YPR raced down the road the short distance to Srebrenica, its radio blaring frantic appeals for medical help while Van Renssen’s three companions searched desperately for the medical kit in the ransacked vehicle. An armored ambulance met the YPR on the road just south of Srebrenica, and van Renssen was rushed to the UN medical compound at Potocari. It was already too late; he had died in his vehicle while still on the road. Private van Renssen was pronounced dead at 1627. An X-ray later found 30 fragments from a handgrenade lodged in his skull.^{297 298}

Another, less serious, confrontation with the Bosnian Muslims occurred that evening. Bravo Company commander Captain Groen ordered two of his YPRs to move south to locate the fluid Serb-Muslim frontline and report on the situation there. On the way, one of the APCs was blocked by a group of Muslim soldiers and another makeshift barricade. Some of the troops might have had antitank rockets, and nobody wanted to risk a firefight after van Renssen’s death only hours earlier. Groen ordered the vehicles to turn around and head back to Srebrenica. As they did so, one of the Muslims threw a handgrenade at the APCs. This time the grenade exploded harmlessly beside the vehicles, but it was the second Bosnian Army attack on the Dutch battalion that day and yet another signal that the Muslims were furious and frustrated with the Dutch failure to halt the Serb advance.²⁹⁹

Having overrun OP Foxtrot, the VRS moved to take control of the road segment just to the west, north of OP Uniform. Capture of the road beyond the OP and the surrender of its defenders would open the way for the Serbs to advance the last couple of kilometers toward Srebrenica town. These facts were not lost on the Muslims, and a fierce three-hour firefight ensued north of the Dutch OP, with Muslim soldiers behind the peacekeepers and Serbs in front of them. Well aware of what had already happened to Private van Renssen, OP Uniform's senior NCO, Sergeant Alwin van Eck, made no attempt to evacuate the position. At about 1830 the attacking Serbs gained the upper hand and occupied the ridge line around the OP and a small section of the road; a little later a VRS platoon showed up at the OP and began looting it. The disarmed Dutch peacekeepers were given the same choice as that of OP Foxtrot: return disarmed to the UN base at Srebrenica or place themselves in Serb custody. Considering the experiences of the retreating crew of OP Foxtrot, Sergeant van Eck opted to turn himself and his five men over to the Serbs.³⁰⁰

Significantly, this VRS movement suggested that the Serbs intended to drive *northward* toward Srebrenica and from OP Echo (occupied by the VRS back in June), and not westward to force open the Muslim-held road segment along the southern side of the Srebrenica enclave. It is far easier to see this in retrospect than it in the swirl of confusing events all taking place within a kilometer or so of each other.

During the night of 8-9 July, Lieutenant Colonel Karremans reached a different conclusion based on the same evidence. Despite the Serb takeovers of OPs Foxtrot and Uniform, Karremans still did not foresee a general offensive aimed at taking over the enclave itself. Rather, he still expected the Serbs to take over the strip of land along the southern border of the enclave to secure the road south of the Jadar river and a passage from the bauxite mine southwest of the enclave. Judging by the seemingly limited size and direction of the Serb attack, Karremans concluded again that it was "a diversion and an attempt at intimidation":

*The attacks on OP Foxtrot and OP Uniform must be regarded as part of an attempt to take possession of the Jadar valley. The fact that there are no attacks on the rest of the enclave perimeter reinforces this view.*³⁰¹

Unfortunately, Karremans' conclusions—though based on sound logic and supported by three UNPROFOR command echelons above him—were wrong.

Sunday, 9 July 1995

On 9 July, Dutch Defense Minister Joris Voorhoeve summed up the situation bleakly but accurately: the safe area's Dutch defenders were "surrounded, outnumbered, and afraid of further actions" by the Serb forces advancing against the enclave.³⁰² The UN and the Dutch Government still clung to the hope that the Bosnian Serbs would not overrun Srebrenica. A better understanding of the battlefield situation was necessary, however, before the UN could decide what the Serbs' real objective was.

With the loss of the southern OPs, UNPROFOR had a blind spot in the most crucial part of the enclave. To try to remedy this, Karremans told Bravo Company commander Captain Groen to send four APCs of his "Quick Reaction Force" to two positions south of the town and report back what they saw.

Meanwhile, the Bosnian Serbs renewed their attack, this time surrounding OP Sierra, last of the three UN OP's in the southeastern corner of the enclave.³⁰³ Recognizing the futility of resistance, Sergeant Jan Bresser, the commander of OP Sierra, surrendered to the Bosnian Serbs at 0900.

It was still conceivable that the Serbs had the limited objective of taking the southern road. Indeed, some of the day's events supported that theory. After OP Sierra, the next to fall was OP Kilo, *west* of the cross-roads in the enclave's southeast corner. Its crew was taken away under Serb guard to be held in Milici. After OP Kilo surrendered at 1815, Sergeant Zuurman, the commander of OP Delta—the next OP to the west of Kilo—abandoned his position before the Serbs could take it and his men. (Zuurman's men were held by some ARBiH soldiers overnight but were allowed to continue on to Srebrenica the following

morning.) Five consecutive OP's had been given up, in precise east-to-west chronological order. The Serbs had secured all the positions south of the Jadar river and had perhaps achieved their military objectives—or so some still hoped.

Karremans—lacking any reporting from the southeast following the losses of OPs Uniform, Foxtrot, and Sierra—remained unaware, of another crucial fact for most of the day. While the five OPs that fell to the Serbs on 9 July were indeed all along the southern edge of the enclave, a VRS column led by two tanks, an APC, and a small column of Serb infantry was advancing due *northward* at the same time. By about midday this force had reached as far as the village of Pusmilici, just about halfway between the Serb's start line that morning and the town of Srebrenica. After a series of running battles along the road, the Serb forces had advanced to within about 2 kilometers of the town by early evening.

Troubled by the Dutchbat's poor knowledge of events in the southeast part of the enclave, Bravo Company commander Captain Groen sent another of his Quick Reaction Force APCs down the road from Srebrenica with the inelegant but vital mission of driving south until it ran into the frontline. The mission was successful, after a fashion. The YPR armored vehicle came upon Serb soldiers near the Swedish Shelter Project, a housing development built by relief workers near OP Sierra in the southern part of the enclave. Once again the Serbs surrounded the Dutch peacekeepers and insisted they surrender their weapons. At about 1330, Sergeant Johan Bos, the vehicle's commander, radioed back to Captain Groen that they had been disarmed and that the YPR's crew was being taken to Bratunac. Dutchbat had found the frontline—at the cost of an APC and several more UN prisoners.³⁰⁴

It was not until late in the afternoon, probably around 1700, that the Dutchbat headquarters got a real appreciation of the seriousness of the situation. Looking down from a hill, Dutch peacekeepers in a UN vehicle under Lieutenant Egbers saw a Serb force advancing near the village of Bibici—a scant kilometer or so from the south end of Srebrenica. Worse yet, Egbers

saw no Muslim defenders opposing their advance. Frantically, Egbers radioed back to the harried Bravo Company commander, Captain Groen, to report that "One Serb tank backed by 50 infantry are advancing north."³⁰⁵ Not only did the Serb force represent trouble of the first order but it was also much closer to the town and its UN compound than anyone in the UN chain of command had realized. It meant that the Serbs were advancing north—into Srebrenica itself—rather than west toward the aluminum company's mine.

Meanwhile, Karremans spoke with the acting commander of the ARBiH forces in the enclave, Major Ramiz Becirovic, and offered to allow the Bosnian Army to take possession of the arms it had turned over to the UN and that were currently stored in the weapons collection point in the town. Somewhat to Karremans' surprise, Becirovic declined the offer, explaining that accepting the weapons would give the Serbs a pretext to continue their advance, while decreasing the odds that the UN would order NATO airstrikes—which is what Becirovic clearly really wanted. "We don't want to take the weapons," Karremans heard him say; "Why don't you call for air-strikes?"³⁰⁶ Given that the weapons in the collection point consisted of two inoperable tanks, two howitzers, an antiaircraft gun, a few mortars, and a hodge-podge of about 150 small arms—all in poor repair, out of ammunition, or both—Becirevac's position was probably a reasonable one. Desperate as the 28th Division's military situation now was, a few more wornout weapons would not have improved it, and any action that jeopardized Srebrenica's status as a safe area probably was not worth the risk. Neither then nor later did the Bosnian forces try to retrieve the weapons in the UN storage point.³⁰⁷

The events of 9 July had substantially changed the situation of the peacekeepers, and that evening Karremans again wrestled with the airpower option. Even the strict UN rules of engagement clearly permitted a legitimate call for Close Air Support: during the day the Serbs had unquestionably and deliberately targeted UN OP's Kilo and Mike with artillery and mortar fire.

Yet nothing that had happened during the day, not even an offer from General Nicolai in Sarajevo to have NATO planes at least do a flyby over the enclave, changed Karremans' disinclination to call in NATO aircraft.³⁰⁸

There were practical considerations that caused Karremans to fear that NATO airpower might accomplish little and actually create more problems than it solved. As he put it,

Using Close Air Support in all possible ways is not feasible yet. It will provoke the Bosnian Serb Army in such a way that both Srebrenica itself and observation posts and compounds will be targeted by all means . . . Unless these weapons systems can be eliminated at one time . . .³⁰⁹

As Karremans saw it, the NATO airstrike package would have to be big enough to cripple both the advancing Serb forces and the surrounding artillery at the same time. If only the infantry column was stopped, the Serbs could respond by shelling the town, the Dutch UN compound, or both. If just the artillery ringing the enclave was destroyed, the Serb forces could easily manage the last few kilometers along the road and occupy the town anyhow. So-called "pin-prick" air attacks, like those used around Gorazde and Sarajevo in 1994 (and like those that would eventually be used around Srebrenica two days later), would have no military impact at all and would only antagonize the VRS.

By Karremans' reasoning, a determined Serb advance could only be deterred by an airstrike against a large package of targets—the assault formation itself and probably at least two dozen heavy weapons and assorted vehicles situated around the enclave. Such a strike would vastly exceed any previous UN air operation and mark a dramatic escalation in the level of UN retaliation. It might inflame the Serbs into making a more violent assault on the enclave or touch off another round of retaliatory hostage taking all over Bosnia. Karremans was acutely aware that 30 of his own men from the captured OPs were already in Serb hands. Finally, even if NATO were willing to assemble the bombing package that he considered necessary to destroy the enemy weapons in one massive strike,

Karremans had good reason to doubt that even advanced NATO jets would be able to find and destroy them in densely forested and mountainous terrain on the first try.

Karremans shared his concerns with the UNPROFOR headquarters, where the debate continued. It was now irrefutably clear that the VRS did intend to occupy Srebrenica and capture the enclave. Perhaps 2,000 meters separated the advancing Serb tanks from the edge of the world's first UN-guaranteed safe area. What did this portend, and what could be done about it?

Seeking to resolve these questions and develop a practical course of action, General Nicolai, the UNPROFOR Chief of Staff in Sarajevo, conferred with Col. Harm De Jonge, the Dutch UNPROFOR Chief of Operations in Zagreb. Combining two ideas, they decided to establish "blocking positions," which, when combined with a countervailing UN ultimatum to the Serbs, would serve as tripwires for engaging NATO's airpower. If the blocking positions worked—so the theory went—the Serbs would halt their advance. If the Serbs failed to respect the UN road-blocks, they would have provided a clear justification for NATO airstrikes.

After getting approval for the idea from both General Janvier and the civilian Special Representative of the UN Secretary General, Yasushi Akashi, Nicolai relayed Karremans his new orders. He would deploy his battalion to establish a UN presence astride all the main roads into Srebrenica town. Specifically, his troops were to:

take up blocking positions using all means available in order to prevent further penetration and advance of BSA [Bosnian Serb Army] units in the direction of Srebrenica. Every possible measure must be taken to reinforce these positions, including measures relating to weapons.³¹⁰

At about the same time the Dutchbat received its orders, the UN headquarters in Zagreb issued an ultimatum to the Serbs from General Janvier and UN

Special Representative Akashi. The catalog of UN demands specified that the Serbs were not only to halt their attack and withdraw to the original boundaries of the Srebrenica enclave: the detained Dutch soldiers must be released and all of their equipment and personal belongings returned. The Serbs were notified that the UN had established “blocking positions” within the enclave and warned that, if they failed to respect these blocking positions, “NATO Close Air Support will be employed.”

Here, somehow, arose one of the misunderstandings that helped to contribute to the Srebrenica disaster. Following their conversation, General Nicolai in Sarajevo and Lieutenant Colonel Karremans in Srebrenica had completely different understandings of what NATO airpower was likely to do the following day. Karremans, for whatever reason (and in spite of the written text of the UN threat, which had been faxed to him), believed that NATO was prepared to launch massive airstrikes all around the enclave the following morning. After Karremans relayed this to his staff, the misconception was in turn relayed to the entire Dutch battalion. Karremans even met with the Muslim leaders of Srebrenica around midnight to inform them that NATO would be carrying out large-scale airstrikes with the dawn. Exultant Muslim residents and harried UN peacekeepers everywhere around Srebrenica went to sleep that night believing that NATO’s winged might would be flying to the attack first thing in the morning.³¹¹

Of crucial importance—and what everyone except Karremans appears to have appreciated immediately—was the fact that the phrase used in the written ultimatum was NATO Close Air Support,” with no mention of “NATO airstrikes.” The capitalized phrasing strongly implied to most UN leaders and the Bosnian Serb Army commanders that the air attacks would be individual ground-support flights to defend Dutch troops under threat from specific Bosnian Serb guns or tanks. The limited size and nature of this kind of threat was entirely distinct from the large tactical air package Karremans had postulated as necessary to suppress the numerous VRS weapons around Srebrenica. Its deterrent threat differed by several orders of magnitude from, say, a strategic campaign against VRS infrastructure targets across Serb-held Bosnia.

There were a number of reasons for the narrowly focused warning to the Serbs. Partly, it stemmed from the ambiguities in UN Security Council Resolution 836, which talked about deterring (though not resisting) attacks on the safe areas, allowed the use of force in self-defense (though not necessarily for the defense of the enclave itself), and authorized the use of airpower to carry out the mission (but without specifying the scope or circumstances for the employment of airpower, or indeed the mission itself). The ambiguous text left much of the interpretation up to its readers, in this case the UN’s military decision makers. UNPROFOR Commander General Janvier—who had to deal with the disastrous hostage-taking episode that had followed the last attempted use of NATO airpower—chose a very narrow interpretation of the UN’s mandate in his 29 May directive. Moreover, UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali still had to personally approve all UN requests for NATO airstrikes. For all of these reasons, the Bosnian Serbs found themselves threatened with “air support” rather than “airstrikes”—a distinction not lost on any of the commanders who were the objects of the ultimatum.

The effect was to make it plain that, despite its “blocking positions” and the threat of airpower, the UN was simply not prepared to engage the VRS Drina Corps in effective combat. The UNPROFOR APCs ordered out on the roads were armed with nothing heavier than .50-caliber machineguns. Damp storage had made the Dragon and AT4 antitank weapons held by the Dutch soldiers entirely unreliable, and their range was suicidally short. The soldiers had been furnished no artillery support. There had been neither the time nor the means to prepare defensive positions or to lay mines or even to string barbed wire. If the light blue UN flag failed to stop the Serb advance—and it certainly had not done so to date—it was unclear what, if anything, the UN peacekeepers would or could do about it.

General Mladic’s intelligence chief, Gen. Zdravko Tolimir, speaking from the other end of a telephone line to UNPROFOR Chief of Staff General Nicolai, was dismissive. Not only did Tolimir pay scant heed to the UN’s threats, he simply denied that there were any Bosnian Serb forces in the enclave in the first place.

Even before the first Dutch YPRs moved out to their stations along the roads, the prospects for the blocking positions halting the Serb advance looked slim indeed.

Monday, 10 July 1995

In the early morning hours of 10 July, Bravo Company commander Captain Groen began to implement the order he had received during the night. Although many of the Dutch soldiers were uneasy about the “blocking position” order—it smacked too much of lying down in front of an oncoming truck—Captain Groen promptly directed six YPRs and about 50 soldiers to establish four roadblocks with the APCs and a handful of antitank missiles and rockets. Positions Bravo One and Bravo Four, west and south of the town, respectively, had two YPRs each. Positions Bravo Two and Three, also south and east of the town, each had a single YPR. The battalion’s four forward air controllers—men trained specifically to direct NATO aircraft against hostile ground targets—were split between Bravo One and Bravo Two.

The UN was now in the extremely delicate position of trying to appear to be defending the civilians of the Srebrenica safe area without appearing to assist the Bosnian Army forces in the same enclave. It was an almost impossible task, but the Dutch tried to make the distinction as clear as possible. Bravo Company commander Captain Groen explicitly directed his blocking troops not to fire at the VRS forces unless they were directly attacked themselves.

Bravo One, under Lieutenant Egbers, came under fire at about 1100, probably from a Serb tank on Pribicevac to the east. The crews took refuge in their YPRs and listened to the sound of shrapnel ricochetting off the APC’s armor. One British Forward Air Controller accompanying the Dutch peacekeepers was wounded, though not seriously. As soon as everyone could be accounted for, Bravo One’s two APCs abandoned their blocking position and headed north toward Srebrenica.³¹²

Bravo Two, the southernmost of the planned positions, was never even occupied. On their way south, the Dutch soldiers assigned to this position encountered one of the advancing Serb tanks headed

northward. Their lightly armored YPR went off the road when a near miss from a tank or artillery piece detonated nearby. Unable to get the vehicle back on the road, the crew abandoned it and headed back on foot to meet their comrades at the Bravo Four post.

At about 0900 on 10 July there began the worst episode in the confused and disastrous story of NATO Close Air Support for Srebrenica. At this time, the Dutch battalion formally requested NATO air support via UNPROFOR headquarters. About 50 NATO planes of all types (fighters, bombers, electronic warfare planes, tankers, and so on) were already circling overhead, armed and ready. Everything seemed straightforward, and Dutch battalion troops anticipated imminent air action on their behalf.

They were mistaken. UNPROFOR headquarters instead requested an updated target list, since their previous one was almost 24 hours old and some of the targets had since moved during the course of the Serb attack. The Dutch peacekeepers and their forward air controllers within the enclave dutifully set about updating the target list. At about 1400—some five hours after the initial air support request—the NATO warplanes on station returned to base as the weather deteriorated and their fuel dwindled. There was no pressing sense of urgency, either in UN headquarters or most Western capitals. There had been reports of fighting just south of the town, but, as far as most decisionmakers knew, Srebrenica was not in imminent danger of capture.

While the UN fumbled, the battle raged on. The Serbs had resumed their shelling into the enclave shortly after dawn with the heaviest volume of fire yet felt. Dozens of rounds exploded in Srebrenica in flagrant violation of the UN safe area provisions and forced the town’s population into basements or underground shelters.

At about 0700, Srebrenica’s defenders mounted their only successful counterattack, near the village of Kozlje about 2 kilometers south of Srebrenica. A roughly company-sized force of volunteers from the 28th Division’s elite “maneuver unit” bushwhacked

the farthest advanced group of Serbs while they were still asleep. Firing at close range, the Bosnian commandos damaged a Serb T-55 tank with a rocket-propelled grenade, while a spray of machinegun bullets raked through a platoon of sleeping Serbs. For many of them, it was a last wake-up call, and their surprised and disorganized companions fled the field, a second T-55 dragging the damaged tank southward.³¹³

The exultant Muslims realized that there were no enemy troops between the advance element they had just dispatched and the main body of the attacking force to the south. A kilometer or more of contested territory lay open before them. Captain Mido Salihovic, commanding the raiding party, urgently called for reinforcements to take and reoccupy the key high ground around OP Foxtrot, where the battle had begun four days earlier. The UN had not saved the enclave, but for a moment it looked as though the town's Muslim defenders might defy the odds and do it themselves.

The little battle at Kozlje once again showed the critical limitations of the Bosnian Army. Armed with skill, bravery, small arms, surprise, and luck, a handpicked force of 100 or so troops had not only blunted the Bosnian Serb attack but had actually forced the advance VRS elements—including two tanks—into outright retreat. As so often before, the Bosnian Serbs were able to win back the lost hand with their ubiquitous trump card: field artillery fire, which the Muslims had no way of countering. As soon as the Muslims occupied the key hills at Kozlje and nearby Zivkovo Brdo, VRS artillery and mortar fire rained down on them. The ARBiH infantry was pinned down for hours, unable to advance, unwilling to retreat, and slowly accumulating casualties as shrapnel and tree bursts wounded troops hiding in or under whatever cover they could find.

While the commandos clung to their perilous position, 28th Division commander Ramiz Becirovic was frantically scrambling to find reinforcements to send south to their support. Although he might have had 3,000 or more troops under his command, probably fewer than a third of them were even armed. These few hundred armed men were all Becirovic had to defend nearly 50 kilometers of frontline, and none of his subordinate brigade commanders was willing to thin his own

frontline forces to create a mobile reserve.³¹⁴ Late in the day, Becirovic finally scraped together a scratch force to send south, but the reinforcements were too few and their arrival too late to change the course of the battle.

While Becirovic and his 28th Division subordinates bobbed their chance for a counterattack, the Serbs continued to pound the daring Muslims who had reoccupied the hills around Kozlje. By midafternoon casualties and withdrawals had reduced the original force of 100 to only 10 defenders posted above the morning's ambush site. When the Serbian advance force, reinforced and reorganized, finally returned with a tank and a full infantry company around 1600, there was nothing the 10 Muslim defenders could do to stop them.

Late in the afternoon the air began to go out of the ARBiH defensive balloon. Beginning about 1800, Bosnian Army forces began to fall back in numbers, though still in fairly good order, and sought to regroup for a literal last-ditch defense along a line immediately south of the town. As the Bosnian Muslims pulled back, the Serbs resumed their advance. This left the three remaining UN blocking positions—Bravo One, Bravo Three, and Bravo Four—in serious danger of being outflanked by the advancing Serbs. The UN APCs from the blocking positions perforce were ordered to fall back to new positions on the southernmost edge of Srebrenica town.

The two hours between 1800 and 2000 were nerve-wracking in the extreme for Dutchbat, as the peacekeepers did their doughty best, without actually using force, to deter the Serbs from advancing. At two of the UN blocking positions—Bravo One and Bravo Four—the defenders opened fire but over the Serbs' heads. One brought an 81-mm mortar into play but fired only warning flares. When these gestures failed to stop the Serbs in their tracks, Captain Hageman, commanding the little force, had no choice but to turn his vehicles around and fall back into the town, where the frightened residents assumed that he was going to flee and abandon them to their fate. Grim-faced Bosnian Army soldiers confronted Hageman and told him they would knock out his APCs with antitank rockets if he tried to

pull back any further. The Dutch peacekeepers were now being threatened by both the Serbs and the Bosnian Muslims.

Pursued by the Serbs closing in behind them and blocked by the Muslims from falling back, at around 1900 the Dutch battalion sent another formal petition for the promised Close Air Support. The Serbs had again directly targeted the UN troops in the blocking positions, and the UN compound in Srebrenica was in imminent danger of being hit by the shells now raining on the town. The forward air controllers specified three areas where all-out NATO air support was needed: south of the blocking positions and in Srebrenica itself, north of OP Papa in the northeast part of the enclave near Bratunac, and along the high ridge line the Serbs had occupied in the southeast part of the enclave near OP Uniform. In these circumstances, this time the Dutchbat might well have considered its message less a request for support than a last appeal for salvation.

The UN's top force commander, Gen. Bernard Janvier, was not one to act unilaterally, and he called a meeting of his advisers to discuss the Dutch colonel's request. The discussions went on for more than an hour and a half while Karremans called Sarajevo every 15 minutes to ask if his request had been approved yet. The UN command staff was in parallel discussions with The Hague to see if the Dutch Government—which now had 30 peacekeepers held hostage in Serb hands—would be willing to take the risk of allowing the UN to strike back. After deliberations at the highest levels of the Dutch Government, Dutch Defense Minister Voorhoeve replied that, yes, despite the risks, the Netherlands was prepared to permit NATO Close Air Support missions in defense of the Dutch battalion and the Srebrenica enclave.

Fortunately for Karremans and his tiny command, while their superiors were mulling over their fate, nightfall brought a respite from their touchy predicament. After about 2000, the firing tapered off quickly, leaving the defenders to wonder if the Serbs wanted to allow the town's population to flee northward to Potocari so they could enter Srebrenica uncontested or if they simply preferred to wait until daylight to resume their advance. For whatever reason, the Serb offensive

had again come to a halt, and the UN and the ARBiH leaders had a breathing space to think of a realistic and feasible way to deal with it.

The Serbs helped to clarify their thinking when they raised the ante with an ultimatum to UNPROFOR and the ARBiH. Using one of the radios from a UN APC captured in Bratunac, the Serbs announced that, as of 0600 the following morning, the Dutchbat and the Srebrenica population had 48 hours to evacuate the enclave. The VRS guaranteed safe passage for all who complied with the ultimatum—but declined to specify what would happen if they did not.

On the night of 10 July 1995, Lieutenant Colonel Karremans again called for a robust package of airstrikes against the Bosnian Serbs. During the day, the Dutch battalion had faxed a list of 38 identified Bosnian Serb weapons positions suitable for air attack. Karremans' deputy, Major Robert Franken, conferred with General Nicolai in Sarajevo and was led to believe that, if the Serbs did not withdraw from the enclave, they would suffer retaliatory airstrikes the next day. Karremans went to bed that evening believing that in the morning NATO jets would begin a vigorous air campaign against the Serb tanks and artillery that had been attacking both the Srebrenica safe area and the UN forces within it. In fact, he reportedly told Srebrenica's civilian leadership that, "Everything that moves, whether on two legs, four legs, or on wheels, will be destroyed, erased from the ground."³¹⁵

Karremans was horribly mistaken. General Janvier had in fact vetoed his request for NATO air action.³¹⁶ Janvier considered his instructions to be clear: only Close Air Support was authorized and only if the Serbs continued to attack the blocking positions or advanced into the town. Overruling the opinions of almost all his advisers, he had concluded that any more comprehensive air action would be too dangerous. Months earlier, Janvier had privately concluded that the enclave was militarily indefensible, and, as far back as 24 May, six weeks before the attack on Srebrenica, he had urged his UN superiors to withdraw

the peacekeepers from Bosnia's three eastern enclaves:

We have little time ahead of us. We must take measures which allow us to limit the risks incurred by our forces.

*Let us be pragmatic and above all honest, especially toward those whose security we hold in our hands: without lightning rods, stay out of the storm.*³¹⁷³¹⁸

Janvier seemed not to be alone in his assessment, and, for all of the rhetorical threats in the UN resolutions and warnings, it seemed that all the knowledgeable authorities—the UN, the Western governments, even the Bosnian Serb commanders—understood that a massive NATO air campaign was simply out of the question. Everyone, it seems, but Lieutenant Colonel Karremans and the Bosnian Muslim leadership within the enclave—who, more than anyone else, needed to know that there was no airstrike in the cards that had been dealt them.

11 July: The Enclave Falls

The morning of 11 July dawned heavy with anticipation. The Dutch peacekeepers thought that NATO airstrikes might come as early as 0600. In their morning summary, the UN Military Observers reported that, “The situation this morning has been unusually, but creepily, calm and quiet . . . The usual hail of shells that have been greeting our mornings is surprisingly absent today. We view this as a positive change in the current circumstances, which undoubtedly have come from the NATO ultimatum . . . ”³¹⁹ Even the Muslims, traditionally skeptical of UN promises, were able to believe that NATO airpower was going to save them. After conferring with the civilian leaders of the enclave, acting 28th Division commander Becirovic had even pulled his troops back from the “zone of death” in which Karremans and he believed NATO warplanes were going to devastate the Serb forces.³²⁰ Throughout the enclave, expectations of the UN and NATO were high.

The drama of the NATO Close Air Support mission continued on its farcical way toward its unscripted, tragic conclusion. Still assuming that a NATO bombing package was being worked up, Dutchbat had faxed another formal request for Close Air Support at 2200 the previous night, followed by an updated target list dispatched to UN Sector Northeast in Tuzla at about 0500 that morning. At Tuzla as well as Srebrenica the UNPROFOR commands seemed confident that NATO air action would soon be on the way. After the fog lifted around 0800, the Dutch filed yet another formal air support request (the battalion’s fourth) with the UN Sector Northeast headquarters.

The Muslim commander, Becirovic, had by now wholly entrusted the future of the enclave and his command to Lieutenant Colonel Karremans, the United Nations, and its NATO airpower. Overruling the advice of some of his staff, Becirovic gave strict instructions that the UN peacekeepers among them were not to be harmed, threatened, or taken hostage; that the weapons were not to be removed from the UN weapons collection point; and the 28th Division’s own heavy weapons were not to fire for fear of undermining the enclave’s safe area status.

Both Karremans and Becirovic were completely wrong, however, about the prospects for NATO air action. No planes were on the way; none had even been approved. While the Dutch on the ground believed that the severity of their situation and their repeated requests for help had already provided adequate justification for NATO Close Air Support, UNPROFOR’s higher headquarters did not believe the Dutchbat had met the rigid criteria for CAS in self-defense, since no UN positions had yet come under direct Serb attack that morning. UNPROFOR had yet to share this reasoning and General Janvier’s decision with the beleaguered force in Srebrenica.

After another hour had gone by without any sign of NATO warplanes, Dutchbat Deputy Commander Franken again radioed UN Sector Northeast in Tuzla

to ask what had happened. At this point, the saga of NATO air support crossed the line from the confused to the surreal. Speaking with the acting Chief of Air Operations in Tuzla, a Pakistani colonel, Franken learned that the battalion's request for air support had been denied because it had been submitted on the wrong form. The Dutch had filed a request for *air-strikes*, not *Close Air Support*. Before their request could be considered, they would have to resubmit the request using the proper Close Air Support form along with yet another updated target list.

To keep in touch with the situation, another scout force of two UN APCs had been sent southward to find the frontline using the now-familiar method of blundering into it. At the hairpin turn in the road less than a kilometer south of the town, the two YPRs discovered a Serb tank and several trucks. Turning around as fast as the vehicles would move, the UN APCs managed to flee the scene without being hit by Serb fire. At about 0930 the scouts reported that the Serbs had advanced to within a kilometer of the town. If the UN ultimatum had been intended to force the Serbs to withdraw to the original borders of the enclave, then the threat was clearly not producing the desired effect.³²¹

With the scout force having established beyond all doubt that the Serbs were indeed still violating the terms of the UN ultimatum, the Dutch refiled a Close Air Support request on the required form at about 0945. Then they resubmitted the request two more times, since the UN headquarters in Sarajevo objected to the target list they had attached. After a secure fax line broke and was repaired, an acceptable Close Air Support request form and target list could finally be passed on for consideration in Sarajevo.³²²

NATO warplanes had in fact been in an aerial parking orbit since 0600, and now they had run out of fuel and been ordered back to base. Two more hours would pass before they were refueled and ready to launch again.

The "correct" Dutch request for Close Air Support reached Janvier's desk. He was still not ready to give his approval, partly because UN reporting—Incomplete, occasionally inaccurate, and nearly

always behind the events of the fast-breaking situation—had not persuaded him that Srebrenica was in imminent danger or that the Serbs necessarily even intended to capture the town.

At about the time the Dutch air support request reached Janvier, the Bosnian Serbs began attacking several of the UN OPs with artillery, mortars, and heavy machineguns. OPs Hotel (just east of Srebrenica) and Mike and November (both on the northern edge of the enclave) in particular came under fire. The Serbs may have been trying to divert attention to the north (they had attacked OP Mike before, perhaps as a distraction) as they prepared to launch their final assault on the town, or they may have been trying to tie down the UN peacekeepers in the OPs that had not been captured to keep the UN headquarters guessing. UN peacekeepers pinned down by fire could not effectively locate Serb heavy weapons or help NATO aircraft target them.

Janvier's reflections were interrupted when news of the attacks on OPs Mike and November arrived, but he continued to think for a few more minutes before consulting with UN Special Representative Akashi. Finally, just after noon, Janvier and Akashi approved the Close Air Support request. Shortly after Janvier signed the papers, NATO aircraft were leaving their runways in Italy, bound for Bosnia. It would take them almost two hours to get there.

At the same moment when the UN finally decided to send NATO aircraft to defend Srebrenica, the Bosnian Muslim leadership appears to have concluded that help would never come. In Srebrenica, acting commander Becirovic—with his enemy only hours away, no plan to cope, not enough fighting men, and entirely inadequate weapons—appealed to his higher headquarters in Tuzla for instructions. The ARBiH 2nd Corps was in no position to help Becirovic, however. The 2nd Corps had just exhausted itself in the failed and bloody effort to break the siege of Sarajevo, and it lacked the means to mount a relief attack toward Srebrenica—especially in the next couple of hours, during which time the enclave would surely fall. The 2nd Corps command had never felt able to get weapons or ammunition to the beleaguered and desperate

defenders, and it was even less able now. It could not even give Becirovic any real guidance on what he was supposed to do. The bleak reality of the 2nd Corps' inability to give any help to its doomed 28th Division was a bitter pill for the defenders of Srebrenica, and the taste would linger for years among the survivors, poisoning the past and the future with allegations of conspiracies, secret deals, and sellouts by Sarajevo.³²³

³²⁴

While Becirovic and the 2nd Corps staff in Tuzla desperately discussed what to do about the Serbs' final push, the Bosnian Army's defense of Srebrenica was already beginning to unravel into a confused tangle that made the sequence of events difficult to reconstruct. At about 1300, when the VRS advance brought enemy troops into the immediate vicinity of the town, it appears that the thousands of refugees clustered in Srebrenica's center made a wholesale dash northward. The UN peacekeepers decided to retreat with them, trying to stay ahead of the advancing Serbs and between the VRS and the fleeing civilians. The retreat was given further impetus at 1340 when the UN compound took two direct hits from Bosnian Serb mortar rounds. As both the refugees and the UN fell back, the defense of the enclave's eastern boundary unhinged, and the ARBiH 283rd Brigade swung around to join the northward retreat of the 282nd Brigade. The stream of refugees had become a torrent. Soon as many as 25,000 Muslims were huddled around the UN compound at Potocari.

Of the 18 NATO aircraft that had assembled over the Adriatic Sea in preparation for making their way to Srebrenica, not all were capable of striking Serb ground targets. The downing of an American F-16 on 2 June had brought a tightening of NATO rules for combat operations over Bosnia. The so-called ground attack package thus had a substantial air defense component of two EF-111 Suppression of Enemy Air Defenses (SEAD) aircraft, two EA-6B electronic warfare aircraft, fighter escorts, two AWACS radar and airborne command and control aircraft, fighter escorts, and two tankers to keep the force in the air. This caravan would keep the ground attack planes much safer in hostile Serb airspace, but it also meant that only a handful—six, actually—of the 18 planes in the air were detailed to hit the Serbs on the ground.

Running somewhat behind their schedule, the NATO aircraft appeared in the skies above Srebrenica at about 1430. Serb soldiers from the 1st Zvornik Brigade and its Drina Wolves unit, the 10th Sabotage Detachment, the 2nd Romanija Brigade, and the 1st Birac Brigade had already entered the southern part of the town and were picking their way through its abandoned buildings. Guided by one of the four specially trained forward air controllers, two F-16s of the Royal Dutch Air Force swooped down to attack the Bosnian Serb vehicles advancing up the road just south of Srebrenica. The woman pilot of the first plane dropped a bomb on or near what looked like a tank. A few minutes later, the other Dutch warplane dropped its high-explosive bomb nearby, and that was it. Fully five days after the Dutch battalion's first request for Close Air Support and six to eight hours after the Dutchbat had expected a vast NATO air armada to create a "zone of death" obliterating all Serb heavy weapons in the area, two planes had dropped two bombs and departed.³²⁵

While the Dutch planes made their attack runs, two American F-16s looked for Serb targets south of Srebrenica. Visibility was poor, and they gave up after failing to locate anything. Two other American F-16s then took up the search, hunting for the Serb artillery pieces that had been targeting OPs Mike and November in the northwestern part of the enclave that morning. They, too, failed to find any suitable targets and took off after a Serb soldier loosed an antiaircraft missile from his shoulder-fired SA-7 launcher.

The actual damage inflicted by NATO's ground attack package is difficult to assess, but the first bomb probably at least damaged a Serb tank, and the second may have damaged some of the soft-skinned vehicles nearby. The practical results were even less impressive, especially to the Bosnian Serbs, whose damaged vehicles may not have been part of the advance attack wave. (They may have been parked south of the town because their occupants had dismounted and were already inside Srebrenica.) Militarily speaking, the practical effect of the NATO airstrikes was approximately zero.³²⁶

Having tried and failed to affect the Serb operation with their first aerial attack, the UNPROFOR commanders had to decide whether to launch another and perhaps larger air operation to make the point clearer; they might even hope find and destroy some Serb heavy weapons before nightfall made this too difficult. The decisionmaking process jumped a track only minutes later, however, when an important message from the Bosnian Serbs was relayed by radio through the Dutch battalion headquarters in Potocari. Briefly but very clearly, the VRS explained that, if the UN did not immediately put a stop to NATO air operations, all of the 30 Dutch prisoners—now hostages—in Serb custody would be killed. More immediately, Serb artillery pieces were zeroed in on the UN compound in Potocari, which had become the focus of throngs of Muslim refugees. If another airstrike was made, the VRS stated, the guns would open fire to slaughter peacekeepers and civilians alike. From the UN's standpoint, the choice was not a choice. The NATO warplanes were called off.

About an hour after the VRS threat to kill the hostages, Bosnian Serb Army troops strode into the abandoned UN compound at the extreme north end of Srebrenica. Between 1,000 to 1,500 Bosnian Serb troops had traversed and occupied the entire town in defiance of the pale blue flag with its one-world imprint.³²⁷ Not long past 1600 on 11 July 1995 the noble experiment of the UN's first guaranteed safe area had fallen.

The Serb operation and the UN responses had progressed with a rapid mechanical precision that had seemed to numb the participants to its implications. Now there was left a profound sense of shock and amazement in UNPROFOR, the United Nations, and much of the Western world. Stunned statesmen first had to grasp what had happened and then wonder what to do next. What the Serbs had been able to do seemed unreal, almost unimaginable, a bad dream played out in a distant land. The nightmare was just starting, however.

Chapter 84 Srebrenica: After the Battle

What would the Bosnian Serbs do with 40,000 Muslims?

—Rhetorical question by a senior UN official on 10 July 1995³²⁸

Clearly with respect to the protection of this particular eastern enclave, it has not been a good day.

—White House Spokesman Michael McCurry, 11 July 1995³²⁹

It doesn't take a rocket scientist to understand what is happening . . . The Serbs won a military victory and now they want to ethnically cleanse the territory they captured. The sad fact is that there isn't anything much we or anyone else can do about it.

—A UN official in Zagreb,
12 July 1995³³⁰

The Muslim enclaves in Bosnia are no longer viable and have to disappear. If not we will take them by force . . . What's happening is not ethnic cleansing, it's ethnic displacement—people who want to leave.

—Bosnian Serb President Radovan Karadzic, in an interview for El País³³¹

No one will do you any harm.

—Gen. Ratko Mladic, patting a Muslim boy on the cheek on Serb television³³²

Those Who Stayed—UNPROFOR and the Srebrenica Refugees, 11–21 July, 1995

In the aftermath of the UN's failed aerial deterrent and the occupation of Srebrenica town by Serb forces, the UN commander there and the enclave's remaining Muslim leaders had some decisions to make. Late on 11 July, Lieutenant Colonel Karremans received orders from UN headquarters to negotiate an agreement with the Bosnian Serbs, but, as before, his instructions gave him little advice about resolving their inherent difficulties. He was to negotiate a cease-fire with the VRS, surrender none of his weapons or equipment, safeguard the civilian population to the best of his ability, provide medical care to the roughly 25,000 refugees surrounding the UN compound, and defend his battalion from attack by all means available.

A shocking portent of a worse nightmare to come was played out around 2000 on the night of 11 July when General Mladic summoned Lieutenant Colonel Karremans to his new forward headquarters outside Potocari. On the floor of the room lay a live, trussed-up pig. The Serb general offered Karremans a glass of *sljivovica* plum brandy—which the Dutch commander could hardly refuse—and, as the two raised their glasses in a toast for the photographers, Mladic ordered a Serb soldier to slaughter the pig in front of them. As the Serb slit the pig's throat and blood gushed on the floor, Mladic looked Karremans in the eye and said, "This is how we deal with our enemies."^{333 334 335}

Karremans' first meeting with Mladic ended soon afterward, but he was summoned to a second one around 2300. Mladic, who held all the cards and knew it, began listing the Serb conditions for the evacuation of Srebrenica, and he was uncompromising on everything.

12 July

Karremans met with Mladic a third time the next morning, and now the terms for the evacuation of the residents were to be agreed upon—or, rather, dictated by General Mladic. The evacuation to Muslim-held Kladanj was to start that very day at 1300; at

Karremans' insistence, the Dutch would be allowed to escort the departing convoys. First, however, the refugee population would be separated into groups before being allowed to depart: wounded, sick and weak; women and children; and able-bodied males. All able-bodied men would be "screened" for possible involvement in "war crimes" before being released. Karremans objected vigorously to this ominous condition, but Mladic summarily overruled him. To facilitate the evacuation, the VRS further demanded that the UN provide the diesel fuel for the buses transporting the refugees out of the enclave. The Dutchbat had to demonstrate that they had no diesel fuel before the Serbs consented to "advance" the fuel themselves. (The UN made good on this condition only two days later when a logistic convoy was allowed to enter the enclave and transfer 30,000 liters of fuel to the VRS.)³³⁶

With remarkable rapidity, Serb drivers began arriving with about 50 buses and trucks outside the Potocari UN compound. As the first transports arrived, thousands of panicked Muslims stormed the vehicles in a rush to abandon their surroundings as quickly as possible.³³⁷ Fearing the civilians might trample each other in their rush to board the vehicles³³⁸ and unwilling to let the Serb convoys leave wholly unmonitored, Karremans faced a dilemma: if he refused to help, he would have no control over a situation that kept deteriorating toward disaster; the alternative, however, was to assist the Bosnian Serbs with a form of ethnic cleansing on terms of their dictation. Karremans elected to cooperate with the evacuation.

Early in the afternoon the first convoys left westward for Kladanj, but the ride ended well short of that destination. Instead, the deportees were dropped off some 10 km outside Kladanj and left to make the rest of the way themselves. Not only did this mean walking for hours in the blazing July sun carrying the sick, elderly, injured, and small children, it also meant crossing Serb-Muslim lines with the attendant risks of detonating a mine or drawing rifle fire.³³⁹

The Dutch attempted to follow every convoy to ensure the safety of the deportees, but Serb restrictions soon left them with almost no ability to do this effectively. When General Mladic had agreed to let UNPROFOR

escorts accompany the refugee convoys, the Dutch had assumed that this meant there would be at least one peacekeeper per bus.³⁴⁰ Mladic, however, disputed this assumption, and the Serbs instead said they would allow two Dutch vehicles to accompany each convoy. This gave the peacekeepers far less scope to monitor the fate of the refugees. The convoys were large, and it proved impossible for either escorting vehicle to see all parts of the convoy at all times. The Serb drivers could simply divert from the route, if they wanted to, without being detected, and the best the UN monitors could do was try to verify that the same number of vehicles arrived near Kladanj as had set out from Potocari.

It was not long before even this much monitoring became impossible as the Serbs began stealing Dutch vehicles, leaving the escorts to fend for themselves and their charges on foot. In all, 13 UN convoy escort vehicles—along with weapons, blue helmets, and flak jackets—were confiscated during this time.³⁴¹ The UN had not only surrendered control of the evacuation, it could no longer even monitor and report the situation. One way or another, between 3,000 and 4,000 refugees made it to Kladanj that first day.

13-14 July

The evacuation resumed at approximately 0630 on 13 July. So many Dutch vehicles had already been stolen by Serb troops that the peacekeepers had to fall back on static monitoring from four observation posts set up along the approximately 70-kilometer route from Potocari to Kladanj. This provided hardly more than a symbolic observation of the convoys and almost no ability to prevent abuses. Unhindered, the Serbs claimed they had all but completed the grim task of deporting the Srebrenica refugees by about 1930. In the course of the day, Mladic had demanded that Karremans order the Dutch peacekeepers to leave the town with the departing refugees, but this was one demand that Karremans refused comply with. The Dutch commander insisted that the last peacekeepers would not leave the enclave until all of the Muslim wounded had been safely evacuated under UN supervision.

When UNHCR staff people accompanying an aid convoy arrived at the Potocari base on the 14th, they found some 3,000 Srebrenica residents still there—including several hundred Muslim males already aboard buses and under guard. When the UNHCR staff departed Potocari a few hours later, no more than a few hundred Srebrenicans remained.³⁴²

15-21 July

Virtually all of the enclave's population had departed by now, either on foot during a desperately catastrophic breakout attempt or in the trucks and buses of the Serb-run evacuation. There remained several dozen seriously sick and wounded, the UN's Bosnian Muslim employees, and the peacekeepers themselves. Problems created over their departures would take almost a week.

On 15 July, 55 Dutch peacekeepers captured around Srebrenica and held by the Bosnian Serbs at Bratunac were released and allowed to make their way through Serbia for an eventual safe return to the Netherlands. The rest of the Dutch battalion remained in Srebrenica.

On 17 July, the last group of Bosnian wounded was transferred to the custody of the ICRC.³⁴³ The VRS authorities required the Dutch battalion's deputy commander, Major Franken, to sign a document specifying that the evacuation of the refugees had proceeded "correctly" and that the "Serb side has adhered to all the regulations of the Geneva conventions and international war law."³⁴⁴ Apparently fearing for the well-being of these last Muslim civilians, Major Franken agreed to sign the text, after appending to it the handwritten amendment "as far as it concerns convoys actually escorted by UN forces." The turnover of the wounded cleared the way for the Dutch battalion to depart, as there was no one left to protect except for the few Bosnian UN employees. It would be a matter of days, however, before the peacekeepers actually departed the former safe area.

After prolonged negotiations, the Dutch left the Srebrenica enclave around noon on 21 July. Along with them departed the Bosnian Muslim UN employees and the UNPROFOR vehicles and weapons not already confiscated by the Serbs. For the UN peacekeepers, the wounded and the employees they tried to safeguard, and the Srebrenica women and children who had been bused out of Potocari and then forced to walk to safety, escaping the enclave had been a dangerous and harrowing ordeal. They had no idea how much harder it had been for those who left by other means.

Those Who Left: “The Death March,” 11-16 July 1995

Die, you scum, we are the champs . . . Come out on the terrace and hail the Serb race.

—A popular Serb radio tune,
July 1995³⁴⁵

14 July: The March Sets Out

On the evening of 11 July, a few hours after Serb soldiers had occupied the town center of Srebrenica, some 12,000 ARBiH soldiers and Muslim civilians gathered in the little village of Susnjari in the northwestern corner of the enclave. They had decided to make a break for freedom rather than surrender to the advancing Serbs.³⁴⁶ Their barely conceivable intention was to sneak past the VRS patrols and make their way through tens of kilometers of Serb-held territory to government-held lines. Their collective decision was a terrible gamble, borne of fear and desperation, and a horrific odyssey lay before them. Fewer than half would survive the trek.

The assemblage of military-age males could only loosely be called a fighting force. Probably no more than 1,200 of the thousands in the column were armed, so the rest could fairly be described as civilians.³⁴⁷³⁴⁸ To minimize the effects of the landmines they would encounter, they formed themselves into a long column, two abreast, that stretched for about 12 kilometers.³⁴⁹ Roughly 500 meters ahead of the column scouted 600 troops from the 284th Light Brigade, most of whose soldiers had originally come

from Konjevici Polje and Cerska, the area through which the column would pass.³⁵⁰ Next followed the 283rd Brigade under its commander, Major Ejup Golic, now the de facto leader of the entire refugee column. With Major Golic were most of the town's leaders and many of the enclave's best armed ARBiH soldiers, all of whom knew that those at the front of the column stood the best chance of survival. Bringing up the rear was Ibro Dedic's 282nd Brigade, arguably the 28th Division's weakest and most expendable formation. Spaced in between were the other three 28th Division brigades, with each brigade along the line notionally responsible for looking after the unarmed and unmilitary civilians in their segment of the column.³⁵¹ Coordinating the movement of the column's components would be difficult at best, even within the brigade areas. Communications would be limited to messages passed by hand up and down the column. A command or report would take hours to pass all the way down the line.

To reach safety, the fleeing Muslim soldiers and their civilian charges first had to traverse a gauntlet of Serb patrols and ambushes. Dutch peacekeepers driving northward had already seen Bosnian Serbs forming cordons all along the main road north, which the fleeing Muslims inevitably had to cross at one point or another. These UN personnel later reported small encampments of Bosnian Serb soldiers with weapons and blankets every 10 to 20 meters along the length of road from Bratunac to Nova Kasaba to Milici. This apparent demonstration of VRS strength, however, was actually a weak screen that the ARBiH 28th Division's spearhead—despite the pathetic state of the rear portions of the column—would easily penetrate. The ICTY's presentation at Krstic's trial of VRS commander conversations intercepted by the ARBiH and VRS documents make it clear that the VRS lost contact with the 28th Division on 10 and 11 July and that on 12 July the bulk of the Drina Corps' combat power was vainly searching for the 28th Division in the southwestern portion of the former enclave known as the Bandera triangle. In the process, the Drina Corps was also shifting its assault formations toward jumping off positions for the upcoming attack against Zepa. To stop the 28th Division in the box between the east-west Bratunac-Konjevic Polje road and north-south Konjevic Polje-Nova Kasaba-Milici road were

stretched two battalions from the 1st Bratunac Brigade along the east-west route and elements of the 5th Engineer Battalion, the Military Police Battalion of the 65th Protection Regiment, some MUP Special Police, and some troops from the 1st Milici Brigade along the north-south route. Beyond these units, there were little or no VRS troops until the frontlines southeast of Tuzla. Unwittingly, the Drina Corps had left its back door open.³⁵²

The long line of retreating Srebrenica men set out at about 0200 on 12 July.³⁵³ Most of the first day's travel proceeded without incident, but their luck was not to last. That evening the main body of the column was ambushed for the first time as it approached an asphalt road between Bratunac and the villages of Kamenica and Konjevic Polje,³⁵⁴ about 10 km from Srebrenica. The front end, however, had already penetrated the VRS ring on the Konjevic Polje-Nova Kasaba road and was pushing up the Cerska valley.

Still only loosely organized and taken by surprise, the main body of the column suffered some of the worst and costliest fighting of the long journey to come on 12-14 July.³⁵⁵ Relentless waves of mortar and infantry fire swept down and over its ranks, killing hundreds of men as they stood and scattering hundreds more in heaps of writhing wounded.³⁵⁶³⁵⁷ Men further back in the column later reported passing bodies piled on the ground or dumped into streams. Many of the victims had their throats cut; a few had been completely decapitated.³⁵⁸

The consequences of this first ambush were catastrophic and doomed any possibility of a coherent march to freedom for the back end of the column. The sudden attack precipitated a panicked stampede among the mostly civilian Muslims, dissolving much of the tenuous organization and discipline they had started out with. At one stroke on their first day's march the column had been cut in half, and thereafter neither portion would know the whereabouts or the condition of the other. The forward part the column—roughly one-third of the original and including the best armed and most capable of the troops—continued the advance still in its original, semiorganized formation. The remaining two-thirds disintegrated into smaller groups, each proceeding separately along generally the same route but with little or no knowledge of each other.³⁵⁹³⁶⁰

Serb patrols, fixed positions, and ambushes took a ghastly toll of the fragmented column. Tired, exhausted, many of them unarmed, the retreating Muslims were often caught unawares in the open and simply mowed down. One survivor described a Serb machinegun nest killing 70 men at one go while their Muslim comrades pushed on as fast as they could, praying that the bullets would not reach them.³⁶¹ Others were fooled and trapped by Serb soldiers driving white-painted UN vehicles and wearing the peacekeepers' distinctive blue helmets. Then the captured dupes would be forced to try to lure other Muslims out of hiding.

Countless fleeing Muslims simply gave up. Some committed suicide, shooting themselves or lying down on live grenades. Others went mad from the cumulative effects of no food, poor water, and insufficient sleep while trekking dozens of miles through enemy territory where Serb ambushes could be sprung at any second.

Numerous reports of hallucinations and crazed behavior experienced or witnessed by survivors of the journey left some wondering if they had been exposed to chemical weaponry during the battle for Srebrenica or its aftermath. Specifically, international investigators have questioned whether the VRS may have used the chemical warfare agent BZ on Srebrenica's defenders.³⁶² A hallucinogen like BZ would produce many of the strange behaviors reported by survivors and the occasional reports of shells emitting a ground-hugging smoke instead of detonating. No accurate reconstruction of the 28th Division's incredible journey has been possible, and two scientific investigations failed to find traces of BZ in areas of its alleged use. Within a group of thousands of hungry, sleep-deprived men marching for days through miles of enemy-held territory it is entirely plausible that some, even many, would simply snap. Years after the fact, it may now be impossible to prove or disprove whether chemical agents were used during or after the Srebrenica battle.³⁶³³⁶⁴

As they continued their escape through the forest and glens west of Srebrenica, the surviving Muslims from the main body of the column on 13 July faced a daunting obstacle: they had come to the asphalt highways

running between Bratunac-Konjevic Polje and Konjevic Polje-Milici. They could treat the roads as a barrier confining them to starvation or surrender or as a shooting gallery for the thinly stretched Serb pickets and patrols drawn from the 1st Bratunac Brigade, 2nd Romanija Brigade, 5th Engineer Battalion, the MUP Special Police, the 65th Protection Regiment, 10th Sabotage Detachment, and 1st Milici Brigade posted along their edge. Most eventually tried to traverse the road, and many perished in the attempt. Some made no decision at all, hiding out in the woods until discovery or death from the elements made it for them.³⁶⁵ Perhaps as many as 2,000 would surrender—to suffer the same fate as those who had been herded off back at Srebrenica, gunned down in a hail of bullets, and buried in mass graves.³⁶⁶

The bravest or most desperate attempted to cross the road, mostly in small groups and at night. Those who succeeded then pressed on through a series of devastated villages where many of them had once resided. They had to cross two small mountain ranges and ford two rivers.³⁶⁷ Passing by the abandoned village of Cer-ska, they arrived at Mt. Udrć late on 13 July. There they rested, willing to wait a day or so for less lucky and more disoriented fragments of the column to arrive and regroup.³⁶⁸ After about a day's time, about 5,000 to 6,000 people had gathered—roughly half the group that had originally set out.³⁶⁹ The Muslims resting on Mt. Udrć on 14 July had been lucky and relatively unmolested by the Serbs. They had also exhausted their supplies, however, and drained the last of their drinking water.³⁷⁰ For the next two days the retreating Muslims would be tested to the limit by two opponents: the Serb enemy and their own physical exhaustion. Nevertheless, the 28th Division was set to give the VRS a bloody nose.

14 July: The Battle at Snagovo

Since the fall of the enclave on 11 July, the Main Staff and the Drina Corps had underestimated the size and cohesion of the escaping Muslim column. With their escape from the Konjevic-Milici road, the toughest veterans of the 28th Division—who had given the VRS almost more than it could handle in 1992 and 1993—were now in a position to plunge into the rear

areas of the 1st Zvornik Brigade and even threaten Zvornik itself. As the OTP expert stated during Krstić's trial:

... one of the consistent themes that's found when you look at the reports and the documents is that . . . all of the relevant VRS officers underestimated the physical size of the column and the military threat that it posed to a point where, by the afternoon of the 13th, by the late evening hours of the 13th, it was a very significant military threat and additional resources had to be mobilized

As the Main Staff realized the size of the column, it issued an order on 13 July that “all available able-bodied manpower” be used to destroy the column. With the best units of the 1st Zvornik Brigade near Zepa, however, it was too late.

As the 28th Division's advance guard moved out on 14 July, the few reserves of the 1st Zvornik Brigade that remained attempted to stop its escape. The 28th Division troops—despite their depletion and exhaustion—vastly outnumbered the VRS defenders and overran them, apparently near the small village of Snagovo, southwest of Zvornik. Like the first ambush on 12 July, this one opened with a rain of mortar rounds, followed by Serbs pressing the attack with small arms. This time the Muslims rallied under fire despite their desperate state—or perhaps because of it. For five hours they fought to clear the ambush.³⁷¹ This time, however, they disengaged from their attackers in good order as heavy rain and approaching night obscured their movements.^{372 373} According to a VRS document acquired by the ICTY, the 1st Zvornik Brigade's chief of staff reported to the Drina Corps late on 14 July that, with his few reserves overrun and two of his infantry battalions squeezed between the main 2nd Corps force in the “Sapna Thumb” and the desperate 28th Division, he expected the Muslims to make a significant breakthrough at that point later that evening or on 15 July.

Just northwest of Zvornik, the ARBiH 28th Division and the VRS 1st Zvornik Brigade, including the Drina Wolves, slugged it out on 15 and 16 July. Lieutenant Colonel Vinko Pandurevic, the Zvornik Brigade commander, had started moving his best troops back from the Zepa attack on 15 July to help stop the column, but they were not yet in position.³⁷⁴ The final hurdles for the 28th Division lay just outside the Muslim-held villages of Medjedja and Nezuk and the Serb-held Baljkovica Hill along the frontline trenches in the “Sapna Thumb.” Here the surviving Bosnian troops collected for a last dash past Serb lines to the safety of government-held territory. At this moment of final hope in what had been a virtually hopeless enterprise, the column’s Moses, Major Ejup Golic, picked 120 of his best men to lead a charge through the Serb lines and to freedom. Major Golic and his troops overwhelmed the 4th Infantry Battalion of the 1st Zvornik Brigade, wiping out its headquarters on 15 July. Their rush had taken the enemy by surprise, and they not only drove through to safety but also seized and carried off a Praga self-propelled antiaircraft gun and two self-propelled artillery pieces.^{375 376 377}

The dash for freedom led by the gallant Major Golic and the 28th Division soldiers who followed him was facilitated by men of the 2nd Corps’ 24th Division, assembled at the last minute for an offensive designed to open a corridor for the desperate survivors of Srebrenica. When word had first reached Sarajevo that the Srebrenica enclave had fallen and that a column of troops and refugees was trying to break westward to reach friendly lines, Naser Oric and others petitioned for a 2nd Corps thrust eastward to link up to the fleeing forces. From 11 to 16 July, the ARBiH leadership debated what should, could, and might be done. An ad hoc offensive operation looked like as vain a hope as the 28th Division’s breakout attempt, which was leaving a trail of dead and dying refugees all the way back to Srebrenica and had yet to encounter the main Serb lines. Not until the last possible hour did the 2nd Corps commanders agree to allow a quick rescue operation; their delay in granting the grudging approval would generate endless recriminations and frequent finger pointing by those who thought more could have been done sooner.³⁷⁸

Responsibility for the hastily planned rescue effort fell mostly on units of Brigadier Salih Malkic’s 24th Division. The main attack would come from the area around Dugi Dio and Gaj, led by the 242nd Zvornik Muslim Light Brigade³⁷⁹ and the 243rd Muslim Podrinje Mountain Brigade, with elements of the 245th and 246th Mountain Brigades and Naser Oric’s own small group of forces, which had been with him in the Tuzla area during Srebrenica’s agonized fall.³⁸⁰ The 241st Spreca-Muslim Light Brigade,³⁸¹ the 24th “Black Wolves” Sabotage Battalion, and a composite force scraped together from elements of the 21st and 22nd Divisions would try to divert and draw off Serb fire with a supporting attack.^{382 383}

It was dawn on 16 July when 24th Division troops made their first contact with the lead elements of the 28th Division column who had stormed Serb defenses by day and wriggled past sentries by night. In less than two hours the contact point was widened into a narrow escape corridor for as many fleeing Muslims as could be rounded up, despite frantic efforts by 1st Zvornik Brigade and Drina Wolves troops to stem the tide. Almost incredibly, the VRS picked this moment to propose a five-day local cease-fire beginning at 1300; VRS documents acquired by the ICTY indicate that the Zvornik Brigade had suffered very heavy casualties in the fighting on 15-16 July, losing 40 to 60 soldiers killed in action and over 150 wounded.³⁸⁴ The unlooked-for respite permitted some 4,500 soldiers and civilians of the tattered 28th Division column to pass through the corridor to friendly lines. Even after the cease-fire expired, the 24th Division tried to keep the rescue corridor open, but VRS attacks soon pinched it off. Thereafter, the best the 2nd Corps could manage were periodic infiltration missions behind Serb lines to try to locate Muslim bands still in hiding and convey them back safely. Defying the odds, these missions succeeded in helping back another 700 or so survivors.³⁸⁵ This last remnant brought the total survivor list to less than half of the 12,000 who had set out.

Late in the day on 16 July the first survivors of the long march from Srebrenica began to arrive in Tuzla, ready to tell the world tales of their horrific journey.

There was more to the horrors of the fallen enclave, however, than even the journey's pitiful survivors knew. More, and worse, was still to come.^{386 387}

17-18 July: Arrival

Probably around 5,000 to 6,000 of Srebrenica's defenders finally made it to the safety of government-controlled territory, most arriving in late July but a few straggling through in August or even September—weeks after the enclave's fall.^{388 389} The long and winding route the column took and the detours it made to avoid Serb ambushes meant that the ragged remnants who finally streamed into Tuzla had covered more than 100 km on foot, much of it without food or water. They had prevailed with few arms and hardly any communications equipment, battling enemy forces that lay in ambush or pursued them from behind.³⁹⁰ By the standards of not only the Bosnian conflict but of modern military history as well, it had been an epic journey.

The Massacre of the Fighting-Age Males, 11-14 July 1995*

12 July: The Separations

From the very start of the evacuation organized by the Serbs on 12 July, it was clear that they had different plans for different segments of the Srebrenica population. Some people were allowed to leave immediately, and women, children, and older couples were waved on to buses and trucks as quickly as they could be rounded up. It was equally clear that the victors were detaining most of the males over 16, uniformed or not, reportedly for questioning in nearby Bratunac. What was not clear was where exactly these men were going, how long they would be held, or when and under what circumstances the Serbs would release them. On the first day of the evacuation, Bosnian Serb television showed General Mladic at Srebrenica playing the role of the magnanimous victor and handing

out candy to captive Muslim children. Few non-Serb viewers saw any sincerity in the general's smiling exterior, and on succeeding days he would be reported at nearby locales such as Nova Kasaba and Karakaj, where Muslim men from the enclave were being held.³⁹¹

In the stark and brutal world of the Balkan wars, the detention of fighting-age males in captured territory had been played out time and again. Some were examined and dismissed, some were accused of "war crimes" and imprisoned or executed on the spot, and many others were simply held captive for eventual release or exchange for the other sides' prisoners. The Serb forces were not unique in their detention of hundreds or even thousands of fighting-age males. Just two months before the fall of the Srebrenica safe area the Croatian Government had detained captured Krajina Serb males for "war crimes" when it took over UN Sector West. After the evacuations from Srebrenica there was natural concern about the whereabouts of the men who had been kept back, but it would take some time before concern turned to suspicion and finally to alarm. It would be longer still before the mass executions that had been their fate would be discovered and confirmed.³⁹²

13-14 July: The Executions

The Muslim men rounded up and segregated by the victors of Srebrenica on 12 and 13 July were driven off and detained in nearby villages like Bratunac, Nova Kasaba, and Kravica. These locations seemed to be collection points where Muslim prisoners were brought in over time as they surrendered or were captured. There was often brutal treatment, random abuse, and sporadic executions in these holding areas, but in general these initial holding points did not serve as killing grounds. Rather, the Muslim prisoners to be killed were taken away and executed at sites spread out all across northeast Bosnia.³⁹³

* For additional details of the VRS commanders and their organization and planning of the mass executions, see ICTY Krstic trial transcripts from 28-30 June 2000.

The largest single execution appears to have taken place near the village of Karakaj, 25 km northwest of Srebrenica, near Zvornik, where on 14 July at least several hundred and as many as 2,000 men died.³⁹⁴ According to one witness, dozens of Muslim men were first brought to a house near the UN compound in Potocari, which served as a collection point, during the day on 12 July. Around 1900, Mladic himself showed up, insisting that they were merely being held until a prisoner exchange could be negotiated: "Don't be afraid . . . Nothing will happen to you. Not a single hair will be missing from your head. We just need you for the exchange." The prisoners were then loaded aboard buses and taken north toward Bratunac and lodged in a warehouse with a dirt floor. About 50 prisoners were taken away during the night of 12-13 July and beaten, some so severely that they died upon their return. General Mladic returned to the site on the 13th, again around 1900, and ordered a count of the prisoners. The tally came to 296. Later that evening the prisoners boarded buses once again. This time they were taken to a large school gymnasium near the town of Krizevici, where as many as 2,500 prisoners had collected by the night of 13-14 July. Mladic appeared a third time at the sports hall around noon on 14 July, after which the prisoners were loaded onto trucks and again driven off. This time, however, their destination was not just another collection point.^{395 396 397}

According to survivors of that last truck ride, two groups of captured Muslim men were executed near the village of Sahanici outside Karakaj. One group was taken to a grassy field, lined up into four rows, and mowed down with automatic weapons fire. Another group was reportedly taken to a gravel field atop a small plateau and executed in similar fashion. After knocking down waves of men with Kalashnikov and machinegun fire, Serb soldiers walked among the piled bodies, looking for signs of life and putting extra rounds into the heads of those who moved. The handful of men who survived the executions by hiding under the bodies escaped in the night to the sound of heavy machinery moving or covering up the dead.³⁹⁸

^{399 400 401 402 403 404}
As many as 2,000 more Muslims—captives who had surrendered after the first VRS ambush thwarted their attempt to escape—died in an agricultural warehouse

outside the village of Kravica, about 15 kilometers northwest of Srebrenica.⁴⁰⁵ The Kravica warehouse appears to have been first a transfer point for Muslim prisoners captured during the retreat and then an execution site. At first prisoners from the vicinity of Kravica seem to have been taken elsewhere to be killed, probably the execution sites near Karakaj or Bratunac. Then, for two or three hours on the evening of 13 July, Serb soldiers simply fired into the holding area in the Kravica warehouse, tossing in some grenades for good measure.⁴⁰⁶ (Months later, bullet holes and grenade fragments were still visible in the warehouse walls.) The next morning a huge earthmover drove straight through the wall of the warehouse to make a wider opening for the equipment used to scoop out the bodies. Loaded onto trucks, the bodies were buried in mass graves in two adjacent fields at Glogova,⁴⁰⁷ about one and a half kilometers away.^{408 409}

At Nova Kasaba, south of Konjevic Polje, probably about 1,000 Muslim males were herded into a soccer stadium surrounded by Serb guards. Most of the men had been captured after the disastrous first ambush of the 28th Division's escape column between Nova Kasaba and Kravica. During the day on the 13th, probably after his appearance at the warehouse near Bratunac, General Mladic addressed the prisoners at the Nova Kasaba stadium and assured them they would not be harmed. Then he left. A few hours later, in the evening, the prisoners were taken to two nearby fields, lined up and shot, and buried in mass graves.⁴¹⁰

^{411 412}
Perhaps the most chilling account of the executions came from Drazen Erdemovic, an ethnic Croat originally from the Muslim-majority town of Tuzla who had joined the Bosnian Serb Army. He described how he had participated in the mass killing of some 1,200 Muslim males at the Branjevo collective farm near the small village of Donja Pilica. The execution site was almost 50 km north of Srebrenica, an indication of the scope of the Serb extermination effort and of an intention to scatter and conceal the gravesites over a wide area. Erdemovic had been a member of the VRS' 10th Sabotage Detachment, commanded by Lt. Milorad Pelemis. The 80-man detachment was one of the most

elite units in the VRS, reporting directly to Col. Petar Salapura, Chief of Military Intelligence within the VRS Main Staff's Intelligence and Security Directorate. Its job was "eliminating troublesome people" and "sabotaging sensitive targets behind enemy lines."⁴¹³

As Erdemovic related it, he and seven other members of the 10th Sabotage Detachment were ordered to report to Zvornik where they met an unnamed VRS lieutenant colonel, possibly the Chief of Security for the Drina Corps. They followed him to an obscure location near a collective farm, where he told them curtly: "This is where the buses will arrive." Each soldier had his AK-47 rifle, and an M84 machinegun with a load of ammunition was mounted in a nearby vehicle. The first of the promised buses arrived shortly afterward, with about 60 Muslim prisoners guarded by the two VRS military policemen. In groups of 10, the men were led out into the field and gunned down in rows. At first Erdemovic and his Serb companions used their Kalashnikov rifles, but later they fired the M84 machinegun to speed things up. They finished their work around 1530 that afternoon and left the field covered with the corpses of 1,000 to 1,200 Muslim men. Later in the day, men described as volunteers from Bratunac—most likely soldiers from the 1st Bratunac Light Infantry Brigade—executed some 500 more Muslim prisoners still held in the Pilica community hall. When it was all over, a bulldozer came to cover the bodies.^{414 415}

In the weeks after Srebrenica's capture smaller groups of Muslims, a dozen or so at a time, were executed at places like Zabrde and Rasica Gai. Many Muslims captured along the escape route were probably shot where they were found by VRS soldiers, and probably many more Muslims were simply left to die of their wounds. Few of the victims of these smaller executions will ever be named or even numbered.^{416 417}

Late July: The Realizations

From the very beginning after the enclave's capture, there were indications that bad things would happen. The real question was how many bad things, how bad, and whether the UN could do anything about it. If the Bosnian Serbs could casually defy a sheaf of UN

Security Council resolutions, occupy a UN safe area, and effectively take an entire UN peacekeeping battalion hostage, it seemed likely that they held all international conventions lightly, making the UN's presence something less than a deterrent to whatever Serb forces wanted to do.

The first reports of rape, brutality, and murder in their violated safe area began to reach the UN after the night of 11-12 July, when the Bosnian Serb troops moved at will through the 20,000 or so people camped outside the UN compound. They grabbed people seemingly at random and took them away to be raped, beaten, or disposed of without trace. The first narratives of these experiences reached journalists in Tuzla and the outside world in a matter of days. As thousands of refugees began to pour into Tuzla, stories of Serb atrocities multiplied: rapes of women, random executions in the night, bodies left in the streets. These accounts came only from the area immediately around the UN camp at Potocari and outright killings reported were few. The level of brutality said to have been visited upon temporary captives of the Serbs began to raise fears about the fate of others still being held, particularly the military-age men.^{418 419 420 421}

The arrival in Tuzla of the first survivors of the "death march" late on 16 June raised the scope and scale of the after-action horrors to a new level. These survivors described almost defenseless men being mowed down by machinegun fire and blown apart by shells, ambushed in traps and hunted down like game, men driven crazy by the travails of pursuit, men whose still-twitching bodies were stacked like firewood. To foreign observers of the Balkans, however, even these gruesome actions fell within the scope of military experience: there had been a battle and one army was in hot pursuit of the remnants of an enemy formation still in retreat. In wars across the centuries, it could be said, armies have hounded each other unmercifully, riding down defeated foes and seeking to eliminate as many potential adversaries as possible. The Serbs' post-Srebrenica pursuit tactics could be seen as just a particularly grim example of the familiar horrors of war. It was troubling to reflect, however, that it was aspects of the Serbs' previous behavior that had

created such terror within the enclave as to impel thousands of its male inhabitants to prefer the desperate gamble of a breakout to peaceful surrender. Neither the UN nor the Bosnian Army was yet certain just what had happened, but fears were growing about the men still unaccounted for.

The full truth would not emerge nor be confirmed until a tiny handful of survivors from among the thousands of massacred men eventually made their way to safety and began to narrate the unthinkable. Their narratives—detailed, credible, and eventually corroborated by other evidence—provided the first insights into the full scope of the Srebrenica horrors. The assembled evidence presented a compelling, composite picture of the systematic execution of 7,000 or more Muslim males, most of them taken captive and summarily executed. Clearly, the Bosnian Serbs' actions could no longer be written off as either isolated, unauthorized brutalities or an extreme example of warfare. It was mass murder.

Chapter 85 **Srebrenica—Analysis and Aftermath**

The Bosnian Army

Bosnian Army strategy in Srebrenica had rested entirely on getting the UN to defend the enclave, one way or another. There is no evidence that they had any other plan. As events unfolded, the idea was to prove catastrophic. However disastrous its outcome, the ARBiH had little choice except to put all its chips on the UN. Theirs was a strategy of desperation.

From the outset, the 28th Division appears to have deliberately planned and acted to get the Dutch peacekeepers directly in the way of the Bosnian Serbs so that a confrontation between the VRS and the UN would impel NATO to provide flying artillery for the blue helmets and the Srebrenica safe area. This is why division personnel kept trying to force Dutch crews to remain at their positions, blocking their attempts to pull back and trying to prevent the UN from concentrating its forces inside the bases at Srebrenica and Potocari.

This Bosnians' tactic failed disastrously on every level. Their efforts to blockade the Dutch withdrawals and to maneuver Dutch teams into firefights with the VRS merely antagonized the Dutch peacekeepers and their higher headquarters. They also played into the hands of Serb propagandists, who, as the VRS advanced on Srebrenica, were able to contrast the Serbs' initial "correct" dealings with Dutchbat to the threatening actions of Muslim commanders and soldiers. Bosnian Serb media reveled in the story that the Dutch peacekeepers manning the isolated OPs were *choosing* to be taken in by the Serbs rather than risking a return to hostile Muslim lines. The death of Private van Renssen at the hands of a Muslim soldier was particularly telling, at least as far as the Dutchbat was concerned. UN peacekeepers who had only limited contacts with the enclave's Muslim population (and a generally negative impression of its 28th Division defenders) were going to think more than once before risking their lives in defense of a populace that had just murdered one of their comrades.

Another manifestation of the hope that the UN and NATO could be brought in on their side occurred when the 28th Division declined to accept the weapons in the UN weapons control point. The lack of these marginal weapons hardly made a difference in the final outcome of the battle, but the ARBiH's refusal to accept the arms when they were offered is further evidence of their reliance on the UN for their defense and an acknowledgment that their own military position was hopeless.

Having depended completely on the UN for the defense of the enclave, when that aid was not forthcoming the Muslims had nothing to fall back on. It was not until 11 July, when the 28th Division's leaders discovered that the UN's idea of defending the safe area was a pinprick airstrike on a single Serb tank, that they appear to have realized that the UN could or would not save them. By then there was no time to reconsider the fundamentals of the defensive plan, and nothing could be done. Serb soldiers were already occupying the southern portions of Srebrenica town. The Muslim defensive line had all but collapsed, and

two of the Division's brigades were in headlong retreat north toward Potocari. There was no time for a new gambit: the Muslims had already been checkmated.

Not that a vigorous military defense could have done much for the crowded, beleaguered enclave. Even if every other factor had operated in its favor, without heavy weapons the ARBiH had no way of stopping even the puny armored column that poked into Srebrenica. Is it possible that they could have somehow convinced the Serbs that the costs of their operation might exceed the gains or bought enough time with fighting withdrawals to prompt the cautious Serbs to be satisfied with the fruits of their initial advances? It is impossible to say with any certainty, but the evidence suggests not. The nature of the attack and its nightmare aftermath all indicate that the VRS was determined to eradicate the Srebrenica enclave, initially through the seizure of all the territory around Srebrenica town to make it untenable, and then—with its opposition weakened—the direct capture of the town itself. This being so, it seems unlikely that even a master tactician, making the fullest possible use of the resources available, could have saved the enclave with a military defense. A successful counterattack following the 28th Division's surprise recapture of Kozlje and Zivkovo Brdo on the 10th could have bought time for a UN response or perhaps forced an indecisive VRS commander to reconsider—for a time. In a situation where the UN was the indecisive party and the VRS apparently dead set on achieving victory, the 28th Division could have held out for no more than another day or two, however. Ammunition reserves were almost exhausted by the 11th, a shift of forces to block the VRS advance from the south would have left the north or west of the enclave undefended, and the 2nd Corps in Tuzla was simply incapable of hacking a corridor through Serb-held Bosnia to relieve the surrounded enclave.

In sum, acting 28th Division commander Becirovic probably made the most sensible choice for the circumstances of the moment. Only in hindsight could it be said that fighting and dying in the enclave might seem a nobler course than the surrendering and dying that was to be the fate of so many of the defenders. At the time, none of Becirovic's visible alternatives

seemed viable. Taking back the weapons and stores held in the UN weapons collection point, even at the very outset of the battle, would have gained him little and lost him the moral edge of respecting the safe area's proscriptions. Most of the weapons surrendered to the UN were turned in *because* they were next to useless; a few dozen weapons, most of them without ammunition, would have been as effective as a cup of water on a prairie fire. The lone M48 mountain gun with its 40 rounds of ammunition—the enclave's entire heavy weapons inventory—could have been employed briefly against the Serb armored advance to improve the morale of the enclave's defenders, but at best the effects would have delayed the outcome of the battle by an hour or so. Finally, Becirovic could have taken the Dutch troops hostage until the UN did something to halt the Serb offensive. The possible sort-term advantages of such a bold stroke were outweighed by its likely consequences. If the UN did accept the blackmail and intervene to halt the July fighting, the aftermath would almost certainly be Srebrenica's doom. The surrounded enclave was completely dependent on the UN for not only its defense but also for its sustenance—food, medical assistance, military defense, and political protection. How much of this would continue after a momentarily successful showdown with the UN at gunpoint? The thin blue line of the Dutch battalion would be withdrawn, the nebulous cover of a NATO air umbrella would vanish, the tenuous international lifeline would shrivel, and Becirovic would be totally on his own to face the next and last Serb offensive.

Such must have been Becirovic's thinking when he entrusted everything to the UN, which offered the only defense available to him—and left him without a backup plan if that defense should fail. It is only with the hindsight knowledge of the UN's failure and its consequences that Becirovic's last unchosen option—a sacrificial last stand—can reasonably be examined. House-to-house battles fought in the streets of Srebrenica and a guerrilla war conducted from the surrounding woods: these now look preferable to the docile surrenders and desperate flights that left thousands executed in the fields outside the town. What we

know now they did not know then, however, and it is uncertain that in terms of lives lost and advantages gained another military option would have had any better outcome.

A fighting stand in Srebrenica, if one could be made, might have made a difference, given the Serbs' traditional reluctance to close with the enemy and suffer the inevitable combat losses of modern urban warfare. There were serious problems even with this course of action. Not all the men of the 28th Division were armed, and after the Serbs attacked few had more than a day's supply of ammunition. Even when the ARBiH decapitated the first Serb column on 10 July and seized a critical defensive point, it took Becirovic too long to round up too few men to exploit the opportunity. A street-by-street contest for Srebrenica town at that point would probably have prolonged the fight and increased the losses to the Bosnian Serbs, but it could only have delayed, not changed, the final outcome.

A resumption of the partisan struggle the enclave had so bravely mounted in 1992 and 1993^{*} was theoretically also an option, but Srebrenica in 1995 was not Srebrenica in 1992, and the guerrilla campaign fought from the woods in 1992 lasted only about a month. In 1995, Srebrenica's defenders were responsible for almost 60,000 refugees who could neither be abandoned nor easily taken to the woods. If, on the other hand, the enclave's civilian population had somehow been evacuated to government-held territory, there would be neither reason nor incentive for the enclave's soldiers to fight on.

Finally, and significantly, Ramiz Becirovic was no Naser Oric. A young, vibrant, charismatic fighter like Oric could perhaps have inspired the people to make a last fighting stand or embark on an arduous guerrilla campaign on the slim hope of regaining their homes. A weak, thin, 45-year-old deputy commander, who had painfully survived a helicopter crash two months earlier and was barely able to walk, could not. In the more than three years of war it had faced, Srebrenica

* See Section III, Chapter 28, "Battles on the Drina, Round One: April to December 1992" and Section IV, Chapter 36, "Battles on the Drina, Round Two: December 1992 to August 1993" for a narration of the Muslim guerrilla campaign fought in the area around Srebrenica in 1992 and 1993.

had somehow gotten by in the face of seemingly insurmountable adversities: it had survived without weapons, without ammunition, and often without the UN. Lacking all of these things and facing the most determined Serb offensive yet, Srebrenica could not survive without leadership.

The Bosnian Serbs—The Consequences of Srebrenica

Srebrenica was taken in a matter of days and at marginal cost to the Serbs. Arguably, it was one of the easiest VRS victories of the war. From a political standpoint, the post-victory massacres and the worldwide outrage and international condemnation that followed constituted a colossal defeat. The long-term consequences of the Bosnian Army operation at Srebrenica remain open to debate.

The emerging news of the mass execution of thousands of civilians at Srebrenica seared international public opinion in a way that no previous events in the Balkans had ever done. Even the earlier images of Serb-run concentration camps or occasional shelling massacres had not provoked this sort of reaction in Western capitals. The French Government was particularly agitated that such barbarities could be conducted in blatant defiance of the international community. The immediate practical effects of this public condemnation could be quickly calculated by the Serbs: they were practically nil. No punitive military steps, not even diplomatic wrist slaps, followed as a direct consequence of the Srebrenica operation.

On the other side of the balance, Bosnian Serbs retained possession of both Srebrenica and Zepa, even after the divvying up of territory imposed by the Dayton peace accords. Thus, the VRS occupation of the safe area achieved a crucial war aim, "clearing the map" for the entire region north of Gorazde. The cost to the Serb international image may have been irreparable, but the eventual situation on the ground seems to have been the overriding consideration for Bosnian Serb decisionmakers at the time. From this standpoint, they achieved their goals.⁴²²

How the international outrage generated by the takeover of Srebrenica ultimately affected the Bosnian Serbs in practical terms is hard to judge. Srebrenica was clearly a major milestone on the path to more vigorous Western diplomatic and military engagement in Bosnia.⁴ While it did not result in punitive NATO military action (the first of which was triggered by a subsequent shelling incident in Sarajevo) or directly bring about the Dayton negotiations (prompted more by the ongoing Croatian and Bosnian Army offensives at the time), it certainly did incline NATO and the Contact Group further in the direction of more immediate and forceful measures to end the Balkan crisis. How much the events at Srebrenica brought about subsequent Western intervention, as well as the relative importance of that Western intervention in conjunction with other concurrent events on the ground, is and may remain a matter of speculation.⁴²³ ⁴²⁴

The Possibility of Yugoslav Involvement

There are some reports from UN officials and Bosnian survivors that suggest Yugoslav Army (VJ) troops (likely from elite formations such as the 63rd Airborne or 72nd Special Operations Brigades), as well as possibly elements of the Serbian State Security Department (RDB) Special Operations Unit (“Red Berets”), may have been engaged in the battle at Srebrenica.⁴²⁴ Bosnian Army forces have cited a jeep they captured with Yugoslav Army license plates—N-2660—as evidence that VJ forces had been directly involved in the fighting, although this could indicate only that VJ equipment was being used on the other side of the Drina.⁴²⁵ VJ and RDB assistance in some form is also consistent with the Serbian President Milosevic’s close coordination and planning with General Mladic of Bosnian and Krajina Serb political goals and military strategy during 1995. Elements of these same units had helped the Bosnian Serbs at other times in other places in Bosnia.

⁴ See Annex 60: UNPROFOR in Bosnia, 1995: From Vacillation to Retaliation to Peace Implementation for a more detailed discussion of the international community’s evolving perspective on peace-keeping and peace enforcement at this time.

⁴²³ See “The Political Impact of the NATO Air Campaign” later in Chapter 94 for a discussion of the role and impact of the international community in the latter stages of the Balkan conflict.

Although it is certainly believable that the VJ may have sent some special operations forces to assist its VRS allies in a brief battle only a few miles from the Yugoslav border, it does not follow that they were either an essential part of the operation’s execution or a decisive factor in the battle’s outcome. The VRS, though undermanned at the strategic level, was more than capable of defeating a weak, disorganized, and nearly unarmed opponent in a local engagement without Belgrade’s assistance. The limited number of VRS reinforcements allotted to the operation seems to confirm this. Once a concerted VRS effort was mounted, Srebrenica was doomed to fall, with or without VJ or RDB assistance.

No basis has been established to implicate Belgrade’s military or security forces in the post-Srebrenica atrocities. While there are indications that the VJ or RDB may have contributed elements to the Srebrenica battle, there is no similar evidence that Belgrade-directed forces were involved in any of the subsequent massacres. Eyewitness accounts by survivors may be imperfect recollections of events, and details may have been overlooked. Narrations and other available evidence suggest that only Bosnian Serb troops were employed in the atrocities and executions that followed the military conquest of Srebrenica.

The United Nations

What must be learned for the future is that enough military power must be provided from the start, so that you can escalate when the enemy adopts terror tactics . . . You also need a clarity of command that never existed with the UN operation.

—Dutch Defense Minister
Joris Voorhoeve⁴²⁶

The UN’s actual mandate to Dutchbat was not to defend the enclave, but to deter aggression. The assumption—or the hope—that a largely symbolic UN presence in the safe areas would be sufficient to accomplish this was cruelly belied

in Srebrenica and elsewhere in Bosnia-Hercegovina. The safe area concept was dependent on the cooperation of the warring factions.

—Dutch Ministry of Defense report

The UN's assumptions about the safe area concept had been exposed as fundamentally flawed, at least in this time and place with these parties. The UN of necessity relied on a token presence and the good faith of the warring parties to implement the terms of the Security Council's resolutions. Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali surely would have preferred to have employed a genuine military force like the 34,000 blue helmets he had originally requested to carry out the UN resolutions establishing and governing the six safe areas, if only to secure a greater range of military and political options. The UN's member nations, however, did not grant Boutros-Ghali 34,000 more peacekeepers, or even the 7,600 projected for the reduced safe areas plan. Lacking resources on the ground, the UN Secretary General and UNPROFOR commander General Janvier relied on the deterrent value of a relatively small UN presence, combined with the threat of airstrikes, to forestall military action against the enclaves.

Thus, the ill-equipped and outgunned ARBiH 28th Division relied completely on the UN for the enclave's defense, while the underfunded and resource-starved UN hoped that speaking loudly and carrying a small stick would be enough to safeguard the enclaves. The enclave's last line of defense—NATO airpower—was at times viewed by various parties as either a too powerful provocation to the Serbs or as a too weak deterrent of them. When it was actually employed as a counter to VRS actions, the NATO air component proved embarrassingly ineffective.

No one thing doomed the Srebrenica enclave. Through no fault of their own, the Dutch peacekeepers in Srebrenica did not have the manpower, equipment, or the mandate to physically defend the enclave in any military sense. A long history of encounters, failures, and incidents over the preceding four years had completely undermined the UN's reputation in the region, giving it little clout in its negotiations and little

credibility in its threats. To a degree, the failures that led to the fall of the enclave and the massacre of its inhabitants can be traced to decisions made years before in national capitals all around the globe by the UN's constituent members.

Aftermath and Conclusion

Precisely how many Bosnian Muslims died in and around Srebrenica will never be known. Estimates produced by the UNHCR put the number of Bosnian Muslims in and around Srebrenica in July 1995 at about 38,000. (Other estimates generally range between 38,000 and 42,000 residents.)⁴²⁷ Roughly two-thirds of these remained around the UN compound at Potocari on 11 July, whereupon they were either bused to the relative safety of the frontline around Tuzla or were taken away to scattered locations in the Drina valley and executed. Between 12,000 and 15,000 Muslims, soldiers, and military-age civilian males attempted to break out on foot beginning on the night of 11-12 July. Thousands of these were also hunted down and killed, although under different circumstances from those who were taken from Potocari and shot en masse. All told, perhaps 1 in 5 residents of the area was either executed or died trying to escape: among military-age males, this fraction is far higher.

Probably the most accurate accounting of the death toll to be compiled is that of the International Committee of the Red Cross, whose official statistics indicate that between 12 and 16 July 1995 a total of 7,079 Bosnian Muslims were killed in the fighting, executed or died on the march, or remain otherwise unaccounted for. Numbers alone do not tell the entire story. The true horror of Srebrenica cannot be expressed simply by the statistics of dead and missing, if indeed it can be expressed at all. It was not just the things that happened but also the manner in which they happened and the whole panorama of failures that allowed them to happen, which in combination make Srebrenica the darkest chapter in the history of the Bosnian war and an ugly blot on the pages of humanity.

Chapter 86

The Demise of Zepa—A Second Safe Area Falls

If they want to take Zepa, they can, and we can't stop them.

—A UN Official in Zagreb,
July 1995.⁴²⁸

The people of Zepa want the government of Bosnia Herzegovina to ask the Security Council if Zepa is still a "safe area" and if so who is protecting it.

—Open letter broadcast by Zepa town officials, 16 July 1995⁴²⁹

I am saddened by the fall of Srebrenica and the imminent fall of Zepa . . . We are in no position to physically protect them.

—UN Special Envoy to the Former Yugoslavia Yasushi Akashi,
19 July 1995⁴³⁰

As the leaders of the international community met in London in the wake of Srebrenica's fall, a second safe area was under sentence of death, and its death throes had indeed begun. If the vague wording of the London conference statement could be understood to threaten the use of military force to defend the Gorazde enclave, its failure to mention the Zepa enclave—already on the verge of falling—was a near invitation to the Serbs to complete their attack as quickly as possible.

The Zepa enclave—an assemblage of 20 tiny villages at the bottom of a deep canyon and by far the smallest of the UN-designated safe areas—was next in the sights of the Bosnian Serbs and very likely became a target at the same time the Srebrenica operation was planned. The enclave was centered on the village of Zepa, which was scarcely more than a few dozen houses, a small school, and a cemetery enclosing a crossroads 15 kilometers southwest of Srebrenica. Its valley was surrounded by steep, forested slopes and numerous caves, and the town in World War II had been the site of a famously tenacious partisan

resistance to the German Nazis, who, it was said, had never fully subdued the area.

After refugees had streamed in from the surrounding area, roughly 10,000 Muslims were jammed into and around the village.⁴³¹ Just before the Zepa enclave came under assault, it received a few hundred additional refugees from the north. These were civilians who had fled the collapsing Srebrenica enclave, only to walk into the closing trap at Zepa immediately afterward.

This population was thinly guarded by a woefully inadequate, company-sized Ukrainian UNPROFOR contingent. The safe area was nominally guarded by 79 Ukrainian blue helmets, but the small number of peacekeepers was hardly adequate to even observe and report on developments, let alone do anything about them. Moreover, the humiliating failure of the larger and better equipped Dutch peacekeeping contingent at Srebrenica days earlier had effectively exposed—especially to the Serbs—the impotence of the UNPROFOR forces in eastern Bosnia.

The Drina Corps—now under the formal command of Major General Krstic—was to again control the attack against the enclave, under Mladic's direct supervision as at Srebrenica. The Drina Corps normally had one tactical group with 750 to 1,000 troops from two different brigades guarding the enclave.⁴³² To bolster this force, the corps shifted many of the same units that had taken part in "Krivaja 95" at Srebrenica to the Zepa sector to undertake the assault. This included:

- The tactical group from the 1st Zvornik Infantry Brigade, including the elite "Drina Wolves," which assembled at Krivace northwest of the enclave.
- Elements of the 1st Milici Light Infantry Brigade—with an attached company from the 1st Bratunac Light Infantry Brigade—near Podravane, north of the enclave.
- Elements—probably an infantry company—of the 1st Birac Infantry Brigade.

- Elements—probably an infantry company—from the 1st Vlasenica Light Infantry Brigade.
- Parts of the 65th Protection Regiment from Mount Zep.

All told, the VRS force probably totaled about 2,000 to 2,500 troops.

The ARBiH 285th “Zepa” Brigade (really little more than a battalion) was, if anything, even less prepared and equipped than the defenders had been at Srebrenica. Numbering at most 1,500 men, most of whom lacked even small arms, the ragtag unit apparently had only a few mortars and was short of ammunition. Led by Colonel Avdo Palic—apparently a courageous, skilled, and dedicated leader—the force was hardy and tenacious but lacked training, organization, and almost every category of military supplies. Besides Palic’s leadership and its own determination, about the only thing the Zepa Brigade had going for it was the hilly, forested terrain, which favored the defenders and made direct attack difficult.

Operation “Stupcanica 95”—The VRS Takeover of Zepa

The VRS began initial preparations for Operation “Stupcanica 95” on 11 July as Srebrenica fell; the Main Staff began issuing orders to the Drina Corps for its units surrounding Zepa to coordinate with the 65th Protection Regiment to take advantage of the developing situation. On 13 July, the Drina Corps issued its operation order for the attack, and General Krstic established his forward command post that evening at the village of Krvace, northwest of Zepa, at the foot of the Main Staff command bunker in Mount Zep. The Serbs delivered an ultimatum to the Zepa enclave the next day. Bosnian Serb commanders ordered the Bosnian Army defenders of the town to lay down their weapons by 1400 or be attacked. At the same time, the Serbs warned Zepa’s Ukrainian peacekeepers, insisting that they stay out of the way during the coming offensive or suffer the consequences.⁴³³ It was not much of a choice, but enough word of what had happened at Srebrenica had reached the town that acceptance of any Serb guarantees was all but out of the question. The townspeople of Zepa elected to mount the best defense they could for as long as could be managed.

The VRS Drina Corps had no trouble sticking to the consequential terms of its ultimatum and opened its assault promptly at 1400 with an artillery and armor attack from south of the enclave.⁴³⁴ Almost immediately, UN spokesmen reported that two of the nine Ukrainian observation posts had been directly targeted by VRS big guns.⁴³⁵ A loftily impotent “NATO air presence” flew over the area during the Bosnian Serb attack, but their show of force had no perceptible effect on events on the ground.⁴³⁶ (Not only had the limitations of NATO airpower been shown at Srebrenica three days earlier but also Zepa did not have any trained forward air controllers who could accurately direct pilots to Serb ground targets.)⁴³⁷ The VRS attack slowed for a time in the early evening, but shelling and fighting resumed after a pause of several hours.^{438 439}

Once again the UN forces assigned to protect a Bosnian “safe area” found themselves in the middle of a fight, literally and figuratively. Not only was Serb artillery fire falling on some Ukrainian OPs at the enclave’s periphery but confrontations were also brewing with Muslim soldiers and citizens at other position in the enclave. Within hours of the Serb assault’s opening, Zepa’s almost defenseless ARBiH contingent surrounded the Ukrainian UNPROFOR compound and demanded that the peacekeepers turn over their weapons and vehicles.⁴⁴⁰ After a very heated debate punctuated by shots fired in the air, the Ukrainians surrendered some of their small arms and disabled five of their armored personnel carriers.^{441 442} ⁴⁴³ Bosnian Army spokesmen subsequently claimed that it was “renegade” soldiers who had simultaneously tried to seize UNPROFOR weapons at gunpoint in both Zepa and Gorazde, but no one believed them.⁴⁴⁴

Meanwhile, pessimism—bordering on despair—ruled the international community. The Bosnian Serb assault had begun only hours after French President Jacques Chirac’s defiant Bastille Day speech calling for vigorous international action to defend the remaining safe areas. At the same time, UN Under Secretary General Chinmaya Gharekhan reportedly estimated that the Zepa enclave would fall within 48 hours.⁴⁴⁵ Given the paucity of Zepa’s defenders and the

negligible credibility of the UN defending force, the prediction seemed entirely believable. Meanwhile, Zepa Mayor Mehmed Hajric directed a loud and forceful appeal for help toward the international community: “We are waiting for NATO airstrikes on the aggressors around Zepa. We expect the UN to send the Rapid Reaction Force to Zepa to intervene and prevent the aggressors taking Zepa, where the civilian population had been left to the mercy of the aggressors.”⁴⁴⁶ The prevailing belief that the enclave was already doomed made it extremely unlikely that Mayor Hajric’s calls would be translated into forceful UN action. The UNPROFOR commander in Bosnia, General Rupert Smith, warned the Bosnian Serbs in a letter not to attack the Zepa enclave and reminded them that he was free to recommend the use of NATO air-power in its defense. Smith, however, had few real threats in his armory, and everybody knew it.

For a time the plucky defenders of Zepa miraculously managed to defy the odds, the experts, and the enemy. Their success appears to have been due much more to the Serbs’ cautious advance than the Muslims’ defensive abilities. The following day, UN spokesmen reported that there had been heavy fighting in the eastern part of the enclave but that the attacking VRS troops did not seem to have made any gains.⁴⁴⁷ Despite the shelling by Serb fire the previous day, all nine of the Ukrainians observation posts were manned, indicating that none of the positions had yet been overrun or destroyed. Despite Zepa radio operators’ claims that the Serbs were assaulting the town from all directions, the UN reported that the 15th saw only modest Serb offensive activity along a segment of the front-line 4 kilometers north of the town, possibly because the Drina Corps had to withdraw troops from the 1st Zvornik Brigade, including the Drina Wolves, from the attack and rush them back to the Zvornik area to deal with the retreating 28th Division.⁴⁴⁸

Although the Serb attacks on ARBiH positions on the 15th were restrained, the confrontations between the ARBiH and the UN teams were not. Some 150 Bosnian Army troops surrounded one Ukrainian observation post, demanding weapons, while another crowd of about 70 civilians surrounded a Ukrainian checkpoint. Warning shots from the peacekeepers dispersed both crowds, but the UN’s ability to mount vehicle patrols was effectively nullified, and the Ukrainians were from then on confined to their positions.⁴⁴⁹

The Serb assault began anew in the early morning hours of 16 July when a sizable contingent of VRS troops crossed the Rijeka river west of Zepa and mounted an infantry attack supported by artillery and mortar fire. Ukrainian OP number 3 in the southwest part of the enclave also came under fire that morning. Meanwhile, the ARBiH attacked and occupied three other Ukrainian OPs, temporarily detaining their crews and seizing their weapons and ammunition. The ARBiH command in Zepa also announced a “general mobilization” of all able-bodied citizens in the enclave, although it was unclear what practical effect this was likely to have since there were far too few weapons for the men already mobilized.⁴⁵⁰ During the day the Serbs continued with infantry probes along the northern confrontation line but mounted their main attack from the west.⁴⁵¹ Disregarding the NATO air presence and ARBiH resistance, a column of VRS infantry supported by following tanks advanced about half a kilometer to halt about 1.5 kilometers outside of Zepa.^{452 453 454}

The 17th was mostly quiet, while the Bosnian Serbs mysteriously suspended their attack yet again. The UN essentially quit the field that morning, abandoning six of the nine observation posts and falling back to the main base just north of Zepa. One of the other observation posts (OP number 2) was, however, blockaded by the Bosnian Serbs and became a hostage, with the Serbs threatening to fire on it if NATO warplanes again appeared over the enclave. Meanwhile, the Ukrainian Government announced that it was working out a plan to evacuate its peacekeepers from Zepa if necessary—but without suggesting how.⁴⁵⁵

On the 18th the Ukrainian contingent in Zepa announced that it was disabling all of its remaining weapons and equipment in order to prevent its seizure by the Bosnian Government forces in the enclave. (This announcement followed the ARBiH’s forcible confiscation of the vehicles, weapons, ammunition, and equipment belonging to the Ukrainian company in Gorazde the previous night.)⁴⁵⁶ While this decision (although apparently never fully carried out) discouraged further harassment of the UN contingent by Zepa’s defenders, it also made the UNPROFOR force within the enclave almost entirely irrelevant, as it undercut even the symbolic capability of resisting further attacks.

After the one-day lull, the VRS assault force—bolstered by a reinforced battalion from the 1st Bratunac Light Infantry Brigade dispatched on 16-17 July—resumed the offensive early on the 18th, dropping intense mortar fire into the town.⁴⁵⁷ In response, Bosnian Government troops surrounded the Ukrainian UNPROFOR base in Zepa and threatened to use the peacekeepers as human shields unless NATO airstrikes were called in.⁴⁵⁸ Ukrainians were now being held both by the Serbs (at OP number 2) and the Muslims (at the main compound), with the former threatening to shoot the Ukrainians if NATO aircraft attacked and the latter levying threats if NATO did not. Meanwhile, there was fierce fighting west of the town, but the tenacious Bosnian Army defenders managed to stall the Serb advance for yet another day.⁴⁵⁹ Nevertheless, Bosnian President Izetbegovic essentially conceded their defeat when he publicly offered to negotiate with the Bosnian Serbs for the evacuation of the civilian population of Zepa.⁴⁶⁰ In defiant reply to sharp criticism that he was thereby abetting the ethnic cleansing of the enclave, Izebegovic replied that, “There are worse things than ethnic cleansing . . . and that is ethnic killing.”⁴⁶¹

Confusion reigned on the 19th, as contradictory statements about the enclave’s status followed one upon another. Preliminary statements by the UN that Zepa may have been captured were refuted by Mayor Hajric.^{462 463} Then the Bosnian Serb Army issued a statement that the town had indeed agreed to surrender; two civilian representatives had accepted the Serb terms in a meeting with General Mladic at 1800.⁴⁶⁴ Unconfirmed UN information suggested that the civilian population had evacuated the town, retreating slightly north to areas where the Bosnian Army was still holding out.⁴⁶⁵ The situation remained unclear at the close of the day, and nightfall brought both darkness and obscurity.

The UN was able to shed some light on the situation on the morning of the 20th, reporting that the Serbs had surrounded Zepa, that there was still no evidence that they had entered the town itself, but that the enclave’s fall seemed only a matter of time. Izebegovic’s public statement on the 18th had in fact prompted a meeting in the Zepa enclave with representatives of the ARBiH, VRS, and UN to discuss the

evacuation of civilians.⁴⁶⁶ The Bosnian Serbs unilaterally announced that they were prepared to evacuate the town’s population—while detaining men aged 18 to 55 as prisoners of war—and brought in some 50 to 60 buses for this purpose.^{467 468} Mladic’s frustration appeared to grow as the Muslims—undoubtedly fearing the same fate as their massacred Srebrenica kin—categorically refused to accept the surrender terms.⁴⁶⁹

His patience at an end, Mladic issued another ultimatum: accept the surrender terms by 1900 or face unspecified consequences. As soon as the deadline expired, the Serbs resumed fire into the enclave with heavy weapons and machineguns. Once again, the Ukrainians found themselves assailed from all directions. While Serb weapons fire showered the town, the frustrated and near-panicked Bosnian Muslims opened fire on the Ukrainian compound, hijacked three UN armored vehicles, and seized the pathetic and haphazard collection of arms they had turned in at the UN-controlled weapons collection site.^{470 471 472}

The failure of the international community to explicitly support them at the 21 July conference in London—convened to discuss international actions to defend the remaining safe areas—further amplified the Zepa residents’ fears that they were being abandoned. The anemic conference statement made no reference to their besieged town and left unclear what the West actually intended to do if its demands for a halt to the attacks on safe areas continued to be ignored. Statements made over the next few days that NATO was prepared to defend not only Gorazde but also other threatened safe areas garnered little credibility and failed to impress either the residents of Zepa or their Bosnian Serb attackers.^{473 474}

On 22 July, the day after the conference in London, the Serbs stepped up their artillery and armor attacks against the western part of the enclave.⁴⁷⁵ Nevertheless, Zepa’s Mayor, Mehmed Hajric, told British reporters that day that, “We’re still holding on” and asserted that, although the Bosnian Serbs were pressing the offensive from Rogatica, the defending lines “had not moved an inch.”⁴⁷⁶

The defense mounted by the tenacious Bosnian defenders against what appeared to be either a lackadaisical or a timid Serb offensive had not been without cost. On the 23rd the UN reported continued Serb shelling and an increase in tank, machinegun, and sniper fire. UN spokesmen said the Zepa police had also been heavily engaged and that casualties among the defenders had been high.⁴⁷⁷

The heroic ARBiH defense began to give way on the 24th. Serb forces shelling from Brezova Ravan—barely a kilometer west of Zepa—were wreaking destruction almost at will, while the villages of Ribjoc and Vratar southeast of Zepa were captured and set aflame.⁴⁷⁸ The Serb penetration of the southern defense line—apparently spearheaded by approximately a company of armor, which was all but impossible for the ARBiH to counter—ended any hope for the defense of the enclave.⁴⁷⁹ The end could not be far away.

The following morning there was yet another sequence of conflicting statements on the enclave's surrender. First, UN spokesmen announced that agreement had finally been reached on the evacuation of Zepa's civilians.⁴⁸⁰ This was followed by statements that the Zepa Brigade had agreed to hand over its weapons in exchange for the safe evacuation of the town's civilians. The Bosnian Government rejected this claim, stating that these were simply the terms of a Serb ultimatum that the Zepa leadership had not in fact accepted.⁴⁸¹ At the close of the day it appeared that nobody—not the UN, the Bosnian Government, nor the Bosnian Serbs—was clear about what was going on or what had been agreed to. Around midday there had been confused statements that Zepa may have been abandoned and that Bosnian Serb troops may have occupied it.⁴⁸² After some delay these statements gained credibility as both the UN and the Bosnian Army confirmed that the VRS had indeed occupied the abandoned village. An official Bosnian Army statement conceded the loss of Zepa itself but went on to say that the defenders had not yet surrendered and that they would continue to resist from the surrounding hills.⁴⁸³ Late in the day a convoy of 150 Muslim wounded was allowed to leave for Sarajevo, and the Security Council authorized the use of UN troops to assist with the evacuation of civilians from the enclave.^{484 485} The saga was almost, but not quite, over.

On 26 July the evacuation of the thousands of civilians from Zepa commenced in earnest, transported to Muslim-held Kladanj in Serb buses with UN peacekeepers aboard.⁴⁸⁶ Determined to avoid a repetition of the horrors of Srebrenica two weeks before, the UN insisted on compiling lists of all passengers and accompanying them along their entire route of travel.⁴⁸⁷

The following day, General Mladic met for the first time with his adversary in Zepa, ARBiH Colonel Avdo Palic, the 285th Zepa Brigade commander. Mladic still appeared to be intent on securing a surrender agreement in spite of the Sarajevo government's refusal to accept his terms. Palic, however, was faced with two stark choices: battle the Bosnian Serbs from the hills and hope eventually to reach safe territory, or accept Mladic's terms and risk the fate of Srebrenica's soldiers.⁴⁸⁸ Even in these dire straits, Colonel Palic adopted a hard line: Zepa's defending troops would turn themselves over only to the United Nations and not to the Bosnian Serbs. Sarajevo offered to release Serb prisoners of war held elsewhere in Bosnia in exchange for the men from Zepa, but the two negotiators remained at an impasse.⁴⁸⁹

In the cruel and brazen traditions of the Bosnian conflict, the impasse was resolved through the muzzle of a gun. On 29 July a UN spokesman reported that Mladic had told a UN officer that Colonel Palic had been shot after surrender talks failed to produce results.⁴⁹⁰ (This was never definitively confirmed, but Palic was never seen alive again.) The remaining ARBiH negotiators—"encouraged" by Palic's fate—then agreed to Mladic's demand that all military-age males should be taken into Serb custody and await a prisoner exchange. This did not mean that those hiding out in the hills would necessarily heed the agreement, and it appears the vast majority did not. Meanwhile, in the valley below, Zepa burned in the wake of Serb troops moving from house to house looting anything left of value.⁴⁹¹

With the fall of the enclave, the Bosnian Serbs needed to redirect vital manpower to a more pressing objective: countering the threats posed by the Croats advancing into western Bosnia. As many as 3,000 of the Muslims of Zepa—most of them unarmed—were lurking in the hills and villages north of the town, but,

without food, weapons, or supplies, they were not a threat to worry about.⁴⁹² The VRS Drina Corps contented itself with containing this minor problem with a garrison of second-string units and withdrew most of the assault troops to reinforce more important sectors; the townsmen were left to the exigencies of the forest.⁴⁹³ Several hundred of these men eventually chose to filter into Serbia,⁴⁹⁴ while the rest either made their way back to government-held territory or were found and captured by the Bosnian Serbs. True to their word, the stubborn defenders had never formally agreed to any terms of surrender.⁴⁹⁵

Chapter 87

Srebrenica Aftermath—Gorazde and Operation “Daring Lion”

If no one wants to make a commitment to retake Srebrenica, at least we should guarantee the safe area of Gorazde, where there are British blue helmets, but really defend ourselves . . . If it's to be like Srebrenica, that is, leaving as soon as the first Serbs show up, then it's useless to pretend to make an effort.

—French President Jacques Chirac,
14 July 1995.⁴⁹⁶

It is not good enough simply to make speeches calling for action . . . If France actually believed that military action could save Zepa and Srebrenica, then no doubt French troops would be marching on Zepa and Srebrenica at this time. They are not.

—British Foreign Secretary Malcolm Rifkind, 15 July 1995.⁴⁹⁷

We have to declare war on Gen. Mladic or get out.

—Gen. Philippe Morillon, former UNPROFOR Bosnia commander then serving on the French General Staff, July 1995.⁴⁹⁸

At a Bastille Day news conference, France's new President, Jacques Chirac, launched a blistering criticism of the international community's failure to defend Srebrenica, calling up analogies with the Anglo-French appeasement of Hitler before the Second World

War.⁴⁹⁹ Chirac had openly called for the UN's new Rapid Reaction Force to swing into action after Zepa came under assault later that month, and Gorazde seemed next in line to fall.^{500 501} Defense Minister Charles Millon warned that, if the French call to arms was not heeded by its allies, then Paris would consider withdrawing its troops from Bosnia.⁵⁰²

French urgings that the United Nations prepare to retake Srebrenica by force ignored the reality that UNPROFOR was barely capable of defending the remaining safe areas, let alone forcibly retake one that had already been occupied by the VRS.^{503 504 505} As French Maj. Gen. Andre Soubirou—commander of the Rapid Reaction Force—admitted at the time, only the RRF's multinational brigade (composed of reflagged French, British, and Dutch elements already in Bosnia) was even operational. Any offensive action by the RRF was still out of the question. For the time being at least, other options for taming the Serbs would need to be examined.

Operation “Daring Lion”

With the demise of first the Srebrenica and then the Zepa safe areas, all eyes turned toward Gorazde. It was the last remaining eastern enclave, and there was broad consensus that this time something had to be done to preserve it—but there was no agreement on what that “something” might be. Lacking such agreement, NATO planning staffs spent the last few days of July working frantically on two radically different plans for helicopter airlift operations—one to get the hundreds of UN peacekeepers out of the enclave, and another to reinforce it with possibly thousands more.

The first plan, codenamed “Daring Lion” would—if necessary—employ a force of helicopters probably drawn from American units in Italy or Germany to evacuate UN forces trapped in Gorazde. The hope, of course, was that the airlift would be unmolested by either side, but an escort force of attack helicopters or combat aircraft would clearly be necessary to safeguard the evacuation transports. The bold appellation notwithstanding, “Daring Lion” was clearly an avenue of last resort. All UN heavy equipment would have to be destroyed or abandoned, and it would be very hard

to characterize such an operation as anything but a humiliating retreat from a life-and-death situation and a visible abandonment of a UN guarantee of personal security. For the planners, the potential for disaster or escalating involvement if the heavily laden transports came under fire was all too evident.

The second plan under consideration was a French proposal whereby American helicopters and air cover would be used to reinforce Gorazde in a last-ditch effort to save both the safe area concept and the credibility of the United Nations in Bosnia.⁵⁰⁶ A thousand or more French and British troops would be brought into the enclave by American helicopters in a grand show of overawing international force and commitment. The British were very hesitant to commit themselves to such a risk-laden proposal and the Americans even more so.⁵⁰⁷ The British accused the French of posturing, and the Bosnian Government accused the British of delaying while civilians under UN protection were being slaughtered around the enclaves.⁵⁰⁸ Relations among all the major actors visibly sank to a new low.

The one-day conference held in London on 21 July* had foremost on its agenda a study of measures that might prevent the fall of Gorazde, although this was in the broader context of how to resolve the Bosnian conflict as a whole. Intended to achieve consensus on the allies' next steps to ensure Gorazde's safety, when the conference broke up without agreement on action it did as much to highlight Western disunity as it did to threaten the Serbs or reassure the Muslims. Even as the British Prime Minister opened the conference with a strong warning to the Serbs not to attack any more of the UN safe areas, the VRS was shelling Sarajevo, attacking Bihac, and tightening its noose on Zepa.⁵⁰⁹ The aggressive French plan to airlift reinforcements into Gorazde died when the French were unable to recruit any supporters for this option from among the 16 nations that convened in London.⁵¹⁰ The participants could agree only on a summary statement that was instantly recognized for the cop-out it was. The world press was instantly and roundly critical, with

* Note that the 21 July meeting in London was not the same as the subsequent postwar "London Conference." The latter began on 8 December 1995 and was a much larger forum addressing the issues of how the Dayton Agreement (which had yet to be signed) would be implemented.

the most acidic commentary naturally coming from the Bosnian Government.^{511 512 513} For now, the consensus was for strong words and weak actions.

The Gorazde enclave was quietly evacuated between 24 and 28 August. All of the Ukrainian and British peacekeeping troops headed out overland, leaving a brave handful of unarmed UN Military Observers and forward air controllers in place to report on events in the enclave and, if necessary and feasible, guide NATO warplanes to their targets.^{514 515 516 517} UNPROFOR had left the last of the eastern Bosnian safe areas under a cloud of shameful dissimulation, but the cloud had a thin lining of silver. The pullback of the last sizable contingent of vulnerable UN peacekeepers—the last potential hostages—left the UN and NATO considerably freer to employ NATO airpower. This crucial change would be demonstrated when Operation Deliberate Force was launched at the very end of August, only a few days later.

Chapter 88

The Fateful Krajina Serb Offensive Against Bihac, July 1995

Desperate Measures—The Reorganization of the Krajina Serb Army

The Krajina Serb Army had been a major actor in the Bihac enclave since 1993, when it had helped launch Fikret Abdic's grab for a separate republic in western Bosnia. Under its new commander, Lieutenant Colonel General Mile Mrksic, it was destined to play an even larger role—a role that would see its eventual departure from the Balkan stage.

Mrksic was appointed to command the SVK on 16 May 1995, replacing Lieutenant Colonel General Milan Celeketic.⁵¹⁸ The change was clearly dictated by Belgrade in the aftermath of the fall of Western Slavonia and the controversial firing of "Orkan" rockets at Zagreb. Mrksic came to his new appointment from Belgrade, where he had been an Assistant Chief of the Yugoslav Army General Staff. He had also been

the first commander of the VJ Corps of Special Units (KSJ) and—more significantly to most Croatians—had commanded the JNA 1st Guards Motorized Brigade when it spearheaded the conquest of Vukovar in November 1991.⁵¹⁹

Mrksic's mission was to shore up the SVK and increase its ability to hold off the HV in the event of a Croatian invasion of the RSK. Overall, in organization, structure, and leadership, the SVK had become a fairly professional army, thanks to three years of assistance and grooming by the VJ. At the lowest levels of the force, however, problems with such basic elements as discipline and training had surfaced that he aimed to repair.⁵²⁰ Mrksic's main focus, though, was on finding ways to offset the SVK's major shortcoming: the lack of adequate manpower to hold its frontline defenses while maintaining sufficient brigade, corps, and General Staff reserve forces. Mrksic's principal step in this direction was to create for the SVK a clone of the VJ's Corps of Special Units, which would provide mobile reserves to plug HV penetrations of SVK positions. Belgrade attempted to address the manpower problem by rounding up Krajina Serb deserters and draft dodgers living in Serbia and shipping nearly 5,000 of them back to the Krajina. Along with Mrksic, the VJ also transferred a number of veteran ex-JNA officers to the Krajina to help implement changes, analyze the SVK's strategic and operational-tactical situation, and strengthen the Army's tactical defenses. With them came some additional equipment for the SVK, including possibly a battalion of M-84 tanks to help equip the new mobile reserve force.⁵²¹

RSK President Martic and General Mrksic picked a historic holiday, "Vidovdan" on 28 June, to parade the new KSJ at its base in Slunj as a morale-boosting demonstration of the SVK's new prowess for the people of the Krajina.⁵²² The corps, headed by newly promoted Major General Milorad Stupar—a former brigade commander in the VJ's KSJ—consisted of an armored brigade, a special operations brigade, a Guards Brigade, an RSK MUP Special Police brigade, and some assorted training units.⁵²³ Its personnel probably numbered 4,000 to 5,000 troops. Mrksic took the occasion to trumpet two "new" rocket systems to threaten the Croatians—"Styx" antiship missiles converted to land use and the "Kosava" rocket bomb system, which were fashioned from aerial bombs

fixed to a rocket-propelled frame. Both were more impressive in appearance than in performance.⁵²⁴

Genesis of the Bihać Operation: Milošević, Mladić, Mrksic, and Abdić

Less than a month after its parade, the KSJ would march into action—against the Bosnian Army, though, not the Croatian one. Initially, the SVK and VRS planned a joint operation against the most immediate threat to the RSK—the HV/HVO forces in the Dinara Mountains and the Livno Valley. However, Belgrade apparently changed this plan to first attack the Bihać enclave, and then shift to attack the Dinara-Livno sector. The neutralization of Bihać and the HV/HVO forces had become a matter of immediate importance to the SVK and the RSK state. A Croatian military offensive to retake the RSK was expected sometime in 1995. Both the 5th Corps and the HV/HVO forces in Dinara posed serious threats to the SVK's ability to defend against the expected HV offensive. The question was which to attack first, the 5th Corps or Dinara. If the Bosnian 5th Corps was still in control of Bihać when the Croatians attacked, Serb lines of communication through the enclave would not be available to shift SVK forces from one part of the crescent-shaped RSK to the other. More critical still, the 5th Corps could combine with the expected HV invasion to attack the SVK positions from two sides, making them untenable and threatening the very existence of the RSK. On the other hand, the HV/HVO forces in Dinara, if left free to capture Bosansko Grahovo, would threaten Knin.

In attacking Bihać, the SVK's objective was the logistic and road hub of the Bihać enclave, the city of Cazin, and the destruction of the Bosnian Army 5th Corps, achievements that Abdić and Krajina Serb troops had so far been unable to accomplish. Abdić would then assume his designated place at the head of a new Republic of Western Bosnia, a further fragmentation of the old republic that would enhance and protect the existence of the RSK. These final operations to knock out General Atif Dudaković's 5th Corps and

strike the HV/HVO was part of the strategic plan by which Milosevic and Mladic intended to snatch vital territory for the Krajina Republic with a series of lightning military operations and then sue for peace. Both recognized that the Serbs could not sustain their war of independence indefinitely, and they wanted to bring it to a quick and profitable end.^{525*}

The VRS's major targets were the ARBiH-controlled Drina valley enclaves and possibly Orasje. General Mrksic and the SVK, together with Abdic and his Serb-led Operational Group "Pauk" would take care of Bihac. The SVK/VRS would then jointly attack Dinara-Livno.

Campaign Plan—Operation "Mac (Sword) 95"

Mrksic's campaign plan to defeat the 5th Corps—Operation "Mac (Sword) 95"—focused on the seizure of Cazin, and for good reasons. Cazin sat at the center of the Bihac enclave (in fact, the area was often called "Cazinska Krajina"), and all lines of communication ran through it. Supplies to support the 5th Corps were flown into the town's Coralici airfield in light transports and helicopters, and makeshift ammunition production facilities there helped keep 5th Corps going. Cazin's loss would effectively bisect the Bihac pocket, fragmenting 5th Corps and exposing it to the prospect of complete destruction.

Two operational groups, one formed from the headquarters of the KSJ and the other OG "Pauk," were to undertake a converging attack toward the city. Major General Milorad Stupar's KSJ forces, augmented with forces from the 15th Lika and 21st Kordun Corps, would provide the main spearhead. Organized into four tactical groups, the reinforced KSJ was to attack from the western border area along a roughly 25-kilometer front stretching from the destroyed JNA Zeljava airbase to Johovica. SVK Lieutenant Colonel General Mile Novakovic and Serbian RDB officer "Raja" Bozovic's OG "Pauk" troops of the Autonomous Province of Western Bosnia and TG-9 from the SVK 39th Banija Corps would attack along the Mala Kladusa-Pecigrad-Cazin and toward Buzim road. To the south, the VRS 2nd Krajina Corps would fight

holding actions on the Grabež plateau to pin down 5th Corps troop reserves. The SVK forces probably totaled some 5,000 assault troops and 9,000 sector holding troops with two or three armored battalions and four artillery groups in support, together with Abdic's 4,000-plus soldiers. There were also an estimated 500 special operations troops from the VJ, the Serbian RDB, and Arkan's Serbian Volunteer Guard, and these were probably augmented by VJ KSJ personnel detailed to provide shock troops and combat leaders for the SVK KSJ attack. However, VRS and Bosnian Serb MUP units that were to be detailed to OG "Pauk" for the operation never arrived.

To the Brink of Defeat: The Battle for Cazin, 19-26 July 1995

The SVK planned to start the operation on 15 July. The start was delayed four days, however, by problems in regrouping units, mobilizing additional SVK and Krajina Serb MUP personnel to replace the missing VRS troops, and an ARBiH spoiling attack.⁵²⁶

On 17 July, two LUNA-M (FROG-7) surface-to-surface rockets landed near the border town of Izacic—a typical start to a Serb offensive. Two days later, General Stupar and General Novakovic's troops launched their attack at 0300, pushing across the frontier from the west on four axes and south from Velika Kladusa. OG "Pauk" and Tactical Group-1 attacked toward Johovica-Sturlic, Tactical Group-2 assaulted the Trzacka Rastela sector, Tactical Group-3 hit the Bugar area, and Tactical Group-4 struck Zeljava-Izacic.⁵²⁷ TG-2, -3, and -4 ran into stiff resistance from a battalion of the crack 502nd Mountain Brigade, and SVK troops here managed to advance only a kilometer or two.⁵²⁸ They also failed to take the important border village of Trzacka Rastela on the main road to Cazin. The SVK offensive was weakened by morale problems in the RSK Special Police Brigade—apparently part of TG-2—which refused to attack. OG "Pauk" and TG-1, however, smashed the weak 517th Light Brigade around Sturlic, quickly driving ARBiH troops back more than 2 kilometers by 20 July. To meet this development, 5th Corps staff quickly alerted the 502nd Brigade to rush the rest of its available troops from the Bihac city area to the site of the breakthrough.⁵²⁹

* See Chapter 73, "The 'Red Generals' Refuse to Bow: Political-Military Relations and the Strategic Debate in Republika Srpska, 1995," for a more detailed discussion of the collusion between Milosevic and Mladic.

Barely checked by the arrival of the Bosnian reserves, the SVK advance continued to the east of Sturlic, and by 21 July the KSJ penetration had extended to 7 kilometers. The Serbs were still failing in their efforts to reduce Trzacka Rastela—which was blocking the widening of the breach—and not even a salvo of seven surface-to-surface rockets seemed to make a dent in the defenses. General Stupar, though, had not yet renewed TG-3 and -4's attack around Bugar and Izacic. The next day, SVK troops pushed on, advancing further east toward the town of Pecigrad, a key chokepoint on the Velika Kladusa-Cazin road. OG "Pauk" now launched a major thrust toward Pecigrad, coming directly from the north.

On 25 July, Dudakovic's defensive situation grew critical. He was still being pounded by TG-1 and OG "Pauk" when TG-3 and -4 launched a new attack toward Bugar and Izacic, breaking through the 502nd Mountain Brigade before being contained in front of Izacic and Gata Ilidza.⁵³⁰ OG "Pauk" and TG-1's continuing drive had brought the SVK another 2 kilometers into the pocket since 23 July, and it had seized key positions at Pecka Brda, Liskovac, and Krivaja. The key passes at Pecigrad and Skokovi were seriously threatened as the SVK offensive approached its apex. Serb troops were within 5 kilometers of Coralici airfield and Cazin town, and, on 26 July, Abdic confidently announced the transformation of the Autonomous Province of Western Bosnia into the Republic of Western Bosnia.⁵³¹ General Dudakovic would later describe this SVK offensive as his most difficult experience of the war.⁵³² He had called for help, however, and now help was on the way.

Croatia Intervenes: The Capture of Bosansko Grahovo, July 1995

The Croatian Government had frequently made it more than clear that it could not and would not tolerate the loss of Bihac to its Serb besiegers and that it was prepared to fight if the enclave's continued existence were threatened. The new SVK offensive now threatened exactly that. When the Bosnian Government recognized that it might not be able to save Bihac on its own, it was natural for it to ask for Croatian military assistance. The resulting compact,

the "Split Agreement," proved to be one of the key events of the war. The military operation that it spawned would not only bring Croatia more openly and deeply into the Bosnian conflict, presaging direct Croatian military operations against Bosnia's Republika Srpska, but would also set the stage for Croatia's reconquest of its own territory usurped by the RSK.

On 22 July, Presidents Tudjman, Izetbegovic, and Zubak, heading delegations of the Croatian, Bosnian, and Bosnian Federation Governments, gathered for a summit meeting in Split. They quickly reached agreement on the provision of military aid to Bosnia. Their joint declaration stated that,

. . . the Republic and Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina have issued an appeal to the Republic of Croatia to provide urgent military and other assistance against the aggression, especially in the Bihac area, which the Republic of Croatia has agreed to.

*They have agreed to continue cooperation and to constantly coordinate defense activities between Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina.*⁵³³

In making common cause with the Bosnians against the Serbs of Bosnia and Yugoslavia, however, President Tudjman intended also to make an opportunity of the crisis aimed at achieving Croatia's consummate political objective—the destruction of the Republic of Serbian Krajina.

The Croatians' first contribution to defending Bihac would be a move to relieve the Serb pressure on it—and incidentally put their forces in direct striking distance of the RSK capital at Knin. For these purposes the HV and HVO joined forces in Operation "Ljeto 95" (Summer 95), whose objective was the capture of Bosansko Grahovo—the primary road junction linking Republika Srpska and the RSK. The VRS-held town of Glamoc was a secondary objective. The HV hoped that an attack on a location so vital to both the Serb mini-republics would draw SVK and VRS reserves away from Bihac. The actual capture of Grahovo would give the HV excellent jumpoff positions

for its next operation, which would be nothing less than a campaign to destroy the SVK and eliminate the RSK. The HV in fact began to mobilize its forces and move units into position for this strategic offensive—already dubbed Operation “Olja” (Storm)—even as it was launching “Ljeto 95.” If the first operation succeeded in capturing Glamoc as well, the HV/HVO would have additional staging points for a further assault against the VRS in Bosnia, particularly toward the town of Jajce, which the HVO had lost in 1992. The summer campaign was planned and conducted by General Ante Gotovina, commander of the HV Split Corps District.

General Gotovina’s campaign plan called for two distinct attacks, one against Bosansko Grahovo—the main effort—and another toward Glamoc, the secondary objective.⁵³⁴ Operational Group “Rujani” of the Split Corps District maintained unified control over the two quite separate subgroups formed for the divided operation. In the first group, the 7th Guards Brigade would be augmented by an elite composite infantry company from the 114th Infantry Brigade for the main assault toward Grahovo, the Guards attacking along the main road from the Livno Valley while the infantry company seized mountain positions on the right side of the road. The 4th Guards Brigade, with the 2nd Battalion/9th Guards Brigade attached, would be held in reserve. The second force, for the attack on Glamoc, would form up in two areas to conduct a converging attack on the town. The main force was to attack from the Sator Mountains, hitting VRS defenses in the rear and coming back up the Glamoc Valley toward the town; it comprised the 81st Independent Guards Battalion, the 3rd Battalion/1st Guards Brigade, elements of the 1st Croatian Guards Brigade (1st HGZ), and Bosnian Croat Special Police.⁵³⁵ The HVO’s 2nd and 3rd Guards Brigades formed the rest of the attack group, reinforced with the HVO 60th Guards Airborne Battalion and 22nd Sabotage Detachment. They would make direct assaults on VRS-held ridge lines southwest and southeast of Glamoc.⁵³⁶ The HV 1st Battalion/1st Guards Brigade and the Reconnaissance-Sabotage Company of the HV Main Staff were their reserve.⁵³⁷ The total HV/HVO force numbered about 8,500 troops.

Someone had the forethought to send reinforcements to the VRS 2nd Krajina Corps following the HV’s successful completion of Operation “Skok-2” in June. In front of Bosansko Grahovo, the 3rd Petrovac Light Infantry Brigade and the 9th Grahovo Light Infantry Brigade, together with the SVK Vijuga Battle Group, still comprised the main force, but it was bolstered by elements from other 2nd Krajina Corps formations and from other VRS corps. To the east, the composite 3rd Serbian Brigade had reinforced the 5th Glamoc Light Infantry Brigade.⁵³⁸ Elements of the 7th Kupres-Sipovo Motorized Brigade beefed up the 5th Glamoc’s left flank. All told, Major General Radivoje Tomanic’s 2nd Krajina Corps fielded some 5,500 personnel.

The Croatian summer offensive operation commenced at 0500 on 25 July. Both thrusts immediately ran into stiff resistance from the Serbs, who appeared to be ready and waiting for the attack. General Gotovina states that,

*At the beginning of the attack, the enemy fiercely resisted at all its defense positions. The enemy defense lines, particularly in the direction toward Bosansko Grahovo, were exceptionally well fortified. There were a large number of shelters and covered trenches with . . . a series of consecutive defense lines and formidable obstacles consisting of minefields.*⁵³⁹

In the Bosansko Grahovo attack, the 7th Guards took the main road and the left-hand sector along the border while the independent infantry company from the 114th Brigade attacked on the right. The 7th Guards pushed forward about 2 kilometers before halting because of concerns about its right flank. The 114th’s lone infantry company was a completely inadequate force to deal with the strong VRS defenses dug in along the ridge line in front of Marino Brdo; the Serbs had stopped the attack in its tracks.

HV/HVO forces in the battle for Glamoc were facing similar difficulties. The 81st Guards Battalion broke the 3rd Serbian Brigade’s forward defenses southeast

of Sator and advanced 1 or 2 kilometers before coming to a halt because the HV/HVO units on its right had been held up. It appears that troops from 1st HGZ, 1st Guards Brigade, and the Bosnian Croat Special Police were blocked in front of a mountaintop fortified by the VRS, while both the 2nd and 3rd HVO Guards Brigades gained little or no ground in their attacks southwest of Glamoc against the VRS 5th Glamoc Brigade. The HVO 60th Guards Battalion and 22nd Sabotage Detachment likewise made minimal progress in the Kujaca hill area southeast of town.

The operation went much better the next day after the forces were regrouped and given additional reserves. In the Grahovo attack the 2nd Battalion/9th Guards Brigade was sent in to reinforce the 114th Brigade company and managed to infiltrate around the left flank of the VRS position to take it from the rear. The HV units on the right were still having a hard time and managed to advance only about a kilometer. This was enough, however, for the 7th Guards to resume its attack in the center and on the left, gaining another 5 kilometers. HV units were now about 7 kilometers from Grahovo on the left.

Opposite Glamoc, the momentum of the HV's advance on the left picked up when troops from 1st HGZ, 1st Guards Brigade, and the Special Police outflanked the fortified area that had held up their attack the previous day. This done, they pushed forward some 5 kilometers, with the 81st Guards Battalion on the left flank threatening VRS lines of communication out of Glamoc to the north. Meanwhile, to speed up the impetus of the attack, OG "Rujani" committed additional reserves—1st Battalion/1st Guards Brigade and the HV Main Staff Recon-Sabotage Company, plus a 72nd MP Battalion Antiterrorist Group—to a new attack in the center against the 1,600-meter Vrholi massif. The 2nd HVO Guards Brigade was able to grind forward about a kilometer against the VRS 5th Glamoc Brigade, while the HVO 60th Guards Battalion and 22nd Sabotage Detachment continued to inch forward around Kujaca.

With the HV attack still behind schedule, on 27 July Gotovina decided to commit to the Grahovo attack his trump card—the 4th Guards Brigade. He now had two full Guards Brigades engaged in the assault, the 4th on

the right and 7th on the left. This combination finally cracked the tough VRS defenses, and the Guards moved on Grahovo, reaching positions some 5 kilometers in front of town after an advance of 10 kilometers on the right.

In the Glamoc sector, however, the HV/HVO were making only marginal progress. HV 1st HGZ troops and the Bosnian Croat Special Police moved forward across the mountains another kilometer or so, and a Mostar Corps District tactical group (comprised of elements from several different HVO Home Defense units) gained some additional ground. The Croatian Air Force (HRZ) contributed an airstrike (and violated the No-Fly Zone) by two MiG-21s near Glamoc, aimed at interdicting the road net.

On 28 July, HV/HVO forces finally defeated the VRS 2nd Krajina Corps, first at Grahovo when the 4th and 7th Guards Brigades crushed the remaining Serb positions and entered the town, and then at Glamoc. The HV 81st Guards Battalion and 1st HGZ troops (with the Special Police) reached the outskirts of Glamoc from the north to cut the main route out of town. That may have helped the HVO 2nd Guards Brigade, 60th Guards Battalion, and 22nd Sabotage Detachment push through the VRS positions in front of Glamoc, for the sudden exposure of their rear would have lessened the Serb soldiers' readiness to stand and fight. That night they may have tempered their valor with discretion. In any case, HVO troops entered Glamoc the next day.

The SVK Withdraws From Bihać

Operation "Ljeto 95" failed in its avowed purpose of slowing the SVK assault on Bihać by forcing the diversion of forces from among the enclave's attackers. Few of the SVK mobile reserve forces engaged at Bihać—the SVK 2nd Guards Brigade from the Special Units Corps was possibly sent—and only a few VRS reserves were transferred to the Grahovo area; nor did ARBiH attacks made at the same time as "Ljeto 95" draw any reserves from around Bihać. It

was only *after* the July attacks that the Serbs altered their plans for Bihać, when wiping the Muslim enclave off the map suddenly seemed a less important pan-Serb objective than dealing with the threat of a Croatian strategic offensive to eliminate the RSK. That threat was manifested in the HV's full-scale mobilization and deployment to attack positions during late July and the threat to Knin represented by the Croatian capture of Grahovo. These alarming developments were enough to change not only the Serb leaders' plans for Bihać but also their whole attitude toward it and its UN defenders. On 30 July, President Martić and General Mrksic met with UN Special Representative Yasushi Akashi and agreed to withdraw from Bihać as part of a six-part accord that, from the UN's point of view, might avert the danger of wider war posed by the sudden threat of a Croatian offensive.⁵⁴⁰ SVK troops began pulling back from the enclave that very day. The ever-optimistic Akashi's hopes for the breaking out of peace, however, were to be quickly dashed.

Chapter 89 Operation "Oluja"—The Fall of the Krajina Serb Republic, August 1995

The Croatian Government rejected the withdrawal agreement that had been so hastily drafted by the Serbs and the UN. President Tudjman had never had such a promising opportunity for the military reconquest of the RSK, and he was not going to pass it up unless the RSK surrendered without a fight and accepted Zagreb's terms for reintegration into the Croatian state. Tudjman's conditions for even meeting with the Krajina Serbs were haughtily presumptuous:

... talks on the immediate implementation of the Croatian Constitution on the occupied areas shall begin, as well as the talks on the implementation of regulations of the constitutional act on Serb ethnic community's rights.⁵⁴¹

Talks under these conditions would have meant that the RSK had already agreed to reintegration, so the Krajina Serbs were not likely to swallow them. Yet Tudjman had threatened that, unless the terms were met, Zagreb would use force to impose them.⁵⁴² The UN worked frantically to avert a Croatian offensive

against its renegade minority, trying to bring the two sides together in Geneva on 3 August to have "talks about talks." Even this was unacceptable to the Croatians, who insisted that substantive talks on ending the RSK's existence be the focus of any discussion.⁵⁴³ RSK Foreign Minister Milan Babic—the same Babic who in 1990-91 had led the Serbs out of the Croatian state—made a last-ditch peace offer, pledging acceptance of a modified "Z-4" plan for Serb autonomy in Croatia. His efforts failed despite their endorsement by the United States.⁵⁴⁴ Zagreb was not interested in what it saw as more delaying tactics. Time had run out for the RSK, and its day in the sun was coming to a close.

Campaign Planning and Order of Battle

The HV offensive would be led by a new Main Staff chief—Corps General Zvonimir Cervenko. On 15 July, Cervenko had replaced the ailing, 76-year-old Staff General Janko Bobetko—the HV Chief of Staff since 1992. Cervenko, though more vigorous than Bobetko, was of the same vintage, having been drummed out of the JNA in 1971 for nationalist tendencies. In his previous position he had served as Chief of the Presidential Military Office.

Bobetko and the Main Staff, however, had molded the campaign plan for the HV offensive well before Cervenko took office and had issued the final version on 26 June.⁵⁴⁵ The strategic offensive—dubbed "Oluja" (Storm)—was divided into operations numbered "Oluja-1" through "Oluja-4." A single corps district would direct and execute each operation. Main Staff control over the operation would be exerted from the main command post in Zagreb and a forward command post—under Major General Marijan Mareković—deployed to the town of Ogulin to oversee Karlovac and Gospic Corps District coordination. The entire offensive was scheduled to last four to five days. In order to better control its far flung units, the SVK Main Staff divided its forces in two, forming Operational Group "Kordun" under Lieutenant Colonel General Mile Novaković to control the three

corps—21st, 39th, and KSJ—in UN Sector North while leaving the 7th and 15th Corps directly under the SVK Main Staff.

Plan for “Oluja-1”⁵⁴⁶

The Zagreb Corps District, under the command of Major General Ivan Basarac, was to undertake “Oluja-1” in two stages against two objectives. In view of the Krajina Serbs’ doctrinal habit of compensating for any injury by rocket attacks on Croatian cities, the corps’ first-stage objective was to encircle Petrinja and penetrate to a line some 6 to 7 kilometers south of the town to eliminate SVK artillery-rocket groups in range of Croatian urban and industrial targets. This first phase would include a strong secondary attack from the Sunja area toward Hrvatska Kostajnica. To undertake this phase, the Zagreb Corps was to have been given the 2nd Guards Brigade as the main assault formation, the 81st Independent Guards Battalion, a composite battalion of MUP Special Police, two reserve infantry brigades, and five Home Defense regiments. Modifications made in the plan late in July, however, disrupted the planned order of battle by withholding two key shock units—the 81st Guards and the MUP battalion. The corps was forced to modify the attack plan at Petrinja to compensate for the lack of the MUP troops and to substitute another Home Defense regiment and a reserve infantry brigade for the 81st Guards in the Kostajnica attack. These compromises would play havoc with the first phase of the corps operation.

During the second phase, the corps’ mission was to quickly break through Serb-held territory out to the Bosnian border. (A subsequent linkup with ARBiH 5th Corps forces in the Zirovac area added to the original plan appears to have resulted from difficulties encountered by the HV at Petrinja.)⁵⁴⁷ The Zagreb Corps would then cut off SVK units in the Zrinska Gora region and eliminate them or force their surrender, completely liberating the Banovina (or to the Serbs, “Banija”) region. This would be aided through the Kostajnica attack force pressing along the Una to seize the river crossings at Dvor. For this phase, the corps was allocated an additional four reserve infantry brigades and a Home Defense regiment. Two corps artillery groups formed from a battalion of the HV Main Staff’s 16th Artillery-Rocket Brigade, plus two corps artillery battalions provided added fire support.⁵⁴⁸ The corps also received an additional antitank

battalion.⁵⁴⁹ The total force numbered about 30,000 HV troops, including support personnel, and would eventually involve some 1,000 ARBiH personnel.

The Zagreb Corps District’s primary opponent was the SVK 39th Banija Corps under the command of Major General Slobodan Tarbuk.⁵⁵⁰ Tarbuk had only four infantry brigades, comprising some 9,000 troops, facing the oncoming HV, one of which was in reserve. Part of this force, a composite tactical group, plus the reserve brigade were already engaged against ARBiH forces in Bihać—about 3,500 men (although some of these obviously would be redeployed in the event of an HV assault). The corps was stronger in armor than the HV but weaker in field artillery and heavy mortars. A critical concern was the corps’ shallow operational depth; the frontline brigades had two defensive positions constructed in the first or tactical zone—the area within 5 kilometers of the front—but no positions behind them. If the town of Glina, some 10 kilometers from the frontline, should be lost, the corps’s main lateral line of communication would be cut and with it most of its defensive maneuverability. With few reserves for a counterattack force and no VRS or VJ reinforcements on the horizon, Tarbuk’s men had to stop the HV at or in the forward defense lines.

Plan for “Oluja-2”⁵⁵¹

The role of the Karlovac Corps District, under Major General Miljenko Crnjac, was a minor one compared to the other three HV corps. Crnjac’s mission was to conduct a holding attack against the SVK 21st Kordun Corps to pin it down and keep it away from the flanks of the Zagreb and Gospic Corps Districts. His forces would also try to capture SVK-held areas south of Karlovac, around the town of Vojnic, to limit Serb shelling of Karlovac. If things went well, the corps would then seek to occupy the entire region. Crnjac’s modest objectives did not rate him any Guards units, but he did get one MUP Special Police battalion, two reserve infantry brigades, and an antitank battalion in addition to the corps’s normal subordinate brigades and regiments. If needed, he could probably call on a corps-level artillery-rocket group for heavy weapons support⁵⁵² as well as two helicopter gunships from an HRZ Mi-24 detachment to help deal with SVK armored counterattacks. His total force for the operation numbered about 15,000 men.

Crnjac would be opposed by Major General Veljko Bosanac's 21st Kordun Corps. The mobile reserve force of Major General Milorad Stupar's KSJ, although committed to Serb operations against Bihać, was also available in this sector, especially after Serb troops started withdrawing from the enclave. Bosanac controlled three infantry brigades, only two of which would be engaged against the Karlovac Corps—about 4,000 men. (The third was stuck between Karlovac and Zagreb Corps Districts.) Most of a 1,500-man infantry brigade from the 15th Lika Corps was also in the zone of the Karlovac Corps attack. Stupar had some 5,000 troops in four brigades for the earlier attack on Bihać, but their subsequent deployment is not known. The SVK as usual outnumbered the HV in armor, field artillery, and heavy mortars; but 21st Corps suffered the same lack of operational depth that the 39th Corps did and would likewise have to stop and hold any attack in its frontline positions.

Plan for “Oluja-3”⁵⁵³

Major General Mirko Norac would direct the Gospic Corps District in the principal “Oluja-3” mission of breaking through to the Bosnian border and, in cooperation with the ARBiH 5th Corps, splitting SVK forces in the northern RSK (UN Sector North) from those in the south. The corps would then sweep the border area of SVK outposts and pockets of resistance. The operation was to be conducted in two stages, the first being a push to a phase line some 10 kilometers from the frontline—outside the first SVK defensive zone—after which a second wave would be committed to continue the breakthrough to the border. All units would then engage in the mopping-up actions. The corps’s forces were grouped around two axes, each centered on a Guards Brigade. The first and largest, with the attached 1st Guards Brigade leading the way, would drive from near Otocac toward the Plitvice Lakes.⁵⁵⁴ Meanwhile, the ARBiH 5th Corps was to conduct its breakout operation in this area to pin down SVK reserves and connect with the approaching HV.⁵⁵⁵ The second column, clustered around the 9th Guards Brigade, would attack from the Gospic area toward Udbina Air Base. In addition to the Guards, Norac had available one conscript infantry brigade, two reserve infantry brigades, and six Home Defense regiments. Two corps artillery-rocket groups were formed to support each of

the main axes, and two Mi-24 helicopter gunships were on call for antitank support.⁵⁵⁶ General Norac probably had about 25,000 HV troops in all to be joined by some 2,000 ARBiH personnel.

The SVK 15th Lika Corps, under Major General Stevo Sevo, would be defending the sector that was the main object of the Croatian-Bosnian attack. To do this he had only two of his brigades plus part of another to meet the attack, plus two in reserve opposite Bihać. These forces numbered no more than 6,000 men because Sevo’s other two brigades faced other enemy corps districts across a front of some 150 kilometers.⁵⁵⁷ The Lika Corps would be in a virtually untenable position when its narrow lines were hit and squeezed by both the HV and the ARBiH.

Plan for “Oluja-4”⁵⁵⁸

Major General Ante Gotovina had planned and directed the “Ljeto 95” operation that had prepared the way for “Oluja 4.” His Split Corps District, together with MUP Special Police forces under MUP Colonel General Mladen Markac, now had the primary “Oluja” mission of seizing the Serb political stronghold at Knin and the vital road junction at Gracac. By encircling the bulk of the SVK 7th North Dalmatian Corps or forcing its withdrawal into Bosnia, the operation would allow the HV/MUP to occupy all of RSK-controlled Dalmatia. Strategically, the capture of Knin would be the single-most-important objective of the entire offensive. Knin had been the center and the symbol of the Croatian Serbs’ rebellion against Zagreb, and its fall would send a clear message to the RSK Government and its people that their state had come to an end.

The military effect of the capture of Knin and Gracac, both key road hubs, would be to cut off SVK forces in a huge pocket between Benkovac and Knin, forcing a Serb surrender or a rapid retreat through a narrow route to Bosnia at Otric-Donji Srb before HV units cut them off. Gotovina and Markac organized the mission along two primary axes. The first would use the 4th and 7th Guards Brigades, plus a Home Defense regiment, to assault toward Knin from the positions

around Bosansko Grahovo and the Dinara Mountains gained during Operation "Ljeto 95." The 81st Guards Battalion (initially assigned to "Oluja 1") had been kept in place after the "Ljeto" operation to protect Gotovina's rear from any VRS counterattack around Grahovo, probably because Bosnian Croat forces either were unavailable or were considered unreliable for this mission. The second major axis would involve a composite MUP Special Police brigade, together with a battalion from the 9th Guards Brigade, attacking through the Velebit Mountains toward Gracac. The rest of the corps, organized into three operational groups (one conscript infantry brigade, three reserve infantry brigades, and five Home Defense regiments), would make frontal attacks against SVK positions around Benkovac, Kistanje, and Drnis to pin them down or even, if possible, break through their lines and speed up the operation. Three artillery-rocket groups were in support.⁵⁵⁹ The MUP and HV combined had some 30,000 troops to undertake "Oluja-4."

The Serb 7th North Dalmatian Corps, now under the command of Major General Slobodan Kovacevic, had the main job of defending against Gotovina and Markac's operation.⁵⁶⁰ The 7th Corps had two motorized brigades of its own and four infantry or light infantry brigades strung along what had been the main front between the Bosnian border and the Velebit Mountains, while an adjacent brigade from the 15th Lika Corps was defending the Velebit Mountains-Gracac axis. The HV advance made through the Dinara Mountains-Livno Valley in "Ljeto-95" had completely undermined the corps's defensive arrangements and forced it to strip its brigades of their meager reserves to help cover their back door at Grahovo, now occupied and controlled by the HV. A newly constituted composite reserve force, Tactical Group-3, had little chance of halting a new HV thrust from Grahovo. (Elements of the KSJ's 2nd Guards Brigade which had been moved toward Grahovo in July were positioned in Knin but were not forward deployed with TG-3.) The knowledge that their positions had now been completely turned must have severely undermined morale among the 7th Corps's 10,000 men.

HV Doctrine

In keeping with HV offensive doctrine, all four "Oluja" operations were to be conducted as rapidly as possible, with Guards formations bypassing major

pockets of resistance to avoid any delay in reaching their objectives.* The bypassed Serb forces could then be mopped up at will. Artillery-rocket salvos and strikes by reconnaissance-sabotage units would seek to disable SVK command posts and communications nodes to hamper SVK maneuvers and slow down unit transfers in reaction to the HV's fast moving spearheads. Electronic warfare units would add to these effects by jamming SVK communications. On a broader, deeper scale the HV waged psychological warfare against the RSK state and the SVK, broadcasting false commercial radio messages and distributing fake government leaflets directing Serb civilians to evacuate their homes. By such means the Croatians expected to lower Serb morale and clog SVK lines of communication.

The Operation Commences—4 August 1995⁵⁶¹

Operation "Oluja" began at 0500, with immediate effect throughout the Krajina. One of the HV's key undertakings was a program of coordinated airstrikes and sabotage missions by ground forces against the SVK's command and control facilities across the RSK. It was a stunning success, disrupting the ability of the SVK General Staff to coordinate the overall defense of the RSK and interfering with operational communications down to the brigade level.⁵⁶²

Despite the promising start of the overall operation, its individual components were having problems. The Zagreb Corps District ran into immediate difficulties as it kicked off "Oluja-1." Having lost the use of the elite MUP Special Police units—which were to spearhead the attack against Petrinja while the 2nd Guards Brigade bypassed it—General Basarac decided to modify his assault plan.⁵⁶³ He apparently ordered the 2nd Guards to make a direct attack on Petrinja instead of following the original plan to have them encircle the town.⁵⁶⁴ The opposing SVK 31st Infantry Brigade was well prepared for a frontal assault, its antitank guns knocking out several HV tanks on the approaches to Petrinja and barring the infantry from gaining any significant footholds in the town.⁵⁶⁵ Home Defense and reserve infantry troops, lacking the

* For a more detailed discussion of HV doctrine, see Section VI, "Croatia 1993-94: Biding Its Time, Building Its Army."

discipline and motivation of the Guards, proved unwilling to try to fight their way into Petrinja, leaving the 2nd Guards to bear the brunt of the fighting.⁵⁶⁶ The result was an almost immediate breakdown in the attack mission. The secondary attack toward Kostajnica—deprived of its Guards battalion spearhead—also gained little or no ground against the SVK 26th Infantry Brigade. Here, however, the reinforced 125th Home Defense Regiment did a better job than those in the primary assault as it pushed toward Hrvatska Dubica along the Una River.⁵⁶⁷

In “Oluja-2,” the Karlovac Corps District succeeded in its primary mission of pinning the 21st Kordun Corps inside its defense perimeter but fared poorly in terms of ground gained.⁵⁶⁸ Serb General Bosanac’s troops blocked a river assault by the HV 104th Infantry Brigade to the east of Karlovac.⁵⁶⁹ Some 20 kilometers southwest of Karlovac, however, General Crnjac’s forces—parts of two Home Defense regiments—were able to push several kilometers toward the village of Primislje but were unable to break through the SVK brigade defending the sector, which appears to have been able to consolidate its defense line along the Korana River.⁵⁷⁰ An attack by an infantry brigade and a Home Defense regiment to encircle the town of Plaski also failed.⁵⁷¹

General Norac’s Gospic Corps District achieved mixed results on 4 August in carrying out “Oluja-3” but made enough of an advance to place the 15th Lika Corps in a difficult situation. Near Gospic, the 9th Guards Brigade and its accompanying reserve formations made only minimal progress, halting in front of strong SVK defenses at Ljubovo and Medak.⁵⁷² To the north, however, the 1st Guards Brigade punched a hole along the boundary between two 15th Corps brigades near the Kapela mountain range, although it appears to have run into stiff opposition from the SVK Corps of Special Units (KSJ) near Licka Jasenica, which greatly slowed its advance.⁵⁷³ The Home Defense regiments and reserve brigades on the Guards’ right flank barely advanced against the 18th and 50th Infantry Brigades in their attack northeast from the Otocac area.⁵⁷⁴

The HV’s greatest success on Day One came in the Velebit Mountains and Northern Dalmatia with “Oluja-4.” The capture of Grahovo in July had by

design left Knin virtually indefensible. The SVK 7th North Dalmatian Corps could spare only the scraped-together Tactical Group-3 to block this avenue of approach; stripping any other sector would only have opened another invasion route. The HV 4th and 7th Guards Brigades quickly crushed TG-3 along their converging axes toward Knin.⁵⁷⁵ Attacks on the left flank of the main advance by a Home Defense regiment and an infantry brigade helped cave in the already tottering SVK defenses in this sector,⁵⁷⁶ and a spirited attack by MUP Special Police and a battalion of the 9th Guards Brigade in the Velebit valley made more cracks in the SVK defenses. Despite a strong defense of the Mali Alan pass by the 15th Lika Corps troops, the elite MUP and HV units cracked the SVK positions and broke through, quickly pushing on toward the village of Sveti Rok and the Celavac hill area along the main road to Gracac. The pace of the MUP advance left the SVK 9th Motorized Brigade no time to regroup or consolidate its defenses.⁵⁷⁷ Gracac, too, was already in mortal danger. With these successes in two key sectors, the limited gains made by the rest of General Gotovina’s Split Corps District reserve formations around Benkovac mattered little.⁵⁷⁸ If Gracac and Knin fell, they would form part of the noose encircling the entire Serb position.

Day Two—5 August 1995

Knin fell on the morning of 5 August, the apex of “Oluja” and the highlight of the day’s operations. The collapse of the “Vijuga” Battle Group the previous day had opened the way for the 4th and 7th Guards Brigades to march into the town against only scattered opposition, despite 7th Corps attempts to shift a battalion from the 75th Motorized Brigade to positions north of Knin.⁵⁷⁹ The RSK Government and the SVK General Staff had pulled out during the night to the village of Srb, some 35 kilometers to the northwest.⁵⁸⁰ Then the fall of Gracac to the rapidly advancing MUP troops during the morning—again, despite efforts by 7th Corps to shift a battalion each from the 4th Light and 92nd Motorized Brigades—forced Mrksic and the commander of the 7th North Dalmatian Corps, General Kovacevic, to make a difficult choice: withdraw entirely from the Benkovac-Obrovac-Kistanje

pocket or face defeat and the destruction or surrender of the entire corps. The 7th Corps, together with most of the Serb inhabitants, chose to pull out. With their defenders gone, Benkovac and Obrovac were occupied in the early evening by HV Split Corps District forces.⁵⁸¹ The 7th Corps forces—probably most of three brigades—fell back to positions southeast of Gracac and Obrovac near Otric to cover the main withdrawal route.

Things had appeared to be going reasonably well for the 15th Lika Corps on 4 August. On 5 August, however, the corps began to disintegrate as multiple attacks pummeled and overwhelmed General Sevo's forces. The disabling blow was the intervention of the ARBiH 5th Corps in the HV's "Oluja-3." The HV Gospic Corps District eventually would have battered its way through the SVK defenses over the next two days, but it was the attack by major elements of two crack ARBiH mountain brigades at midnight on 5 August that sealed and hastened the corps' defeat.⁵⁸² Forced to commit most of its reserves to blocking the many HV attacks, the 15th Corps had kept only skeleton forces opposite much of the Bosnian border. The 502nd Mountain Brigade, bypassing the UN observation posts along the Bosnian-Croatian border northwest of Bihać in the darkness, quickly punched across the border to rampage into the 15th Corps rear areas. Quickly occupying the town of Licko Petrovo Selo, the brigade pushed on, taking more border villages and sweeping through the famous Plitvice Lakes resort area—scene of one of the first combat actions of the Yugoslav wars—to reach Rakovica, some 10 kilometers inside Croatia, at about 0800.⁵⁸³ Three hours later, the "Tigers" of the HV 1st Guards Brigade arrived, led by Main Staff General Marijan Mareković, to link up with the 5th Corps⁵⁸⁴ after overcoming resistance from SVK infantry and mines in the Licka Jasenica/Saborsko area. Their arrival meant that SVK forces in the north were now cut off from those in UN Sector South.⁵⁸⁵ Another ARBiH brigade—the 501st—seized the important radar and radio facilities at Mount Plješevica and moved into the Korenica area, site of the 15th Corps headquarters, although it encountered strong resistance around the town.⁵⁸⁶

General Norac's forces at Gospic also achieved some notable successes. The 9th Guards Brigade overcame strong SVK resistance at Ljubovo early on 5 August, allowing the brigade and its accompanying reserve

units to break out into the open and move against the RSK Udbina Air Base,⁵⁸⁷ which forced the SVK to evacuate its aircraft to the VRS base at Banja Luka.⁵⁸⁸ Two Home Defense regiments and a reserve brigade helped in the Ljubovo attack and pushed northeast after the breakthrough toward Korenica. The MUP breakthrough at Gracac to the south allowed General Markac's troops to roll up the flank of the SVK 9th Motorized Brigade at Medak, eliminating a key Serb center of resistance. The 15th Corps had now been chopped into three pockets: one centered on the 50th Brigade at Vrhovine, another around the remnants of the 18th Brigade at Bunic, and the last around the 103rd Light Infantry Brigade at Donji Lapac-Korenica on the Bosnian border. Those troops and civilians able to flee retreated toward Lapac and the sanctuary of Republika Srpska across the border.

While the 15th Corps crumbled to the south, General Bosanac and the 21st Kordun Corps hung tight in their defenses around Slunj and south of Karlovac. Primislje fell to troops from the 14th Home Defense Regiment of the Karlovac Corps, but the HV made few gains elsewhere against the SVK.⁵⁸⁹ Nevertheless, the 21st Corps' days were numbered also.

General Basarac and the Zagreb Corps District—now overseen by Colonel General Petar Stipetic of the Main Staff, who had been brought in to reorganize the faltering attack—were still making heavy weather of the "Oluja-1" operation against General Tarbuk's 39th Corps. The weight of the HV, however, was beginning to wear down the Serbs. The first break came when the flanking attack along the Una by the 125th Home Defense Regiment seized Hrvatska Dubica.⁵⁹⁰ A renewed drive from the Sunja area—bolstered by the commitment of an additional reserve brigade—forced the SVK to begin falling back toward Kostajnica. More important, the ARBiH 5th Corps breakout from the Bihać enclave early on 5 August toward Zirovac forced General Tarbuk to use his only reserve brigade—the 33rd Infantry—to block this drive into the corps rear area.⁵⁹¹ Without this reserve, the SVK was unable to stop the tenacious HV 2nd Guards Brigade from grinding down the SVK 31st Brigade troops around Petrinja and throwing a loose cordon around the town. The SVK continued to hold out

around Petrinja throughout the day, blocking the HV from a breakout that would spell the end of 39th Corps and cut the escape route of the 21st Corps units deployed to the west.

Day Three—6 August 1995

As the 7th and 15th SVK Corps defenses continued to crumble on 6 August and soldiers and civilians streamed toward Bosnia, the HV Split and Gospic Corps Districts pressed the retreating the Serb forces toward the border. The Split Corps District airlifted the 1st Croatian Guards Brigade (1st HGZ) via Mi-8 transport helicopters to positions southeast of Obrovac to reinforce the reserve formations in this sector; together with MUP Special Police forces, the 1st HGZ pressed the SVK back and took Otric.⁵⁹² Markac's men also pushed north, through Bruvno, toward Lapac, linking up to the 9th Guards Brigade and 154th Home Defense Regiment as they marched into Udbina.⁵⁹³ HV and ARBiH troops also linked up in Korenica, and the HV eliminated the remaining 15th Corps pockets at Bunic and Vrhovine.⁵⁹⁴ Resistance in the south was nearing an end.

After the linkup between 1st Guards Brigade and the ARBiH 502nd Mountain Brigade on 5 August, the two formations were directed to press north toward Slunj the next day, hitting the KSJ and the 21st Kordun Corps in the flank⁵⁹⁵ while two Home Defense regiments made a simultaneous frontal attack toward the town.⁵⁹⁶ The SVK 13th Infantry Brigade, apparently joined with elements of the KSJ, was forced back under this onslaught toward the 21st Corps headquarters in Vojnic, and HV troops entered Slunj.⁵⁹⁷ The corps, however, held out around Vojnic and Karlovac, covering for the thousands of Serb refugees from the Slunj-Plaski region fleeing east toward the town of Topusko in Banija/Banovina.

To the east, HV Zagreb Corps District forces took control of Petrinja early on 6 August after the SVK 39th Corps withdrew its remaining troops during the night.⁵⁹⁸ With the capture of the town, the 2nd Guards Brigade, supported by Home Defense formations, pushed on toward the vital road junction of Glina.⁵⁹⁹ At the same time, HV units closed in on Kostajnica,

capturing the town and then pressing on toward the last crossing point into Bosnia at Dvor. An attempt by Mrksic to shift the KSJ's 2nd Armored Brigade to the Glina area and counterattack did not succeed.⁶⁰⁰ Late in the evening, the 2nd Guards entered Glina, driving the SVK before them.⁶⁰¹ With 39th Corps defenses buckling, General Mile Novakovic—in overall command in the north—asked for a cease-fire to evacuate SVK soldiers from the 21st and 39th Corps along with Serb refugees. The cease-fire, however, would only last for the night, breaking down the next morning when the HV claimed that the Serbs had failed to turn over their heavy weapons as specified in the agreement.⁶⁰²

Day of Decision—7 August 1995

With HV and MUP forces consolidating their positions in the south, the key actions on this day came in the north.⁶⁰³ General Crnjac and the Karlovac Corps District—led by the 1st Guards Brigade—mounted a concentric attack on the SVK 21st Corps forces around Vojnic.⁶⁰⁴ By this point, the corps, apparently now led by its former commander Colonel Cedo Bulat, appears to have already begun to withdraw eastward in an attempt to escape capture.⁶⁰⁵ Directed by General Novakovic, elements of the corps plus parts of the 39th appear to have withdrawn toward Dvor during the so-called “cease-fire” earlier in the day; Bulat was trying to move out the rest of the corps before the 39th Corps completely collapsed.⁶⁰⁶ This effort was futile, however, when the ARBiH 505th and 511th Mountain Brigades finally overwhelmed the SVK 33rd Infantry Brigade, cutting the Serb escape route to Dvor, and then linking up to the approaching HV 2nd Guards Brigade.⁶⁰⁷ HV formations approaching from Kostajnica occupied Dvor itself later in the day after SVK rear guards were pushed across the river. Bulat, most of two infantry brigades, possibly remnants of the Corps of Special Units—some 3,000 to 6,000 troops—and tens of thousands of civilians were now cut off around the town of Topusko.⁶⁰⁸

Meanwhile, General Dudakovic and the ARBiH 5th Corps were settling accounts with Fikret Abdic and the completely bewildered APWB forces around Velika Kladusa. With the 502nd Brigade attacking from the west in Croatia and the rest of the corps launching a frontal assault from the south, Abdic's army—by now deprived of its SVK troops and advisers—disintegrated. The victorious 5th Corps marched into Velika Kladusa.⁶⁰⁹ General Dudakovic was rewarded with a promotion to two-star general.⁶¹⁰

Mopping Up—8 August 1995

A triumphant Croatian Defense Minister Gojko Susak had pronounced the operation complete as of 1800 on 7 August. There remained, however, a few pockets of resistance for the HV to stamp out the next day. In the south the Gospic and Split Corps District's coordinated a drive against the last major SVK pocket around Donji Lapac-Srb, unleashing three Guards Brigades, the 1st HGZ, and the MUP Special Police. By this time the SVK remnants and civilians still in the area were in the process of withdrawing, and the HV attack merely sped them along. The action was complete by 2000 hours.⁶¹¹

The most dramatic moment of the day came in the north when Bulat surrendered his forces to veteran HV Main Staff officer General Petar Stipetic—an old friend of his from JNA days. The 21st Corps's heavy weapons, including a battalion of tanks and a 130-mm field gun battalion, were turned over to the Croatians.⁶¹² The defeated soldiers and as many as 20,000 refugees escorted by the UN were allowed to depart Croatia, driving overloaded cars, buses, trucks, and tractors along a tortuous route that ran through western and eastern Slavonia to the Federal Yugoslav border. The Republika Srpska Krajina had ceased to exist, with only one fragment of Croatian territory in eastern Slavonia remaining under Serb control.⁶¹³

Evaluation of “Oluja”

Legends and myths about the Croatians' defeat of the Krajina Serb Army began almost as soon as the RSK had been destroyed by the lightning operation. Many

have claimed that former US military officers trained the Croatian Army or that NATO had backed the Croatian offensive. Another story was that Milosevic's purpose in sending General Mrksic to the RSK was to prepare a withdrawal of the Army and the population and that the SVK did not really fight but simply retreated as soon as the HV attacked. None of these stories are true, despite recent claims from a former SVK general that Belgrade sold out the RSK.

The HV's stunning victory rested on a combination of improvements made in its force structure and doctrine before the operation and the key penetrations of Serbian positions that the HV and the ARBiH 5th Corps were able to open and exploit during the operation itself and that unraveled the SVK's defense system.

The foundation for “Oluja” was the doctrinal and structural improvements made by the HV since 1993 (discussed in Section VI). These professional improvements enhanced the HV's ability to plan and organize an operation of impressive magnitude and complexity and to develop the capability to conduct high-tempo breakthrough operations that could quickly penetrate to the depths of the enemy's defenses. Without these improvements, the HV would not have been able to undertake “Oluja” in the way it unfolded.

Doctrine alone, however, did not win the war but had to be faithfully executed on the battlefield. The HV was not everywhere nor immediately successful in the attacks planned for “Oluja.” It was rather the HV's success in achieving breakthroughs in key sectors—enhanced by the disruption of the SVK command and control system—that undermined the SVK's defensive system as a whole and caused its collapse.

The first and most visible of the critical individual actions was the HV's long-term advance up the Dinara Mountains and the Livno Valley that gave it excellent jumpoff positions for a quick, direct strike at Knin, bypassing the main SVK defenses south of the town. The appearance of the HV forces in Operation “Ljeto-95” at Bosansko Grahovo effectively sealed Knin's

fate before “Oluja” got off the ground. Capped by the MUP’s breakthrough and rapid exploitation toward Gracac during “Oluja,” the HV’s tactical positions virtually assured the defeat of the SVK 7th Corps before much of its military power had been engaged by HV or MUP troops. An SVK Main Staff officer, Major General Milisav Sekulic, claims that the evacuation of the civilians from the 7th Corps area demoralized the defenders, although it was supposed to allow SVK troops to focus on fighting. This may be true, but the HV had adequate forces to overwhelm the few 7th Corps units north of Knin.

The defeat of the 15th Lika Corps was accomplished by the 9th Guards Brigade’s attack along a narrow axis that cut like a stiletto through the strong SVK resistance. The fast-moving assault of the ARBiH 5th Corps, launched in darkness, acted like a catalyst that increased the rapidity with which the SVK forces facing “Oluja-3” collapsed. The 5th Corps attack, compounding the 9th Guards Brigade’s breakthrough at Ljubovo, fragmented what had been a cohesive 15th Corps defense and left the Serb troops isolated in easily eliminated pockets.

Although part of “Oluja-3,” the 1st Guards Brigade’s successful advance toward Bihać was the clincher that finally allowed the Karlovac Corps District’s less well-endowed “Oluja-2” operation to dislodge its tough 21st Corps opponents from their positions. The Guards’ drive enabled the HV to roll up the 21st Corps’s flank so that it had to withdraw from its strong positions in front of Karlovac itself.

The loss of Petrinja and Glina defeated the 39th Corps, and the HV’s breakthrough at Petrinja after a stubborn SVK defense appears directly attributable to the intervention of ARBiH 5th Corps troops on 5 August: the ARBiH attack deprived General Tarbuk of reserves he could have fed into the Petrinja battle. Unaided by the ARBiH, in time the HV almost certainly would have broken through the SVK positions around the town on its own, but at considerably greater cost in time, effort, and manpower. The fall of Glina soon after and the severing of the Dvor road guaranteed that mopping up the disjointed SVK resistance would pose no problems.

The battlefield successes of the HV and the ARBiH were facilitated by SVK structural weaknesses—which, of course, the HV staff had calculated on exploiting. The SVK’s biggest problem was not that its troops were unwilling or unprepared to fight but that there were not enough of them—a problem recognized when General Mrksic was brought in to reallocate defensive formations and establish a bigger and better mobile reserve force. The Krajina Serbs had fought well in the attack, in another country, during the Bihać battles; and during “Oluja” many SVK formations had been able to hold their ground against frontal attacks by stronger HV forces. The SVK Main Staff and its corps commanders did not have enough combat formations, however, to maintain the depth and mobility needed to contain an HV penetration. When the HV struck through SVK static defenses at Knin, the SVK 7th Corps commander had no units in reserve to resist and prevent its capture. The only unit left uncommitted had been cobbled together from bits and pieces stripped out of the corps’ line brigades. Lack of reserves to cushion a flank attack forced the evacuation of the well-defended area south of Karlovac, and Petrinja’s stout defenses yielded when the reserves it counted on were committed elsewhere. All the corps sectors faced the same difficulties and suffered the same fate. Mrksic’s ill-fated Corps of Special Units was supposed to offset the lack of corps reserves. Although its elite troops had fought well against the 5th Corps during the attack on Bihać, the KSJ in “Oluja” failed to fulfill its primary mission as a roving reserve force and was able to delay the HV 1st Guards Brigade for no more than a day during its drive south of Slunj.

With no reserves to call on to plug holes or outflank enemy attack, the SVK’s static infantry brigades were unable to counter the HV’s high-tempo operations and, in particular, were unable to stop the HV Guards. Attacks by HV Home Defense and reserve formations, which had far less training, less discipline, and lower motivation than the Guards units, were repelled almost routinely by the SVK, and it probably could have contained an HV offensive employing only those types of formations.

The problem in 1995 was that the SVK Main Staff had traditionally counted on the Bosnian Serb and Yugoslav armies to act as its strategic reserve, and against “Oluja” these reserves were not available. The VRS was still more than willing to fulfill this role, but the VRS Main Staff itself was short of the reserve formations it needed to contend with ARBiH attacks across Bosnia. When “Oluja” hit, the battlefield situation in Bosnia made it impossible for the Bosnian Serbs to contribute anything more than a few counterattacks around Grahovo and Bihac. Difficulties in allocating reserve formations were exacerbated by the unusually sluggish performance of the VRS Main Staff throughout the HV’s Dinara-Livno Valley operations, when it appeared to have underestimated the HV’s capabilities. This was exacerbated by the decision to attack Bihac in July rather than conduct a joint SVK-VRS operation against the HV south of Grahovo. The VRS then reacted too late to the capture of Bosansko Grahovo and committed too few reserves to the defense of the area. “Oluja” was a wake-up call for the VRS, but it came too late to help save the SVK.

The Yugoslav Army gave no direct help to the Croatian Serbs because President Milosevic did not order it to. SVK General Sekulic in fact claims that Milosevic sold out the RSK and intentionally forced decisions that he knew would lead to its fall. He cites the decision to attack Bihac, the RSK Supreme Defense Council’s order to evacuate civilians from the Knin area, and President Karadzic’s attempt to remove Mladic. However, while these may have been mistaken decisions, it does not follow that these were decisions calculated to give away the RSK, especially since there were good arguments for most of them. Other parts of his claim do not make sense—only Knin was ordered to evacuate, not Sector North, and Mladic was Milosevic’s man in Bosnia, not Karadzic.

The VJ—with Milosevic’s concurrence—was already supplying equipment to the SVK and providing it with officers and NCOs to stiffen its units, along with some special operations units. Sending VJ units openly across the borders in support of the SVK was apparently more than Milosevic was willing to do to save the RSK. Even if he had been willing, the rapidity with which the HV struck and enveloped the RSK left very little time for the VJ to send adequate forces to

the region. “Oluja” did cause the VJ to mobilize and deploy large numbers of armor, artillery, and infantry to the border with eastern Slavonia as a warning to Zagreb, but it would have taken a major VJ-supported offensive out of the RSK enclave to actually deter or slow down the HV offensive. Milosevic’s failure to order in the VJ has been taken as a sign—not just by General Sekulic—that Milosevic was indifferent or at least callous about the RSK’s fate. That there is a certain amount of truth to this does not, however, imply that Milosevic wanted to see the RSK fall. He had committed his personal prestige and a lot of Yugoslav resources to propping up the RSK, and he had been sending VJ officers and equipment to help defend the Krajina Serbs since 1992. There was a line beyond which he was not willing to go, however, if by crossing it, Yugoslavia incurred prolonged or increased Western sanctions or high military costs. With Western governments and their people increasingly focused on what was happening in places like Srebrenica and Bihac, Milosevic had finally come to that line.

Strategic Shift: The Impact of “Oluja” in Bosnia

The sudden defeat and disappearance of the RSK had a profound impact on the VRS leadership’s thinking and crystallized their belief that a political-military settlement had to be negotiated as soon as possible.^{*} The military capabilities demonstrated by the Croatian Army impressed on General Mladic and the Main Staff the realization that the military balance in Bosnia could be radically altered if Zagreb shifted the focus of HV actions from the defunct RSK to Republika Srpska. They and President Milosevic began to put unrelenting pressure on Radovan Karadzic to let Milosevic head a negotiating team that could bargain for a secure Serb position in an overall Bosnian peace settlement.

The Croatians and Bosnians were way ahead of them. Zagreb and Sarajevo had agreed on and were planning

^{*} For a deeper discussion, see Chapter 73, “The Red Generals Refuse to Bow: Political-Military Relations and the Strategic Debate in Republika Srpska, 1995” and Chapter 94, “Evaluation—The Cease-Fire Agreement and the Final Offensives.”

exactly the kind of war-ending offensives in western Bosnia that had aroused Mladic's imagination and concern. Zagreb's goals in undertaking a full-scale military intervention were to create a buffer zone astride its border with Bosnia and to establish itself as the dominant regional power through a full demonstration of its military might. A new Bosnian balance of power with a weakened Republika Srpska, countered by the Bosnian Army and an HV/HVO alliance, would be very much in Zagreb's interests. Forcing an end to the Bosnian war would also gain Croatia points in the West. If the Serbs refused to negotiate, the HV could take western Bosnia and form a protectorate of their own, leaving a portion of the area to the Muslims. The Bosnian Government welcomed the prospect of Croatian military support and was actively cooperating with Zagreb, but it wanted to go even further. If it could completely defeat the VRS and take all of western Bosnia for itself, it might then reestablish a unitary state that would allow the return of the Muslims expelled from the area earlier in the conflict. For a time, however, Zagreb and Sarajevo's planning for their military operations was overshadowed by the military intervention of yet another actor—NATO.

Chapter 90 “Deliberate Force”—NATO Airpower Over Bosnia, 30 August–20 September 1995

After almost three years of incremental involvement, NATO brought the full weight of its airpower into play in the last days of August 1995. It had taken this long because, among other factors, the political consensus necessary for strong retaliatory air actions could not be assembled from among all the NATO Allies. The vulnerabilities of UN peacekeepers on the ground to retaliatory Serb hostage taking had been all too clearly demonstrated after the NATO attacks of 1994 and early 1995. Finally, effective action was inhibited by the cumbersome “dual-key” arrangement for airstrike authorizations, which required the approval of both the UNPROFOR military leadership and the UN’s civilian Special Envoy, Yasushi Akashi.

All three of these factors changed after the searing shambles of Srebrenica exposed the need for stronger counters to what had become a pattern of calculated Serb aggression and outrageous behavior. Evidence was rapidly mounting that Serb actions at Srebrenica

had gone far beyond the accepted norms of military and political exigency during and after the battle. These revelations piled atop the past record of abuses removed any ambivalence about the need for a strong stance against the Serbs, even by those NATO members such as Greece who may have been traditionally sympathetic to Serb interests and positions. The UN was withdrawing personnel from Serb-held territory, and the evacuation of UN peacekeepers from the remaining safe areas and outposts would remove the Serbs’ hostage-taking weapon, freeing NATO planners for more comprehensive strike options. On 26 July the much-vilified, civil-military dual-key arrangement was abandoned, giving UNPROFOR commander Lt. Gen. Bernard Janvier individual authority to authorize NATO airstrikes to counter or retaliate for actions against peace and security in Bosnia.

The UN’s experiences in trying to defend its safe area at Srebrenica had paved the way for decisive NATO action, but it was a sharper, shorter incident that finally triggered it: the Sarajevo “marketplace massacre” of 28 August 1995, which was almost identical to the previous February 1994 “Markale marketplace massacre” that had evoked NATO’s first explicit threat of aerial retaliation. Thirty-seven civilians died, and nearly 100 more were injured in the latest shelling (only 100 yards from the 1994 one). Chilling televised and printed pictures of the maimed and the mourning raced around the globe, evoking cries of outrage and calls for action. UN investigators concluded almost immediately that the Bosnian Serbs had been responsible “beyond reasonable doubt,” and plans for retaliation were under way within 24 hours of the mortar bomb’s explosion.⁶¹⁴

The first thing to be done was to remove the threat of hostage taking that had bedeviled the last instance of NATO air action at Pale. On 29 August, the day after the Sarajevo shelling incident, UNPROFOR began quietly pulling its peacekeepers out of the encircled Gorazde enclave and directed UN troops elsewhere to move to more defensible positions. NATO’s Allied Forces South (AFSOUTH) commander Admiral

Leighton Smith and UNPROFOR commander Janvier quickly finished drawing up an initial bombing folder of 10 Serb targets. The day after that the hammer began to fall as NATO undertook its largest combat mission since the alliance's foundation in 1949.

The NATO air campaign—codenamed “Deliberate Force”—commenced during the early morning hours of 30 August. It began with a subelement of the overall attack plan—codenamed “Dead Eye”—which consisted of land- and carrier-based strikes against the Bosnian Serb Integrated Air Defense System (IADS).⁶¹⁵ A variety of aircraft mounting electronic warfare, radar-jamming, and specialized strike capabilities attacked 16 Bosnian Serb radar sites, command posts, communications relays, and surface-to-air-missile (SAM) sites.⁶¹⁶ After these aircraft had opened the way (though they had not entirely eliminated the threat), the regular bombing strike missions followed. These consisted of “strike packages” of roughly two dozen planes each and were directed at Bosnian Serb ground targets in eastern Bosnia such as ammunition dumps and command posts. By the end of the first day, more than 300 sorties had struck some 90 separate aiming points at 23 major targets.⁶¹⁷

NATO suffered its only aircraft loss of the Deliberate Force operation on the first day when a low-flying French Air Force Mirage 2000 was downed by a shoulder-fired SAM while bombing Pale.⁶¹⁸ The two pilots ejected safely and were taken captive almost immediately by VRS soldiers while NATO mounted three search-and-rescue operations in a vain attempt to find them. (The French pilots were released after the signing of the Dayton Agreement.)

While NATO aircrews were striking VRS targets primarily in the Sarajevo area, UNPROFOR called its own Rapid Reaction Force (RRF) into play for the first time. French, British, and Dutch artillery on Mount Igman directed fire against Bosnian Serb heavy weapons positions within the Sarajevo exclusion zone. On the first day of the Operation Deliberate Force, RRF artillery fired more than 1,000 rounds and reportedly destroyed 23 of the roughly 300 Bosnian Serb weapons positions around Sarajevo. The RRF gunners were supported by Tactical Air Control Parties (TACPs) of trained observers, who assisted

with precision artillery targeting and helped sort the results from the ongoing air operations.⁶¹⁹⁶²⁰

If NATO’s demonstration of violent force and resolve made any impression on the Bosnian Serb Army commander, General Mladic, it did not show. There was no sign that the VRS was withdrawing its weapons from the Sarajevo heavy weapons exclusion zone or that it had any intention of doing so. A second wave of strikes, directed primarily against ammunition dumps around the capital, followed the next day. The operation then continued into its third day until a little past noon on 1 September,⁶²¹ after which NATO announced it was unilaterally suspending the operation to see if the Bosnian Serbs were ready to withdraw their weapons from around the city as the UN had demanded.⁶²²

The UN’s gesture proved to be in vain, for the Bosnian Serbs defiantly rejected NATO’s terms in public broadcasts. At 1600 that day, therefore, French RRF artillery was called upon to fire 24 155-mm shells at a VRS mortar position near Vogosca that UN observers believed was preparing to open fire. Less than an hour later, British RRF guns fired almost 100 105-mm shells at a VRS SA-6 SAM site that had earlier fired at a NATO plane near Lukavica barracks in south Sarajevo.⁶²³⁶²⁴⁶²⁵ UNPROFOR commander General Janvier then endured a long meeting with General Mladic in the town of Zvornik to discuss the NATO ultimatum, but Mladic again refused to accept the UN’s terms.⁶²⁶⁶²⁷ The Serbs punctuated their defiance on 2 September by firing a small shell (or possibly a rifle grenade) into the Sarajevo neighborhood of Moj Milo, wounding seven residents.⁶²⁸

Now that it had assembled the means and the gumption to call Serb bluffs, the UN’s next action was the unilateral reopening of the “Blue Route,” the long-closed convoy route across Sarajevo airport and into the city. Serb threats had shut down this lifeline and the airlift almost half a year earlier and put a stranglehold on the city. This time the UN truck drivers simply drove past the roadblocks, daring the Serbs to challenge them. The first overland convoy since March passed through unharmed on 3 September, raising the prospect that the siege might finally be lifted.⁶²⁹ The saga of Sarajevo was not yet over.

The bombing pause by now had lasted longer than the original attack, and it appeared that the Bosnian Serbs were not doing anything to comply with the UN demands. Mladic had agreed to withdraw his heavy weapons from around the city only if the UN agreed to a set of conditions that included a Bosnia-wide cease-fire (which would have locked in Serb territorial gains) as well as a reopening of the UN investigation into the mortar attack that had precipitated its ultimatum.⁶³⁰ NATO issued a warning that the air campaign would resume unless the Serbs accepted the UN's original terms by 2300 on 4 September.⁶³¹ Mladic responded by proclaiming a unilateral cease-fire around the city and moving two dozen of his estimated 300 heavy weapons out of the exclusion zone.⁶³²⁶³³ The UN called this an unacceptable response and let it be assumed that the bombing would resume shortly.

Perhaps to test the recalcitrance of its opponent, NATO waited until 1300 on 5 September before the aerial attacks began again.⁶³⁴ RRF artillery also went back into action against VRS positions within range of the UN guns on Mt. Igman.⁶³⁵ The Bosnian Serbs expressed their disdain and defiance with several shells fired into the city that evening, including one that detonated near UNPROFOR's Zetra base in northern Sarajevo.⁶³⁶ The contest of wills continued.

NATO had nearly exhausted its list of Serb targets in the Sarajevo area, so the air campaign expanded to hit a greater number and range of targets all across the Republika Srpska. Targets in western Bosnia—previously off limits—were added to the strike list, which included ammunition depots, army garrisons, highway bridges, and other military facilities. New weapons were also introduced into the air campaign on 9 September, when US Navy and Air Force planes attacked Bosnian Serb air defense sites with standoff land attack missiles (SLAMs) and 2,000-pound glide bombs. The following day the cruiser USS Normandy fired a volley of 13 Tomahawk land attack missiles (TLAMs) against two Bosnian Serb air defense targets near Banja Luka.⁶³⁷ Possibly in response, Bosnian Serb artillery targeted Nordic UNPROFOR troops near Tuzla on 10 September. The Nordic peacekeepers immediately requested Close Air Support, and US carrier-based aircraft responded with bombing attacks that silenced the offending Serb guns.⁶³⁸

NATO air operations continued at a high operational tempo—as many as seven strike packages a day—through 13 September, when a spell of bad weather cut down on flight operations, and planners began worrying that they would soon run out of targets. Fortunately, before these concerns could become problems, the Bosnian Serbs decided they had had enough and acceded to the UN requirements for the Sarajevo Total Exclusion Zone. On 15 September a French cargo aircraft landed at Sarajevo airport like a symbolic dove of peace to reopen the airbridge after a six-month standdown. On 20 September, after reviewing the actions the Bosnian Serbs had taken to comply with UN requirements, the UN and NATO formally declared that “resumption of airstrikes is currently not necessary.”⁶³⁹

Chapter 91 Operation “Maestral” and Operation “Sana 95”—Decision in Western Bosnia

Campaign Planning and Order of Battle

While NATO cranked up and flew its air campaign to bring the Bosnian Serbs to heel, the HV/HVO and the Bosnian Army were collaborating on plans for their own forthcoming ground campaign against the VRS.⁶⁴⁰ Other than its defiant standoff against NATO around Sarajevo, the VRS in western Bosnia had been relatively quiet since the end of “Oluja.” The exception occurred the night of 11-12 August when the 2nd Krajina Corps hit HV reserve infantry units around Bosansko Grahovo with a strong attack that broke through one brigade and carried VRS troops into the outskirts of the town. Two HV Guards battalions, however, quickly counterattacked and drove the VRS back out of town.⁶⁴¹ The rest of the month saw regular clashes along the frontlines near Bihać, south of Drvar, and north of Glamoc. These appeared to be probing actions as all three sides spent most of the time reorganizing their forces in preparation for operations in western Bosnia that would coalesce into the decisive campaign of the war.

The main part of the joint campaign was to be undertaken by HV/HVO forces in Operation "Maestral" (Breeze). By seizing the towns of Jajce, Sipovo, and Drvar, the operation would roll up large swathes of territory on the approaches to the Sana and Vrbas River valleys. The capture of these areas would also place Banja Luka in jeopardy, though not in imminent danger.

General Gotovina, the commander of the HV Split Corps District, was placed in overall command of what the HV/HVO officially designated the "Croatian Forces." The attack plan devised by Gotovina and his staff consisted of three phases, the first two of which focused on the Jajce-Sipovo axis. In the opening assault the joint HV/HVO Operational Group "North" would fight its way through the VRS frontline defenses along a string of mountains northeast of Glamoc, especially the Mliniste pass and the 1,900-meter Vitorog heights that dominated it. After breaking into and through these defenses, OG "North" troops would exploit their breakthrough by advancing rapidly toward Sipovo and Jajce.⁶⁴² Gotovina acknowledged the magnitude and importance of this aspect of the operation by assigning to OG "North" all of the elite shock units available, including the 4th and 7th Guards Brigades, the 1st Croatian Guards Brigade (1st HGZ), all three HVO Guards brigades, and other special units totaling 11,000 troops.⁶⁴³ Supporting the main effort during phase one and two, five HV Home Defense regiments and three reserve infantry brigades deployed southeast and southwest of Drvar were to conduct holding attacks against VRS 2nd Krajina Corps troops in these areas. Although these forces—organized into OG "West" and OG "South"—were to gain ground as possible on the approaches to Drvar, the actual capture of the town would be the object of the third phase, after the fall of Sipovo and Jajce.⁶⁴⁴

The role of the ARBiH would be a broad flanking advance on both sides of the HV/HVO attack by the 5th and 7th Corps. The entire 15,000-man 5th Corps, led by General Dudakovic, had the primary ARBiH mission, designated "Sana 95," of driving toward Prijedor and seizing the towns of Bosanska Krupa, Bosanski Petrovac, Kljuc, and Sanski Most on the way.⁶⁴⁵ General Dudakovic grouped his eight brigades into two operational groups. The first, comprising four brigades, was to drive on the Bosanski Petrovac-Kljuc axis.⁶⁴⁶ After seizing Kljuc, the group would split into

two with one part of the force heading toward Mrkonjic Grad and the other toward Sanski Most. The second group, with the other four brigades, was to attack on the Krupa-Bosanski Novi-Prijedor axis.⁶⁴⁷ Brigadier General Mehmed Alagic's 7th Corps was to take Donji Vakuf, which had resisted repeated ARBiH assaults since 1994, then push on in the general direction of Banja Luka, passing through Skender Vakuf and Kotor Varos. If possible, the 5th and 7th Corps were to link up near Mrkonjic Grad. Although Col. Senad Dautovic's reinforced 77th Division would spearhead the 7th Corps drive on Donji Vakuf, virtually all of Alagic's 12 combat brigades, comprising 20,000 men, were to be involved.⁶⁴⁸

Lieutenant Colonel General Manojlo Milovanovic—Chief of the VRS Main Staff—was in overall command of the VRS operations in western Bosnia, as he had been since late 1994; his headquarters was located in Drvar. Major General Tomanic's long-suffering 2nd Krajina Corps would again bear the brunt of the HV/HVO/ARBiH operations, together with Major General Momir Zec's 30th Infantry Division/1st Krajina Corps. To absorb the HV/HVO attack, Tomanic and Zec had one motorized brigade and as many as six infantry or light infantry brigades in the frontline plus one in reserve, but only three of these formations, including the reserve brigade—some 5,000 to 6,000 troops—were arrayed along the main Sipovo-Jajce axis.⁶⁴⁹ Opposite the ARBiH 5th Corps, Tomanic had six infantry or light infantry brigades with about 8,000 troops on the Grabez plateau or at Bosanska Krupa and Otoka.⁶⁵⁰ Against the 7th Corps, General Zec deployed a strong force, with more than 8,500 troops in five infantry and light infantry brigades.⁶⁵¹ Overall, the force dispositions selected by the VRS in this theater were flawed, with the bulk of the force apparently deployed opposite the 5th and 7th Corps instead of the far more powerful HV/HVO.⁶⁵²

"Maestral" Breaks the VRS Line, 8-15 September 1995

The HV/HVO assault began on the morning of 8 September, despite heavy fog that hindered artillery fire control.⁶⁵³ Two HV Guards Brigades led the attack, the 7th Guards attacking toward Mliniste while the 4th

Guards to the right pushed against the 1,500-meter Jastrebnjak feature. By 1000 they had broken through the VRS frontline positions, allowing the 1st HGZ to pass through the 4th Guards and seize its objective, the village of Pribelja, and then outflank the tough Vitorog defenses. As soon as Pribelja was taken, the HVO 60th Guards Battalion and Bosnian Croat Special Police were inserted to reinforce the 1st HGZ in tackling Vitorog. The 4th Guards made the largest advance that day, thrusting 5 kilometers into the defensive zone of the 3rd Serbian Brigade. The 7th Guards and the forces led by the 1st HGZ had gained far less ground. The supporting attacks of Groups "South" and "West" had made little headway against the VRS troops southeast and southwest of Drvar.

The next day's attack—9 September—proved to be the crucial one, despite continuing poor weather. HV/HVO forces seized most of the primary VRS defensive zone from the 3rd Serbian and 7th Motorized Brigades. The 7th Guards Brigade advanced some 8 kilometers, capturing the Mliniste pass, while the 1st HGZ and its accompanying units rolled up the Vitorog position.⁶⁵⁴ In the center, the 4th Guards completed the capture of the Jastrebnjak area. On 10 September, the Guards' advance was held to about 2 kilometers as the VRS threw in an armored battalion of M-84 tanks from the 1st Armored Brigade.⁶⁵⁵ Nevertheless, HV/HVO forces were rapidly reaching a position from which they could break out and roll the defenders toward Sipovo and Jajce. OGs "South" and "West," however, were still held up by a tenacious VRS defense around Drvar.

On the next day, 11 September, most of OG "North" rested and reorganized; the 4th and 7th Guards Brigades were withdrawn into reserve and replaced on the line by the 1st and 2nd HVO Guards Brigades. OG "North's" lineup now included the 3rd HVO Guards, 1st HVO Guards, 1st HGZ, and 2nd HVO Guards Brigade.⁶⁵⁶ A probing attack led by 2nd HVO Guards Brigade seized the important Demirovac hill and parts of the Kupres Valley on the route to Jajce. The main action of the day, however, was a concerted attempt by OGs "South" and "West" to capture Drvar.⁶⁵⁷ The 1st Drvar Light Infantry Brigade and the composite 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Drina Light Infantry Brigades quickly stymied the HV assault, heavily supported by artillery and rocket fire, including 262-mm "Orkans."⁶⁵⁸

The second phase of "Maestral"—the advance to Sipovo and Jajce—began on 12 September. As expected in the planning, the VRS forces—primarily the 7th Motorized Brigade—had been forced to pull back from their exposed positions near Vitorog to defend the Sipovo area. The rapid HV/HVO push, however, gave the Serbs little time to coordinate a positional defense, and they had to use their armor and artillery to slow the Croatian attack while they tried to consolidate their positions. During the day, OG "North" was able to break up the VRS defenses with strong artillery and multiple rocket launcher fire, supported by three Mi-24 helicopter gunship sorties. The reinforced 1st HVO Guards Brigade then broke into Sipovo, supported on the right by 1st HGZ.⁶⁵⁹ As the VRS crumpled around Sipovo, the 2nd HVO Guards Brigade began its dash toward Jajce as planned, reaching positions some 10 kilometers directly south of the town by the end of the day.⁶⁶⁰ On 13 September, Jajce—the jewel of the operation—was restored to Croat hands, avenging its loss to the VRS in 1992.⁶⁶¹ The VRS forces that had fallen back now concentrated on holding Mrkonjic Grad and brought up reinforcements from the 30th Division to consolidate the defenses around the town.⁶⁶²

The planners of "Maestral" had achieved their major purpose with the capture of Jajce, but, as anticipated, the weaker part of the operational force had been unable to seize the secondary target, Drvar, still held by the stubborn VRS 2nd Krajina Corps. To bolster phase three and complete the operation, General Gotovina assigned a reinforced battalion-sized battle group from the 7th Guards Brigade to put a new spearhead on OG "South."⁶⁶³ On 14 September he launched a general attack on the city by OG "South" and "West," with the 7th Guards troops coming from the southeast.⁶⁶⁴ As the HV closed in on its defenses from three directions and the ARBiH 5th Corps threatened the fourth with an advance on Bosanski Petrovac to the north, the VRS decided to call it quits and pulled out of the town. "Maestral" had netted the HV/HVO over 2,500 square kilometers of territory and penetrations in some places of up to 30 kilometers.

The 7th Corps Captures Donji Vakuf, 10-14 September 1995

The Bosnian Army's operations against Donji Vakuf had twice been beaten back, on 24 July^{665 666 667 668 669} and 12 August.^{670 671 672} In the second attack, an estimated 11,000 troops⁶⁷³ advanced several kilometers to take high ground on Mt. Komar and south of Donji Vakuf, only to lose most of these gains when the Serbs committed their precious infantry reserves to fierce counterattacks.^{674 675 676 677 678 679} Now, on 10 September, Brigadier General Mehmed Alagic's 7th Corps began yet another string of attacks around Donji Vakuf and in the Komar Mountains northwest of Travnik.^{680 681} Again it looked as if Major General Zec's 30th Division would be impossible to dislodge from its heavily fortified positions, which had frustrated the earlier ARBiH assaults. This time, however, the rapid HV/HVO advance on the left of the 7th Corps's determined drive added a new element to the equation, and General Zec at last had to give up Donji Vakuf and swing his right flank back toward Jajce on 13 September to avoid envelopment.^{682 683 684} As the VRS 30th Division pivoted on its brigade north of Muslim-held Mount Vlasic, the 7th Corps pressed its advance, flooding into the Mt. Komar area in the wake of the retreating VRS and advancing along the eastern bank of the Vrbas River.^{685 686 687 688 689 690} With the HVO's occupation of Jajce, however, most of the 7th Corps's front was pinched out and its envisioned linkage with the 5th Corps fronts blocked by the intervening HVO units. General Delic and the ARBiH General Staff decided that, rather than press 7th Corps operations on a limited front toward Kotor Varos, they would transfer most of its troops to western Bosnia via Bosnian Croat territory and reinforce the 5th Corps by that means.⁶⁹¹

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

While the HV/HVO were breaking through the VRS defenses around Sipovo, the 5th Corps was finishing its preparations for Operation "Sana 95." For reasons of his own, General Dudakovic appears to have held off the start of his operation until 13 September—five days after the HV/HVO push began.⁶⁹² Then he swung

his strong right arm, Operational Group "South," with the 502nd Mountain Brigade forming its fist and recently captured Serb armor and field guns adding muscle to HV artillery support. VRS 2nd Krajina Corps defenses cracked under the blow,⁶⁹³ breaking the four VRS brigades defending on the Gravez; Dudakovic's troops pushed rapidly south toward Bosanski Petrovac.⁶⁹⁴ A body of VRS men and equipment, with refugees clinging to its flanks and rear, recoiled along the main road to Petrovac. Kulen Vakuf—where the October ARBiH offensive of 1994 had made its high water mark—fell the next day, and the 502nd Brigade marched into Petrovac on 15 September.⁶⁹⁵ The 5th Corps then linked up to HV forces at the Ostrelj pass, some 12 kilometers southeast of Petrovac, on the route to Drvar.⁶⁹⁶ From Petrovac, the 501st and 510th Brigades took over the pursuit, driving on toward Kljuc, which they entered two days later.⁶⁹⁷ In five days the 5th Corps had advanced some 70 kilometers.

The 5th Corps advance so far was deep, not broad. Not until 15 September did OG "North" attack to widen its gains. This disjointed operation should have allowed General Tomanic's 2nd Krajina Corps to attack and cut off the southern salient, but there were no reserves to exploit the opportunity. Tomanic's two brigades around Krupa and Otoka were able to contain the "North" OG attack for two days, then yielded Krupa to the combined weight of the 5th Corps' 503rd, 505th, and 511th Brigades.⁶⁹⁸

With the capture of Bosanski Petrovac, Kljuc, and Bosanska Krupa, the 5th Corps was ready to shift the direction of its forces and conduct even deeper operations, supported by the forthcoming transfer of several 7th Corps brigades to the theater.⁶⁹⁹ After Petrovac fell, a new "Center" OG, comprising the 502nd, 505th, 506th, and 517th Brigades, was formed to begin the march on Sanski Most via the village of Sanica, driving before it the remnants of the VRS Drvar garrison—the 1st Drvar and 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Drina Brigades.⁷⁰⁰ The fall of Kljuc on 17 September enabled the 510th Brigade to join this push, driving up the western side of the Sana River. The rest of the

“North” OG moved on Bosanski Novi (Novigrad) and Sanski Most, pushing back the VRS 11th Krupa and 1st Novigrad Brigades and part of the Drvar forces.⁷⁰¹ The “South” OG, now comprising the 501st and the newly arrived 17th Krajina Mountain Brigade (from the 7th Corps), moved on Mrkonjic Grad, crossing the Sana River. The eventual objective of OGs “North” and “Center” was Prijedor; the strategic objective of the 5th Corps was Banja Luka.

Both OG “North” and “Center” were in for a big surprise as they reached positions near Sanski Most and Bosanski Novi on 18-19 September, for the VRS Main Staff had been shuffling some 14,000 troops from seven brigades or regiments to the Sanski Most area since 15 September, placing them under the command of Colonel Radmilo Zeljaja’s reactivated “Prijedor” Operational Group 10/1st Krajina.⁷⁰² Belgrade had contributed elements of the Serbian RDB Special Operations Unit (“Red Berets”) and Arkan’s Serbian Volunteer Guard (SDG)—about 2,000 troops—to the area to help round up VRS deserters and be ready to serve as shock troops in a VRS counteroffensive.⁷⁰³ The exhausted remnants of the 2nd Krajina Corps were allowed to regroup behind the new line.

The 5th Corps butted and reeled against this line over the next few days, taking some sharp knocks.⁷⁰⁴ In three days of hard fighting, 20-22 September, the VRS 5th Kozara and 6th Sanske Brigades swarmed over OG “Center” southeast of Sanski Most on the Sana River, almost capturing the command post of the 502nd Brigade at Zegar and nearly encircling the 510th Brigade at Hrustovo.⁷⁰⁵ The 5th Corps troops were pushed back some 6 kilometers. The 505th and 506th Brigades of OG “North” likewise fell back several kilometers, pummeled by the SDG and the VRS Main Staff’s elite bodyguard formation, the 65th Protection Regiment.⁷⁰⁶ The 503rd and 505th Brigades of OG “North” had more success, grinding forward against stiff resistance around Bosanski Novi and in the Majdan Mountains toward Ljubija and Prijedor.⁷⁰⁷

HV River Fiasco: Operation “Una 95,” 18-20 September 1995

The Croatian Army joined the developing fray on 18 September with Operation “Una 95.” The objective of the operation, executed by Major General Marijan Marekovic’s Zagreb Corps District, was to cross the Una River from Croatia and, before the ARBiH could get there, take Prijedor and then move on Banja Luka.⁷⁰⁸ The Zagreb government very likely feared that Bosnian Army forces were gaining too much territory in western Bosnia that could interfere with Croatian domination of the region. In particular, it probably wanted to ensure that the HV, not the ARBiH, controlled Banja Luka—the key to the area. This would explain why the HV did not favor or support the ARBiH attack on Mrkonjic Grad, because the capture of the town probably would have allowed the 5th and 7th Corps to link up and consolidate Sarajevo’s hold on western Bosnia.

The HV 1st and 2nd Guards Brigades were to spearhead “Una 95,” supported by the 17th Home Defense Regiment and elements of other Home Defense and reserve formations. The 1st Guards Brigade’s mission was to seize a bridgehead near Dvor while the 2nd Guards Brigade and the 17th Home Defense Regiment assaulted and captured a bridgehead at Bosanska Dubica. A supporting attack at Bosanska Kostajnica, led by a reconnaissance-sabotage company, would help pin down VRS forces.⁷⁰⁹ The Guards would then break out toward Prijedor, surprising the VRS “Prijedor” Operational Group from their rear. In the ensuing disruption, HV forces would be able to march down the main Prijedor-Banja Luka road.

The operation was probably premised as a surprise attack on ill-prepared troops, but from the beginning it was the HV that suffered the surprises. As the assault troops entered the river opposite the positions of the overaged reservists of the VRS 1st Novigrad and 11th Dubica Brigades, a storm of artillery, machinegun,

and rifle fire briefly turned the river red.⁷¹⁰ At Dvor, 1st Guards soldiers loaded in assault boats took grievous casualties when a dense mortar volley descended on them. Winnowed by such fire, the three HV assault formations nevertheless managed to take and hold small bridgeheads in their individual sectors. That was as far as they got.⁷¹¹ None of the three bridgeheads was positioned to support the others, and the VRS defenders kept them huddled in tiny landing perimeters. When the Zagreb Corps District tried to reinforce these toeholds into footholds the next day, strong river currents and constant heavy shelling deepened the initial disaster. An entire reconnaissance element of the 2nd Guards Brigade was wiped out in Dubica.⁷¹²

With their advance forces trapped and exposed, General Cervenko and the HV Main Staff wisely called off the operation. As the units pulled back under the zeroed-in guns of the Serbs, they may have suffered even heavier casualties than in their assault.⁷¹³ One estimate—by former Main Staff chief Bobetko—put the HV casualty toll at more than 70 killed in action and 250 wounded in the aborted two-day action.⁷¹⁴ The Croatian planners had underestimated the readiness of the VRS to fight, miscalculated the state of the Una River, and overestimated their ability to pull off a classically difficult military operation.⁷¹⁵

Chapter 92 The ARBiH Offensive Operations, September-October 1995

While the Croatian Army and its Croatian Defense Council allies were sweeping through the Croatian Krajina and parts of western Bosnia in a surprise offensive to recoup their losses in the Serb-Croat war and help end the Bosnian one, the Bosnian Army was sweeping up territory of its own. Less spectacular than the Croat gains, the ARBiH pressed forward on several fronts at once in the closing months of the war. Operation “Uragan” (Hurricane), in particular, was planned to retake the long-contested “Ozren salient” once and for all.

“Hurricane” in North Bosnia: The ARBiH Ozren Mountains Offensive, 10 September–16 October 1995

From the earliest days of the war the “Ozren salient” had extended a long, Serb-held finger of territory stretching southeast of Doboj. Over 40 kilometers from Doboj at its furthest point, and about 25 kilometers across at its widest in the middle, the salient totaled about 500 square kilometers in area. Although sparsely populated, the salient was fiercely defended by Lieutenant Colonel Novak Djukic’s VRS “Ozren” Tactical Group 6 of “Doboj” Operational Group 9.⁷¹⁶ The “Ozren” TG normally comprised five to six light infantry brigades, supported by elements of the “Doboj” OG’s 2nd Armored Brigade.⁷¹⁷ Most of these VRS troops were defending their home territory, and their intimate knowledge of the rugged, hilly terrain gave them a significant tactical advantage. If their strategic position looked precarious on a map, on the ground the Serbs had managed to maintain the borders of the thick-knuckled finger almost unchanged since the start of the war.

Running through the salient was a vital stretch of the road that the UN had designated Route “Duck.” Both sides recognized that, if the ARBiH could capture the few Serb-held kilometers of Route “Duck,” it would regain control of the major east-west highway in that part of the dismembered republic. Fingers and islands of territory held by Serbs or Croats between Tuzla and Zenica had forced the government to devise a long and circuitous route to move men and equipment between east-central and west-central Bosnia and had made shifts of units of men and equipment between east-central and west-central Bosnia ponderous and impractical. The capture and utilization of Route “Duck” would allow the ARBiH to link up Brigadier Sead Delic’s Tuzla-based 2nd Corps and Brigadier Sakib Mahmujin’s Zenica-based 3rd Corps, move troops and supplies from one side of central Bosnia to the other, and fully exploit the interior lines of communication it should have enjoyed from the outset of

the war. Another strategic advantage of reducing the perimeter of the salient—by 20 kilometers or more—would be the freeing up of two brigades' worth of Muslim soldiers for operations elsewhere.⁷¹⁸

The most bitterly contested point along the Ozren salient's perimeter was the finger's extreme southern-most point, near the Serb-held town of Vozuca, a way station on Route Duck. Sporadic but intense battles had been fought for the Vozuca-Ribnica area since the beginning of the war, most notably and recently in the ARBiH's big offensive of June-July 1994. The 1994 attack had made great gains into Serb-held territory, but virtually all of them had been lost when the inexperienced ARBiH units overextended their advance and left themselves vulnerable to a decisive Serb counterattack that pushed them back to their start line.

May-June 1995: The First Attempt

On 26 May 1995, the Bosnian Army had launched a weighty two-pronged assault against the southern portion of the Ozren salient. Only the day before a Serb shell had exploded in an outdoor cafe in Tuzla and killed more than 70 civilians. The ensuing ARBiH attack may have been directed at the area the Serb shell came from, as the Bosnian Government maintained at the time.⁷¹⁹ The scale and promptness of the operation suggests it had been planned long beforehand, however. Or possibly Sarajevo expanded an initially modest plan of attack to take advantage of the crisis in relations between the Bosnian Serbs and UNPROFOR as NATO threatened retaliatory air-strikes and the Serbs responded by seizing some 400 international peacekeepers and observers as hostages.

In any case, the ARBiH's late May attack was intended to pinch off the end of the salient and gain control of Route Duck once and for all. The 2nd and 3rd Corps each contributed several brigades to the attack, supported by as much heavy weapons fire-power as could be concentrated.^{720 721 722} The heaviest initial attacks were by the ARBiH 2nd Corp 22nd Division and were reinforced with elements of the 25th Division on the eastern side of the Ozren salient, around the Serb-held town of Bosansko Petrovo Selo.^{723 724} On 29 May, the ARBiH 3rd Corps announced significant gains in its pincer movement against the western side, claiming to have forced the

VRS 1st Prnjavor Light Infantry Brigade off several key elevations, including the 726-meter height at Pod-sijelovo.^{725 726} The 2nd Corps swung its second punch the following day, mounting attacks against three Serb-held bridges across the Spreca river.⁷²⁷ UN observers filed optimistic assessments of the pincer attack's success as 2nd Corps forces drove west from Lukavac and the 3rd Corps pushed eastward from Zavidovici. The Bosnian Serbs acknowledged the seriousness of the situation later that day, with a public appeal for volunteers to help stop the Muslim advance.^{728 729}

For all of its initial promise, the May attack, like all its predecessors, fell well short of its objectives. The two government columns fought heroically to close the last 2 or 3 kilometers that would join them and maybe even surround the VRS 4th Ozren Light Infantry Brigade in Vozuca.⁷³⁰ The VRS's ability to rush reinforcements into the fray at critical moments saved them once again, however.⁷³¹ Counterattacks in the 1st Ozren Light Infantry Brigade's sector west of Lukavac stemmed the ARBiH's 22nd Division's advance, although the division retained a chunk of territory near the village of Milino Selo. More counterattacks reclaimed most of the ARBiH 35th Division's captured ground near Pod-sijelovo. Try as they might, the 2nd and 3rd Corps proved unable to connect in the face of increasingly stiff Serb resistance, and the offensive was halted around 4 June. When the lines finally stabilized, the Serbs remained firmly in control of Vozuca and a good-sized segment of the contested road. Even at its narrowest point near the base of the Ozren finger, the Serb-held territory still separated the centers of the 2nd and 3rd Corps by 10 kilometers or more.

The ARBiH returned to the attack in the Ozren region, on a smaller, more limited scale, on 21 July, when the "El Mujahid" Detachment, comprised of foreign Islamic volunteers, spearheaded Colonel Fadil Hasanagic's 35th Division of the ARBiH 3rd Corps as it gained some ground around Pod-sijelovo from the 1st Prnjavor Brigade.^{732 733} A follow-up attack southeast from Pod-sijelovo on 11 August was supported by simultaneous 2nd Corps attacks.⁷³⁴ Neither attack gained a great deal of ground, but they kept pressure on the VRS Ozren Tactical Group.

Operation “Uragan 95” Kicks Off: 10-14 September

The next strike into the Ozren was not by the ARBiH but by NATO, called in by the UN when its ultimatum to the Serbs besieging Sarajevo went unheeded. As the NATO “Deliberate Force” air campaign commenced on 30 August in response to VRS refusals to remove heavy weapons from the Sarajevo exclusion zone, one of the first targets struck was the Kraljica radio relay station atop Mt. Ozren.^{735 736 737} The communications relay station was important though not vital to VRS command and control in the area; its loss on the eve of the next ARBiH offensive in the area was certainly inconvenient. The tower’s sudden destruction could have affected the outcome of the campaign in other ways: it might have shaken the morale of the defenders but, equally, it might have diminished the importance of Mt. Ozren to the Serbs and made preservation of the surrounding salient less critical to them.

Although the Bosnian Government had pledged not to take advantage of the NATO airstrikes with attacks out of the UN-declared safe areas, the ARBiH’s final offensive in the Ozren mountains—codenamed Operation “Uragan 95” (“Hurricane”)—commenced on 10 September, concurrent with the NATO air campaign.⁷³⁸ Serb forces denounced the Bosnian offensive as evidence that NATO was in effect supporting the ARBiH. However, UN officials responded, a bit awkwardly, that since the Ozren offensive was not near any of the safe areas it fell outside of proscribed areas for Bosnian Army operations.^{739 740 741 742}

The 2nd Corps’ 22nd Division, spearheaded by the elite 9th Muslimski,⁷⁴³ 222nd,⁷⁴⁴ 211th,⁷⁴⁵ and 250th Liberation Brigades,⁷⁴⁶ drove east from the area of Pribitkovici, over 5 kilometers north of Vozuca but along the next major east-west road in the area. The 2nd and 4th Ozren Light Infantry Brigades’ frontline positions were quickly penetrated and the formations fell back with difficulty.⁷⁴⁷ With Pribitkovici taken on 10 September and the road thus open, the 22nd Division went on to take Seona and Lozna on the 11th, cutting halfway across the Ozren salient several kilometers north of Vozuca itself.⁷⁴⁸

Meanwhile to the west, the 3rd Corps’s 35th Division, led by the crack 7th Muslimski Liberation Brigade and the “El Mujahid” Detachment, hammered the VRS 1st Srbac Light Infantry Brigade east of Zavidovici on the Podsjelovo and Paljenik features. As the VRS lines also yielded, the 35th Division troops marched quickly southeast toward Vozuca.

The Bosnian Army offensive soon and at last brought visible, tangible success to the nation. On 11 September, a government television broadcast announced that the 2nd and 3rd Corps had successfully linked up, securing control over the road between Tuzla and Zenica and reducing the travel distance between the two cities by some 150 kilometers.⁷⁴⁹ Government newscasters stated that the two corps had linked up to the capture of Vozuca the previous day after 10 hours of fighting; they showed scenes of gleeful Bosnian troops patrolling among damaged and burning houses in the deserted town.⁷⁵⁰ The following day, the Bosnian Army announced further gains amounting to nearly the southern third of the Serb-held Ozren territory. A huge amount of equipment had been captured, including four tanks, four tank destroyers, a dozen artillery pieces, hundreds of rifles and machine-guns, and a virtual cornucopia of ammunition.^{751 752 753} UN Special Envoy Yasushi Akashi officially confirmed the Bosnian Army advances and the capture of Vozuca on 13 September.^{755 756} Hit once too often and caught without the elite reserves that had saved them in the past, the VRS Ozren Tactical Group made a virtue of necessity, pulling out of the extreme southern bulge of the salient to shorten its defensive line and better organize its defenses.^{757 758}

The Second Push: 15-22 September

By 15 September, Serb authorities were stating that thousands of Serb refugees had fled the Muslim advance in the Ozren region—an indication of the magnitude of losses both actual and anticipated. That same day the 3rd Corps renewed its push on the western side of the Ozren, still spearheaded by the elite troops of the 7th Muslimski Brigade⁷⁵⁹ and the 35th

Division. They pushed the VRS 3rd Ozren Light Infantry Brigade back from the Blizna-Kotlina-Karacic-Rjecica defensive line it had been holding.⁷⁶⁰ This eased Serb pressures elsewhere, and the long-surrounded ARBiH 37th Division was able to push out south and east from the Maglaj area. On 16 September the Maglaj-based 327th Mountain Brigade supported by elements of the Jelah-based 377th Mountain Brigade linked up to advance forces of the 35th Division moving north near the town of Krsno Polje. For the first time in four years beleaguered Maglaj had a road link to the rest of government-held Bosnia.⁷⁶¹ Resuming the one-two punches of the previous operation, the 2nd Corps swung at the eastern side of the Ozren salient.

The “Ozren” TG’s weakened defensive line was again ruptured on 18 September when detachments from the ARBiH 2nd and 3rd Corps broke out from two small bridgeheads they had held across the Bosna and Spreca rivers—lodgements located several kilometers behind the main Serb defensive line. Along the Spreca, Brigadier Osman Puskar’s 22nd Division⁷⁶² departed from the steady approach it had been making since the 15th, suddenly capturing Serb-held Sizje from the 1st Ozren Brigade after crushing the 2nd Ozren Brigade and leaving the 1st Ozren’s flank wide open.⁷⁶³ The division then advanced rapidly along the road network out of the town.⁷⁶⁴ To the west, Colonel Ekrem Alihodzic’s 37th Division mounted a major breakout effort from Maglaj itself, which advanced east to take several key peaks overlooking the besieged town from the 3rd Ozren Brigade.^{765 766} It looked as though the entire salient might eventually be eaten away and that the Serb stronghold of Doboj at the mouth of the salient might even come under threat.^{767 768 769 770 771 772 773}

On 19 September the UN confirmed that the ARBiH had made another successful push forward, advancing over two days to an east-west line running from Rjecice (slightly north of Maglaj) to just south of Krtova.⁷⁷⁴ Also on the 19th, the Bosnian Army’s 2nd Corps trumpeted the capture of the Cerovo Brdo peak and with it the notorious M-46 gun believed to have caused the massacre at the Tuzla outdoor cafe on 25 May.⁷⁷⁵ The Bosnian Army had now captured almost exactly half the original Serb-held area in the

Ozren and almost certainly entertained hopes of advancing the rest of the distance to Doboj.⁷⁷⁶

The fighting that had raged all across the rest of Bosnia had largely slowed to a halt. The HV and HVO had agreed to cease the joint offensive that had made huge Croatian inroads into western Bosnia, just as the VRS was succeeding in rallying its defense around Banja Luka. Brig. Gen. Atif Dudakovic’s ARBiH 5th Corps was slowing its own offensive in western Bosnia, although that battle was not yet over. In the Ozren, fighting if anything intensified, as the Bosnian Army sought to capture the remainder of the Ozren territory before the battlefield lines were frozen by a peace settlement or the Bosnian Serbs used the lull in fighting elsewhere to reinforce their Ozren defenses.⁷⁷⁷

Following the halt of the ARBiH attack on 19 September, the VRS “Ozren” TG had managed to regroup and stabilize its defensive line with three brigades—3rd, 2nd, and 1st Ozren Brigades—running from west to east, with a stiffening of elements of the elite Bosnian Serb MUP Special Police Brigade.⁷⁷⁸

The Advance Contained: 23-25 September

On 23 September, the ARBiH 22nd Division renewed its drive toward Doboj, smashing the VRS 2nd Ozren Brigade’s defenses near the village of Panjik, to the north of the Tumarsko Brdo ridge line. VRS personnel fled northward with their equipment, and ARBiH troops pushed to within 1,000 meters of an Orthodox monastery. To the east, however, troops of the VRS 1st Ozren Brigade stood firm despite the penetrations to its rear from the flank, and “Ozren” TG headquarters detailed ad hoc groups of officers and men scrounged together and exhorted them to hold the front just a little while longer. Their stand paid off with the arrival that night, 23-24 September, of Colonel Miko Skoric, commander of the VRS 2nd Armored Brigade, with a reconnaissance company and some armored units. Their counterattack drove ARBiH troops back from some of their gains, and

Skoric's men reclaimed a key hill. There ARBiH units renewed their attacks, and seesaw battles raged all around the elevation. Colonel Milovan Stankovic, the former commander of the "Ozren" TG, then arrived with elite VRS military police reinforcements on 24 September and finally stabilized the line, which MUP special police troops reinforced later in the day.⁷⁷⁹ These elite additions at last secured Doboj from the threat of further ARBiH advances.^{780 781 782}

The Last Drive Forward: 5-7 October

Heavy fighting continued, however, into early October, as the Bosnian Army snatched back one last piece of territory from the Serbs in an advance from 5 to 7 October. The ARBiH 35th Division/3rd Corps attacked 3rd Ozren Brigade positions northeast of Maglaj—a salient jutting south from the main VRS line—capturing some 50 additional square kilometers.^{783 784 785 786 787} The loss prompted the VRS 1st Krajina Corps to withdraw the veteran 16th Krajina Motorized Brigade from heavy fighting in western Bosnia to block any further ARBiH attacks in the Ozren.⁷⁸⁸ With the attacking forces exhausted after almost a month of battle and international pressure for a cease-fire and a peace settlement mounting, the ARBiH finally halted the Ozren campaign when the country-wide cease-fire took effect at midnight on October 11. The "Hurricane" had run its course.

Analysis: What Damage From the "Hurricane?"

Although the "Uragan" offensive failed to achieve all of its original objectives, it nevertheless has to be counted as a significant feat of arms and a battlefield success for the ARBiH. In total, some 280 square kilometers of territory were captured in a campaign lasting some 30 days. The material gains for the Bosnian Army were also substantial: during the course of the operation, the ARBiH captured four howitzers and 17 smaller artillery pieces, some 60 mortars of all types, 45 antiaircraft guns, dozens of trucks, and a large volume of other war materiel—enough weaponry to outfit an entire ARBiH infantry brigade.⁷⁸⁹

Moreover, although NATO air operations at the time partially disrupted the Serb defenses, the Ozren offensive has to be considered almost entirely a Bosnian Army success. Although Dudakovic's 5th Corps made much greater territorial gains at the same time, it has been argued that the 5th Corps successes were substantially aided by the concurrent and adjacent HV/HVO advances against the overtaxed VRS 1st and 2nd Krajina Corps stretched across western Bosnia. No HV or HVO forces assisted the Bosnian Army in the Ozren area, however, and the forces the 2nd and 3rd Corps battled in the Uragan offensive were essentially the same as those they had confronted in 1992, 1993, 1994, and earlier in 1995.

The ARBiH's ultimate victory derived from its improved operational skill (for example, avoiding the overstretch that had led to disaster the previous year), the inadequate number of VRS reserves, and probably the underlying decline in VRS morale. Put simply, "Uragan" was a very sizable operation, well executed. For instance, the simultaneous offensive undertaken on 15-18 September by two corps some 25 kilometers apart—albeit facilitated by an overstretched and demoralized Serb opponent—was an extremely difficult undertaking and represented the degree of advance the ARBiH had made in the realm of higher and more sophisticated corps-level, coordinated operations.

The ARBiH's new "divisional" force structure and accompanying changes in tactics also helped. In a retrospective commentary on the operation, Brigadier Sead Delic noted that 2nd Corps artillery pieces had been grouped offensively for the first time—a development made possible by the consolidation of heavy weapons into division-level reserves. He also pointed out that innovations like the special "pursuit detachments"—unique combined-arms formations composed of tanks, APCs, heavy weapons mounted on light armored vehicles, and elite mobile infantry units⁷⁹⁰—enabled the ARBiH to operate against the enemy's rear in a manner never before possible and afforded the 2nd Corps a new degree of offensive depth.⁷⁹¹

Perhaps most important, the ARBiH avoided repeating the costly mistakes it had made in mid-1994. Although the Bosnian Army stressed a high operational tempo during the operation and urged rapid advances where possible, this time ARBiH commanders were careful to restrain their units from making too bold advances that might carry them beyond their reinforcements or resupply and leave them vulnerable to Serb counterstrokes. Instead, the government advance as a whole proceeded slowly and deliberately. In that respect, the ARBiH offensive may have been more like a creeping flood than a fast-moving hurricane . . . but it got the job done without expending too much power too soon.

Not Dead Yet: The VRS Counteroffensive, 24 September–6 October 1995

Despite the pummeling it was taking all over the country, the VRS still displayed its abilities as a counter-puncher. In western Bosnia in particular, the Serbs made a determined drive to roll back Bosnian Army gains around Bosanski Novi and Kljuc. After the HV's Operation "Una 95" and the ARBiH 5th Corps attacks on Sanski Most had been contained and in some cases pushed back in the fighting of 18-22 September, the VRS moved quickly to strike at the 5th Corps forces moving toward Bosanski Novi and Prijedor-Ljubija. Moving on the night of 23-24 September, Arkan's SDG and the VRS's veteran 65th Protection Regiment, 16th Krajina Motorized Brigade, and the 43rd Motorized Brigade struck hard against 5th Corps's OG "North." General Mladic personally supervised the operation. In six days of fighting, the OG's four brigades were driven back as much as 15 kilometers in some places.⁷⁹² Then, with Bosanska Krupa and Otoka in sight, the VRS had to abruptly halt its attack as ARBiH gains around Mrkonjic Grad forced the VRS to shift reserves to this important sector.⁷⁹³

Beginning about 20 September, the 5th Corps's OG "South" had undertaken its drive on Mrkonjic Grad. With the 17th Krajina on the left and 501st Mountain on the right, ARBiH troops pushed back parts of the demoralized 17th Kljuc Brigade, together with scattered parts of other formations.⁷⁹⁴ In over a week of advances, the two ARBiH brigades pushed forward

some 17 kilometers, coming within 3 kilometers of Mrkonjic Grad and reaching the edge of the Manjaca Mountains, which protected Banja Luka from the south.⁷⁹⁵ By 1 October, VRS forces around Mrkonjic Grad were in a desperate situation.

Thus it was that the 16th Krajina Motorized Brigade and the SDG had to break off their successful counter-drive toward Bosanska Krupa and rush to newly threatened Banja Luka, coming under the command of Colonel Milenko Lazic's Operational Group 2/30th Division.⁷⁹⁶ To conduct the counterattack, two tactical groupings were created around Mrkonjic Grad. On the right, the 2nd Krajina Infantry and 16th Krajina Motorized Brigades were to drive west toward the Sana River northeast of Kljuc; while on the left, the Bosnian Serb Special Police Brigade, reinforced with the SDG (and probably Serbian RDB troops) pushed the 5th Corps away from Mrkonjic Grad. This group would then move on Kljuc itself. At least one armored battalion from the 1st Armored Brigade supported the attack.⁷⁹⁷ In addition, the reinforced 5th Kozara and 6th Sanske Infantry Brigades from "Prijedor" Operational Group 10 were to push south from the Sanski Most area toward Kljuc.⁷⁹⁸ The VRS hoped to crush OG "South" in the converging jaws. By 3 October, the VRS counterattack began to gain steam, driving back the 17th Krajina and the 501st, which had been reinforced with only one independent battalion. Additional 7th Corps reinforcements were on the way, but they were late in arriving.⁷⁹⁹ By 6 October, the VRS had pushed to within 1 kilometer of Kljuc from the east, having advanced some 17 kilometers in three days.⁸⁰⁰

With the town of Kljuc on the verge of capture, the VRS apparently felt able to withdraw the 16th Krajina Brigade to reinforce threatened VRS positions in the Ozren Mountains.⁸⁰¹ Just as the 16th Krajina departed, however, the ARBiH defenses stiffened with the arrival of the new 7th Corps formations.⁸⁰² VRS troops—now primarily "Prijedor" OG forces from the 5th and 6th Brigades—continued to press against the 5th/7th Corps line near Krasulje, gaining little ground in heavy fighting through 8-9 October.⁸⁰³ The tables,

however, were about to turn again. The Croatian Army was preparing to reenter the battle. It was again the Serbs' turn to be surprised.

Chapter 93

End Game—The Fall of Sanski Most and Mrkonjic Grad, October 1995

With Kljuc threatened, the Bosnian Army had again requested HV/HVO assistance. Zagreb agreed, since the capture of Mrkonjic Grad and a drive into the Manjaca Mountains—the objective for the HV/HVO operation—would give Zagreb a stranglehold over Banja Luka. With their forces poised to drive on the city, the Croatians would be in a position to ensure that the Serbs (the FRY and Republika Srpska) lived up to the tentative cease-fire agreement or to an eventual peace deal for Bosnia—or, even more important, for eastern Slavonia, the last Serb-controlled part of Croatia. If the Serbs refused to deal, Zagreb would take the city, conquering western Bosnia for itself and leaving Sarajevo with an enlarged Bihać pocket. In either case, Zagreb would further demonstrate and cement its role as the region's power broker.

The new HV/HVO operation, "Juzni Potez" (Southern Move), was scheduled to begin on 8 October.⁸⁰⁴ General Gotovina, using HVO Brigadier Zeljko Glasnovic's OG "East," again led the HV/HVO assault. The main shock forces came from the redoubtable 4th and 7th Guards Brigades and the 1st HGZ. The three HVO Guards brigades and other independent battalions and companies were in the second echelon, giving Gotovina 11,000 to 12,000 troops. During the first phase of the operation, the HV Guards formations were to seize Mrkonjic Grad itself, together with the adjoining Podrasnica Valley and the road junction of Cadjavica—an advance of about 12 kilometers. During the second phase, the HVO Guards formations would take over the advance, seizing the southern edge of the Manjaca Mountains and the important Bocac hydroelectric plant—the last major source of electricity for Banja Luka and Serb-held western Bosnia. The whole operation was scheduled to take four days.

VRS Colonel Milenko Lazic's Operational Group-2/30th Division had consolidated its defenses around Mrkonjic Grad after Operation "Maestral" in

September. The town was now defended by three brigades—the 7th Motorized, 3rd Serbian, and 11th Mrkonjic Light Infantry Brigades. The VRS force probably numbered about 5,500 troops. These formations had covered the rear of the VRS units undertaking the Kljuc counterattack, watching the HV/HVO.

The HV/HVO assault began on 8 October, with a diversionary attack by the HV 126th Home Defense Regiment and 1st HVO Guards Brigade against the VRS 11th Mrkonjic Brigade, some 15 to 20 kilometers west of Mrkonjic Grad.⁸⁰⁵ Gotovina hoped to mislead the VRS as to the direction and timing of the main attack. This came the next day, although the start was delayed for two hours by thick fog. A strong artillery-rocket bombardment was followed by Mi-24 helicopter gunship strikes on VRS positions. Despite this display of preparatory and supporting firepower, the opening HV/HVO attack encountered strong opposition. General Gotovina states that,

... the enemy offered strong resistance in all directions, through a well-organized and fortified defense, but also with strong, synchronized artillery fire.⁸⁰⁶

The 1st HGZ, 4th Guards, and 7th Guards Brigades weathered the onslaught to punch their way into the VRS defenses, although the 7th Guards in particular had difficulties against its VRS namesake, the 7th Motorized Brigade, southeast of Mrkonjic Grad.⁸⁰⁷ By the end of 9 October, the HV had moved forward about 5 kilometers, partially enveloping the town and giving the defenders no respite.

The next day, VRS defenses began to disintegrate under the professional pounding of the HV/HVO. Mrkonjic Grad fell after the 4th Guards Brigade apparently broke through the 3rd Serbian Brigade's defenses southwest of town. This outflanked the 7th Motorized Brigade's staunch defenders, and the VRS troops had to pull out.⁸⁰⁸ The 1st HGZ and 4th Guards occupied Podrasnica and Cadjavica as they moved on Manjaca. On the right, the 7th Guards and the newly inserted 2nd HVO Guards Brigade advanced toward Bocac.⁸⁰⁹

Chapter 94

Evaluation—The Cease-Fire Agreement and the Final Offensives

On 11 October, the HV units were withdrawn and the two remaining HVO Guards Brigades moved forward in their place. Although VRS artillery fire raked the attackers, the withdrawing VRS infantry and armor formations were disorganized, and the HVO troops were able reach their operation stop line along the southern edge of Manjaca—only 25 kilometers from Banja Luka.

Meanwhile, General Dudakovic had been planning a counterstrike of his own against troops of the VRS “Prijedor” Operational Group 10, which were still attempting to push south toward Kljuc. The addition of some 10,000 troops from the 7th Corps and other ARBiH commands greatly strengthened his ability to renew the drive on Sanski Most while still vigorously defending Kljuc.⁸¹⁰ With the arrival of these formations, Dudakovic regrouped his brigades, shifting OG “Center”—now reinforced with the ARBiH Guards Brigade and the 501st Brigade—to the left, while filling OG “South” with five 7th Corps brigades.⁸¹¹

On 9 October, Dudakovic attacked with OGs “Center” and “South.”⁸¹² The most important assault came in the middle under OG “Center,” where the 502nd and 510th Brigades faced their old nemeses from the Grabež plateau—the 15th Bihać and 17th Kljuc Brigades.⁸¹³ Again these VRS formations disintegrated under the 5th Corps blow, exposing the VRS formations on their flanks. Colonel Zeljaja’s troops had to fall back or face encirclement. The next day, 10 October, elements of the 43rd Motorized Brigade and the 11th Dubica Brigade tried and failed to halt the 5th Corps at the outskirts of Sanski Most, and the Bosnians seized the town.⁸¹⁴ Despite the national cease-fire agreement scheduled to go into effect on the morning of 12 October, it looked as if Dudakovic had the VRS on the run, and so he continued the offensive. OG “Center” suddenly took a sharp check, however, when the undaunted 43rd Motorized Brigade rallied northeast of Sanski Most.⁸¹⁵ Now the battles seesawed for most of a week, both sides continuing to jockey for position around Sanski Most without either being able to force significant changes in the frontline. The fighting faded to a fruitless finish on 20 October.⁸¹⁶

Operation “Oluja” and the final offensives in western Bosnia were the most important of the several military actions that brought an end to the Bosnian war.

“Oluja” was the key to the chain of military and diplomatic events that led to the final cease-fire in October. It was “Oluja” that suddenly forced on Mladić and the VRS the realization that the military balance had decisively shifted against the Serbs; a cease-fire and a peace agreement were all they had left to protect the existence of Republika Srpska.⁸¹⁷ First Mladić and Milošević had to force this same realization on Karadžić and the SDS leaders and then, on 29 August, persuade them to sign over their negotiating authority to Milošević as the head of a unified Serb negotiating team over which he would exert a final veto as necessary. To the US Special Representative, Ambassador Richard Holbrooke, this signed inter-Serb agreement provided the jolt necessary to jump-start the US diplomatic initiative for ending the Bosnian war, even while the armies continued to battle for chunks and scraps of disputed territory.

On 1 September, Holbrooke announced that the three primary parties—the Croatian, Bosnian Government, and joint FRY/Republika Srpska delegations—would meet in Geneva on 8 September to discuss constitutional arrangements for the new Bosnian state.⁸¹⁸ At the meeting the three sides reached a preliminary “basic principles” agreement on a proposed constitution, which would be the basis for further negotiations. Croatia also clearly indicated, however, that any deal on Bosnia would have to include a simultaneous settlement with the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia on the Serb holdouts in eastern Slavonia.⁸¹⁹ As negotiators sought to expose Serb positions to the light of reason, the launching of the key “Maestral” and “Sana” operations focused the heat of battle on the Bosnian Serbs. This timely development provided dramatic confirmation of Mladić’s fears that the military balance was shifting dangerously and that Serb ambitions must be compromised. The VRS counterattacks that

threw their opponents off balance kept the Serbs in the diplomatic game during Holbrooke's shuttle diplomacy that September.⁸²⁰ Nevertheless, it was now the Serbs who wanted to get a cease-fire as soon as possible, while the Bosnian Government wanted to continue fighting to gain as much territory as possible to lever its position in future bargaining over a territorial division. When Bosnian President Izetbegovic finally bowed to US pressure to halt the fighting, he set additional conditions for the Serbs to argue over so that the ARBiH would have increased time to gain more ground.⁸²¹

This final jockeying over the cease-fire, tentatively agreed to on 5 October, kept all three sides moving military forces up to the last minute.⁸²² Croatia had craftily retired to the military sidelines after the completion of "Maestral," apparently in hopes of putting a brake on the Bosnian Government's military gains lest the Muslims gain too much weight in the Balkan balance of power. President Tudjman was also under US pressure to refrain from shattering the military and diplomatic balancing act by capturing Banja Luka.⁸²³ Zagreb nevertheless went ahead with its final 8 October offensive—"Juzni Potez"—that made it a little plainer to the Serbs that they must deal now or face the loss of the city. Zagreb also had achieved a tentative deal with the Serbs—initiated on 4 October—on the full return of eastern Slavonia to Croatia, and the offensive helped underscore that essential requirement.⁸²⁴

The Bosnian cease-fire finally went into effect on the morning of 12 October.⁸²⁵ Although the fighting in western Bosnia rumbled on for another week, the war in Bosnia was *over*.⁸²⁶ After the country-wide cease-fire—a successful and lasting one this time—took hold in mid-October, representatives of the Croats, the Muslims, and the Serbs met for a long and arduous round of negotiations in Dayton, Ohio, in November, co-chaired by the United States, the European Union, and Russia. The talks seemed perpetually to be on the verge of collapse, yet at the last minute enough compromises were devised so that an agreement could be signed on 21 November 1995. This was followed by a "London Conference" on 8 December, where ministers and officials from no fewer than 42 countries and 10 international organizations attempted to work out

how best to deal with the daunting challenges of implementing the peace and reconstructing the country.^{827 828 829} The results of their negotiating efforts were soon to be manifested in Bosnia in the multinational "implementation force" whose responsibilities and powers had been specified and agreed upon in the Dayton Agreement—IFOR.⁸³⁰

Evaluations of the Forces at the End of the War

How had the armies performed during the last battles in Bosnia's Wild West? All three forces (considering the HV/HVO as a single military force) had amply demonstrated their strengths and weaknesses during a full month of some of the most intense combat of the war. The Croatian Army had again established its position as the premier military organization in the Balkans. The HV's strengths included excellent staff planning, its employment of professional shock brigades, and the ability to support its elite infantry with strong artillery fire and air support. The HV had developed a true combined arms capability in which picked infantry units backed by armor and artillery could fight their way through tough defenses and then rapidly exploit their breakthrough to the final objective. These traits made the HV almost impossible to stop. The weak spots in any HV campaign remained the Home Defense and reserve formations, most of which had little offensive punch and were no match for the majority of VRS units.⁸³¹ *

As for the ARBiH, it is true that the HV provided the main impetus in defeating the VRS, but the Bosnian Army played a key role in these operations as well. ARBiH operations throughout the country kept VRS units tied down and made it difficult to shift reserves to halt the HV's attacks. General Dudakovic was not wholly reliant on Croatian attacks to ease the way for ARBiH advances, even though analysts have argued that the 5th Corps was able to break out from the Grabež plateau on 13 September only because of a coordinated VRS withdrawal made necessary by the success

* HV doctrine and fighting methods are discussed in more detail in Section VI, "Croatia, 1993-94: Biding Its Time, Building Its Army," and Chapter 89, "Operation 'Oluja': The Fall of the Krajina Serb Republic, August 1995."

of “Maestral.” On the contrary, it is clear that the 5th Corps defeated the 2nd Krajina Corps at Grabez on its own and that the VRS had no intention of pulling out of the area and was still holding out in Drvar against the HV the day of the ARBiH’s successful attack. It was the arrival of the 5th Corps at Petrovac that aided the HV attack rather than the other way around. The 5th Corps won its unique victory because of the moral and tactical ascendancy that its elite infantry units had established over the VRS forces during three years of hard fighting on the Grabez plateau. Time and again Dudakovic’s forces had demoralized the Serb defenders with sophisticated diversion and infiltration tactics, and they were no longer able to resist them. What kept the ARBiH from triumphing over the VRS in other situations was its persistent weaknesses in heavy weaponry, which made it vulnerable to the VRS’s strengths in armor, artillery, and solid staff work. The effects of this mismatch in capabilities were fully demonstrated during the late September–early October VRS counterstrikes and exacerbated in the open warfare of the last campaign. In those battles, ARBiH troops had to fight offensively, unprotected by fortifications, against VRS units that did not have the same fear of the ARBiH infantry that had been impressed upon the 2nd Krajina Corps troops. The 5th Corps’ final capture of Sanski Most was, in fact, something of a fluke because the VRS had placed its luckless Grabez units opposite their most feared opponents.

The ARBiH commanders—particularly Generals Delic and Dudakovic—firmly believed that they could have quickly gained substantially more ground from the VRS around Prijedor and Banja Luka after the victory of Sanski Most. In this belief they are probably overrating their capabilities against VRS forces that had regrouped and regained their footing between Sanski Most and Prijedor. In most of the VRS-ARBiH combat following the 15 September 5th Corps breakout from Bihać, the VRS had held the upper hand. Even after the ARBiH captured Sanski Most, the VRS was able to halt the 5th Corps drive on Prijedor. It therefore seems unlikely that the 5th Corps, even reinforced by units from 7th Corps and other formations, could have beaten the 1st Krajina Corps without the help of a new HV operation directed at Banja Luka.⁸³²

The Bosnian Serb Army, denigrated throughout the war as armed thugs good only at slaughtering civilians, proved in the last months of its existence that it could still fight hard against a Croatian Army that clearly overmatched its military capabilities.⁸³³ Analysis of the latter-day war operations refutes many claims and rumors that the VRS voluntarily withdrew from its positions in western Bosnia rather than being forced from the region by the HV/HVO and ARBiH. In the first place, the VRS had firmly maintained no withdrawals would be made, even from territory not required by the Serbs, until after a cease-was signed; then, if territory had to be given up, the population could depart in an orderly way.⁸³⁴ In keeping with this position, the VRS everywhere stood up to the initial attacks made on it but proved unable to stem the flood of the Croat-Muslim tide. Against the HV, its fatal flaw almost predictably proved to be the lack of adequate corps-level reserves to seal breaches in VRS lines. Generally the VRS appears to have been able to hold the HV for about a day in its forward defenses before the HV was able to chew through its positions. Because it had virtually no reserve brigades in western Bosnia and because its positions there generally consisted only of a single defensive zone no more than 5 to 10 kilometers deep, the VRS was unable to mount the counterattacks by which it had maintained these positions against the ARBiH. In fighting the HV/HVO, VRS units were faced for the first time with an opponent that not only matched but also exceeded their own firepower in armor and artillery while also outnumbering them in manpower. Finally, what tipped the balance, even when the offense/defense ratio favored the VRS, was the HV/HVO’s elite shock infantry brigades. The VRS could defeat Croatian reserve units. The well-trained, doggedly persistent Guards were another matter.

The VRS generals, Mladić and Milovanović, and the VRS Main Staff displayed to the end their prowess at engineering strategic shifts of their limited formations. The move of seven major formations from halfway across the country despite heavy damage to its command and control structure during the NATO air campaign was a triumph of the VRS Main Staff’s professionalism and skill. The Serbs’ rapid execution

of major counterattacks also showed how powerful the VRS remained at the end of the war, particularly against the ARBiH. In his last campaign, however, the western Bosnia theater commander, General Milovanovic, appears to have made some initial errors in his force dispositions that cost the VRS dearly. His forces were split too evenly among the Donji Vakuf, Glamoc-Drvar, and Gravez sectors, rather than concentrated in what the VRS considered a vital sector. Given that the HV was the main threat, he should have either concentrated more troops opposite the Glamoc-Drvar area sooner or sent in his reserves before the enemy breakthrough. The VRS Main Staff, too, either did not recognize how brittle the 2nd Krajina Corps had become or was unable to do anything about it; General Tomanic's command appears to have been through the wringer one too many times and collapsed fatally on the Gravez under yet another 5th Corps attack. In all, the VRS simply faced too many competing priorities throughout Bosnia so that the Main Staff could no longer focus its forces on one theater.

One of the most discussed hypothetical questions of the final campaign is whether the HV (and/or the ARBiH) could have taken Banja Luka. The answer is a heavily qualified “probably,” the main qualifier being timing. An HV dash for Banja Luka soon after the completion of “Maestral” probably would have got to the city quickly or forced the VRS to divert all of the reserves it was sending to Prijedor instead to Banja Luka, in which case the 5th Corps could have taken Prijedor. The same holds true for “Juzni Potez” in that, the more quickly the HV moved, the less time the VRS would have had to prepare. On the other hand, if the VRS had been given time to transfer more units after “Juzni Potez,” Banja Luka most likely would have proved a difficult nut for even the HV to crack. In the immediate aftermath of Mrkonjic Grad’s fall, the VRS had already shifted the veteran 16th Krajina Motorized Brigade—probably the best brigade in the VRS—to Manjaca.⁸³⁵ If the VRS believed an HV operation against Banja Luka was imminent, the Main Staff would most likely have transferred all available reserves to the Manjaca area, building up a force that could have numbered at least nine and maybe 11 brigades, including a full-armored brigade, with upward of 15,000 to 20,000 troops.⁸³⁶ The VRS troops would very likely have fought even harder for Banja Luka

than the SVK did at Knin, for they would not have been encircled. Such a large-scale movement of reserves, however, would have left the VRS vulnerable to attacks elsewhere, particularly around Doboj and—depending on whether the HV/HVO wanted it—in the Posavina area opposite Orasje.

The Impact of the NATO Air Campaign

Factoring in the early September standdown of NATO air operations, Operation Deliberate Force lasted a total of 17 days, during which aircraft from nine NATO countries flew a total of 3,536 combat sorties against 56 primary ground targets.⁸³⁷⁸³⁸ Of these sorties, 1,372 were Close Air Support or other bombing missions, and about 785 more were suppression of enemy air defense (SEAD) missions.⁸³⁹ In total, more than 700 precision-guided weapons, over 300 unguided bombs, and 56 high-speed antiradar missiles (HARMs) were expended. Most of the targets were assessed as destroyed, while only one NATO aircraft was lost during the two-week operation. At the conclusion of the campaign, the Bosnian Serbs reversed their position and agreed to withdraw their heavy weapons from the Sarajevo exclusion zone. In almost all respects, Operation Deliberate Force appeared to be an unqualified success.⁸⁴⁰⁸⁴¹⁸⁴²

On the surface, the connection between the NATO air-strikes and the Serb capitulation seems clear: the air-strikes against Bosnian Serb forces were followed not only by a withdrawal of VRS weapons from the Sarajevo exclusion zone but shortly afterward by a series of battlefield reverses for the Serbs and a peace settlement at Dayton a little over two months later. Still, it is important to recognize that the Bosnian Serbs faced a panoply of opponents by this point in the war—NATO, the Bosnian Muslims, the Bosnian Croats, and the Croatian Army in Bosnia—and *which* military factor produced *what* outcome is somewhat more difficult to sort out.⁸⁴³ To measure the military impact of the air campaign on the Bosnian Serb Army’s ability to continue combat operations or to assess whether the NATO campaign had a decisive influence on Bosnian

Serb political decisions, the relative importance of all the relevant factors must be examined and weighed. It is also necessary to consider the contribution of the air campaign toward the immediate objective of compelling the VRS to withdraw its heavy weapons from the exclusion zone, as distinct from the broader long-term goal of persuading the Serbs to accept a peace agreement.

The objective of the NATO air campaign as initially enunciated was “to reduce the threat to the Sarajevo safe area and to deter further attacks there or on any other safe area.”⁸⁴⁴ ⁸⁴⁵ A later, more complete statement stated that the objective was “attaining the compliance of the Bosnian Serbs to cease attacks on Sarajevo and other safe areas; the withdrawal of Bosnian Serb heavy weapons from the Total Exclusion Zone around Sarajevo, without delay; complete freedom of movement of UN forces and personnel and NGOs, and unrestricted use of Sarajevo airport.”⁸⁴⁶ The NATO air campaign sprang from the tragic and humiliating fall of Srebrenica and Zepa only two weeks earlier, followed by the gradual revelation that neither UNPROFOR nor the UN Security Council’s threats had been able to prevent the overrunning of two UN-declared safe areas or the executions of thousands of Muslim prisoners. The credibility of UN and NATO guarantees and of the institutions themselves had been eroded and punctured; at a minimum, the UN had to mount a vigorous defense of its four remaining safe areas.

Operation Deliberate Force undoubtedly was a major influence on the Bosnian Serbs’ reluctant decision to withdraw their heavy weapons from the Sarajevo exclusion zone, but the concurrent ground offensives by the HV, HVO, and ARBiH also had a significant influence on Bosnian Serb decisionmaking. The HV/HVO “Maestral” offensive was gaining ground in western Bosnia at exactly the same time, while the Bosnian Army operations “Hurricane” in the Ozren Mountains and “Sana 95,” which would ultimately capture Bosanski Petrovac and Kljuc in western Bosnia, began just as the NATO air campaign was beginning to run out of targets. The air campaign was causing the VRS pain, but the HV, HVO, and ARBiH ground offensives, by capturing critical territory, were carving flesh and sinew from the body of Republika Srpska itself.

When the “Maestral” offensive began pushing the VRS back on the ground—and after the Bosnian Serbs received international guarantees that their Muslim opponents would not immediately seize Serb-held territory around Sarajevo when their heavy weapons were withdrawn—there was already reason enough for the VRS to remove its heavy weapons from the exclusion zone. Yielding to the UN on this point had become an increasingly necessary choice for a Bosnian Serb military confronting too many opponents at once. While there is little question that the well-executed NATO air campaign helped change the Bosnian Serb position, it seems likeliest that it merely tipped the scales farther in the direction of losing pride and saving weapons—particularly so that the weapons could be moved away to fight elsewhere in Bosnia.

Moreover, Operation Deliberate Force did not degrade the combat capabilities of the VRS as much as it might have appeared if only because the destruction of field-deployed VRS forces was never a primary objective of the campaign. The air campaign was intended to disrupt Bosnian Serb command and control links, however, and to destroy war-fighting supplies, infrastructure, and lines of communication. Although the NATO campaign successfully damaged or eliminated most of the targets it set out to hit, the VRS was nevertheless able to continue combat operations against its Muslim and Croat opponents all through the aerial campaign. The VRS’ capabilities were certainly degraded, but it still functioned as a coherent military force throughout its operational area and was able to move multiple brigade-sized combat formations clear across Bosnia even at the height of the air campaign.

The evidence is even less convincing that the NATO air campaign brought the Bosnian Serbs to the negotiating table at Dayton. In this regard, it is worth noting that the coercion of the Bosnian Serb political leadership into accepting a comprehensive peace plan was not an explicitly stated objective of the air campaign, although movement in that direction was clearly a hoped-for outcome. Ironically, the Bosnian Serbs had already made the difficult decision to accept the peace

process immediately *before* the start of the NATO campaign. On the very day the air campaign began, the Bosnian Serbs signed an agreement with Belgrade empowering Serbian President Milosevic to represent them in what would later become the Dayton peace negotiations.⁸⁴⁷

A close look at the events of the time suggests that it was actually the combined HV-HVO-ARBiH ground offensive, rather than the NATO air campaign, which finally drove the Bosnian Serbs to sit down and negotiate a peace settlement. Having repeatedly fought its Croat-Muslim Federation opponents to a near standstill for over three years, the VRS was now facing the same enemies in coordinated offensives with thousands of the best troops from Zagreb's most elite HV units. Overwhelmed and rapidly losing territory to its combined opponents, the Republika Srpska was by mid-October on the verge of losing an even greater fraction of its land area and was in serious danger of losing the ability to defend Banja Luka itself. It was the stark reality of diminished land and power, and not the lightning bolts of the NATO air campaign, that really forced the Bosnian Serbs to the negotiating table at Dayton.

Chapter 95 Conclusions—The Slovenian, Croatian, and Bosnian Wars of 1991-95

When the last shots had been fired in Bosnia and the signatures inscribed on the treaty papers agreed to at Dayton, it was unmistakably clear that the Socialist Yugoslav Federation was dead. Much less clear was what would come after it. The flaming torch of ethnic nationalism had burnt its way through the country from northwest to southeast, setting ablaze first Slovenia, then Croatia, then Bosnia. Now it had been snuffed out and laid aside, but no one could be certain whether the Dayton Agreement had permanently halted or merely temporarily arrested the wildfire of violence and destruction.

Slovenia, where it had all begun, was by late 1995 well on its way to economic recovery and political integration with the institutions of the West. Croatia

was not so far advanced but had conclusively achieved its long-sought goals of independent statehood and near-ethnic purity. The future of Bosnia awaited the outcome of a new experiment in international relations: the presence of thousands of IFOR peacekeepers had placed the fledgling state into a sort of national incubator in which the troubled peoples of Bosnia might—if carefully and constantly monitored—develop into a viable, sustainable nation of some sort. Tiny Macedonia hovered on the brink of a political abyss: with no military to speak of, surrounded by wary and even hostile neighbors, and host to a potentially explosive Albanian minority, it grappled with still-unresolved questions of statehood without even an internationally recognized name for itself.

The ramshackle self-proclaimed successor state to the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, consisting only of Serbia, Montenegro, and the captive “autonomous provinces” of Vojvodina and Kosovo, was the inheritor of the legacy of a bankrupt former state. The Croatian Serbs had been expelled at the point of a gun from their centuries-old homelands in the Croatian Krajina. The Bosnian Serbs were if anything political rivals of President Milosevic and his party. From Milosevic’s standpoint, not even his rump empire within Serbia was secure: not much more than half the population of Serbia itself was ethnically Serb. Having started a war with the goal of creating a “greater Serbia,” Milosevic had in the end succeeded only in producing a lesser one.

Perhaps the flames of interethnic hostility and bitter warfare that had burned their way across the troubled Yugoslav countryside from 1991 through 1995 were the product of a kind of geographic and historical vulcanism rather than a torch brandished by one demagogue. At Dayton the flames had been damped down and covered over, but beneath the surface seismic faults and tensions remained, the hot lava of ethnic chauvinism flowed, and ancient and recent grievances bubbled like hot sulfur springs. It remained to be seen whether the flames had indeed been extinguished, or whether they would burst forth yet again and send old fires blazing across the new landscape of the Balkans.

* See Chapter 77, “The ‘Red Generals’ Refuse to Bow: Political-Military Relations and the Strategic Debate in Republika Srpska, 1995” for a more in-depth discussion of political-military relations and Bosnian Serb thinking in the runup to the Dayton negotiations.

Endnotes, Section VII

¹ Halilovic, Sefer, *Lukava Strategija* ("Clever Strategy"), chapter 17.

² FBIS Vienna AU 091328Z March 1995.

³ Reuters, "Bosnian Croats Deny Joint Offensive With Moslems" by Laura Pitter, 29 March 1994.

⁴ Milos Vasic, "President or General," Belgrade *Vreme* 14 August 1995, pp. 14,15.

⁵ The more populous and industrial Banja Luka area resented the power that Pale had over it and believed it should exert more authority in the management of the Serb Republic, an idea with which the VRS agreed.

⁶ VRS Information Service chief, Lieutenant Colonel Milovan Milutinovic states that,

Following the Main Staff's warning on major threats to the Serb Republic, and a demand for stronger defenses, a national parliament session was held in Sanski Most in April 1995.

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).

⁷ The Ministry of Defense, headed in 1995 by senior SDS official Milan Ninkovic, was supposed to provide administrative and logistic support to the VRS. It often, however, acted as a conduit for SDS supported "businessmen," including Ninkovic, to make substantial profits at the expense of the VRS. General Gvero stated in 1996 that during the war:

...the state used what little funds it did provide for incredible machinations. There were cases when it had its own way of taking from us even funds that had not been allocated: they sold us food at prices as much as 400 percent more expensive than we would have had to pay in the open-air market. For example, when lard cost 4 dinars at the markets in Sremska Mitrovica or Novi Sad [in Serbia], the Defense Ministry sent us paperwork ordering us to take sizable quantities of that lard from some private entrepreneur at a price of 16 dinars! Was this not organized thievery at the expense of the army?! We have hundreds of such examples.

Milja Vujišić, "The Truth About the General's Dismissal," Belgrade *Intervju* (Internet Version) 13 December 1996—An interview with Lieutenant Colonel General Milan Gvero.

⁸ B. Maric, "Clash Between Army and Politicians," Belgrade *Vecernje Novosti*, 18 April 1995, p. 4. There is evidence that Assembly President Momcilo Krajisnik was heavily involved in oil smuggling and probably made a substantial profit as head of the holding company, "Centreks," at the expense of the state and the Army. Vladimir Jovanovic, "Coup Against Mladic," Podgorica *Monitor*, 21 April 1995, p. 15.

⁹ Belgrade *Vecernje Novosti* reports that:

...Mladic said that the war aims of the RS have in fact not been defined and that this is one of the basic reasons for the "incompleteness" of some of the RS Army operations.

B. Maric, "Clash Between Army and Politicians," Belgrade *Vecernje Novosti*, 18 April 1995, p. 4.

¹⁰ Belgrade Tanjug 18 October 1995.

¹¹ B. Maric, "Clash Between Army and Politicians," Belgrade *Vecernje Novosti*, 18 April 1995, p. 4.

¹² Lieutenant Colonel Milutinovic also notes that:

Rather than meeting with understanding, the military leadership was accused of attempting a military coup. The consequence was a complete neglect of preparations for defense from possible attacks.

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).

One group of Bosanska Krajina delegates, headed by Andjeljko Grahovac, a renegade SDS member and factory director from Banja Luka, strongly backed Mladic during the debate. Grahovac had led a delegation of assembly delegates and businessmen, primarily from the Banja Luka/Bosanska Krajina area, to meet Milosevic in February 1995. Grahovac publicly expressed strong support for Milosevic in a February 1995 interview. He represented the strong opposition Banja Luka felt toward the Pale/East Bosnian domination of the RS Government. Grahovac, together with Milorad Dodik, later attempted in October 1995 to replace the SDS-led government with a "National Salvation" government, headed by Grahovac. Such a government almost certainly would have been strongly supported by Milosevic. Grahovac was also a founding member of Dodik's Independent Social Democrats.

¹³ Vladimir Jovanovic, "Coup Against Mladic," Podgorica *Monitor*, 21 April 1995, p. 15.

¹⁴ Karadzic and the SDS targeted Lieutenant Colonel General Milan Gvero, Assistant Commander for Morale, Religious, and Legal Affairs (the senior VRS political officer and key Milosevic supporter), Major General Zdravko Tolimir, Assistant Commander for Intelligence and Security, and Lieutenant Colonel General Djordje Djukic, Assistant Commander for Rear Services.

¹⁵ This assessment is based primarily on the strong coordination that took place among Milosevic, Mladic, and Mrksic, given their ties to Belgrade and the closeness with which Mladic had been working with Milosevic all year. In addition, there are indications of Serbian RDB and VJ involvement at Srebrenica (and clearly at Bihać), although not on the scale that many Muslim sources claim. It also fits with the Mladic/Milosevic peace efforts nearly simultaneous, which suggests that the military operations and negotiation planning were interrelated. See also Zeljko Markovic, "By Fall, We Shall Take Zepa, Gorazde, Bihać, and Finally Sarajevo, and Bring the War in Bosnia to a Close!!! Belgrade *Svet*, 21 July 1995, p. 1.

¹⁶ The International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) produced VRS documents—including the 8 March RS Supreme Command strategic directive for 1995 mentioned earlier—during expert witness testimony in June 2000 at General Radislav Krstic's trial for the massacres at Srebrenica. These documents indicate President Karadzic approved the operation to seize the enclave. See Krstic Internet transcripts for June 2000 on ICTY Web site and Office of the Prosecutor (OTP) Exhibits 425 and 426. See also Dragan Bozanic, "Interview with Bosnian Serb Leader Radovan Karadzic," Banja Luka Srpska Televizija 4 August 1995 and Jovan Janjic, "We Are Healthy Serbs," Belgrade *Nin*, 25 August 1995, pp. 14-16, an interview with Momcilo Krajisnik.

¹⁷ The RS Supreme Command strategic directive for 1995 called for the VRS to strangle the Srebrenica and Zepa enclaves and seize them if the UN withdrew. The VRS conducted preliminary actions around Srebrenica in early June 1995, but the attack on Srebrenica appears to have been delayed by the ARBiH Sarajevo offensive; the ARBiH raid on 28 June against a Serb village just outside the enclave then sparked the VRS operation. It seems unlikely that Milosevic knew of or approved the mass VRS executions of Srebrenica's male population. There is no evidence that Serbian RDB, MUP or VJ personnel took part in these actions.

¹⁸ Moscow ITAR-TASS 26 July 1995.

¹⁹ Quoted in Paris AFP 27 July 1995.

²⁰ SRNA 28 July 1995.

²¹ Belgrade Tanjug, 4 August 1995.

²² Belgrade Tanjug, 6 August 1995; SRNA 11 August 1995.

²³ Milika Sundic, Belgrade Radio 6 August 1995, an interview with Dobrica Milicevic.

²⁴ SRNA 8 August 1995.

²⁵ SRNA 23 August 1995.

²⁶ SRNA 24 August 1995.

²⁷ A Belgrade *Nasa Borba* article claimed that General Gvero and the VRS had detained Karadzic in Bijeljina for a time in order to have a "conversation" with him. D. N. B. "Karadzic Taken Away for An 'Informative Conversation,'" Belgrade *Nasa Borba*, 26-27 August 1995, p. 2. This report has not been substantiated, but clearly the VRS exerted some sort of pressure on Karadzic at this time since he agreed to the previously unthinkable—giving Milosevic negotiating authority—only a few days later, before the start of NATO airstrikes and the Croatian Army's September ground offensive in western Bosnia.

²⁸ Belgrade NTV Studio B, 28 August 1995.

²⁹ Belgrade Tanjug, 30 August 1995. This report carries the full text of the FRY-RS agreement.

³⁰ Belgrade Tanjug, 18 October 1995. The fourth officer was Major General Grujo Boric, the commander of the "Rajko Balac" Center of Military Schools, headquartered in Banja Luka.

³¹ The officer in question was General Boric.

³² Belgrade Tanjug, 3 January 1995. FBIS London LD0301173895, 031738Z January 1995.

³³ Paris AFP, 27 January 1995. FBIS Vienna AU2701085395, 2707853Z January 1995.

³⁴ Paris AFP, 1 January 1995. FBIS Vienna AU0101195095, 011950Z January 1995.

³⁵ Paris AFP, 2 January 1995. FBIS Vienna AU0201150595, 021505Z January 1995.

³⁶ Paris AFP, 2 January 1995. FBIS Vienna AU0201155895, 021558Z January 1995.

³⁷ Paris AFP, 3 January 1995. FBIS Vienna AU0301185495, 031854Z January 1995.

³⁸ Sarajevo Radio, 10 January 1995. FBIS London LD1001220295, 102202Z January 1995.

³⁹ Sarajevo Radio, 11 January 1995. FBIS Vienna AU1101192695, 111926Z January 1995.

⁴⁰ The 501st Brigade troops—led by elite reconnaissance-sabotage units—infiltrated along the boundary between the SVK 103rd and VRS 15th Brigades, cutting in behind the VRS brigade's left flank. According to one Serbian newspaper,

The 15th Bihać Brigade held a wedged-in position around the Bihać hospital and the city morgue in Bihać, and they were barely 500 meters away from the town center. The units of the Muslim 5th Corps attacked them from the left flank, from the outskirt district of Cerovci. According to the survivors in the 15th Bihać Serb Brigade, their left flank had been covered by a unit from Lika, through whose positions

the Muslim units crossed without allegedly a shot being fired. In this clash, the Serbs lost not only strategic positions around Bihać hospital, but also several villages southwest from the town . . .

The VRS reportedly lost 40 personnel killed in action and 70 missing in action during the engagement. A. B. "Karadzic Sacks Milovanovic," Belgrade *Blic* 31 January 1995, p. 3. FBIS Vienna AU0202141895 021418Z February 1995. See also Zarif Safic, "No One Can Prevent Us From Taking, Taking Back, What Belongs to Us!" Travnik *Bosnjak* 9 January 1996, pp. 12-14. FBIS Reston 96BA0155C 080201Z March 1996, an interview with Brigadier Senad "Sagan" Saganovic, commander of the 501st Mountain Brigade.

⁴¹ Reuters, "UN Accuses Bosnia Factions of Breaking Truce" by Mark Heinrich, 16 January 1995.

⁴² Reuters, "Fighting Flares in Bosnia's Bihać Enclave," 17 January 1995.

⁴³ Belgrade SRNA, 4 January 1995. FBIS London LD0401184595, 041845Z January 1995.

⁴⁴ Sarajevo Radio, 5 January 1995. FBIS Vienna AU0501160095, 051600Z January 1996.

⁴⁵ Paris AFP, 1 February 1995. FBIS Vienna AU0102184895, 011848Z February 1995.

⁴⁶ Paris AFP, 13 February 1995. FBIS Vienna AU1302113795, 131137Z February 1995.

⁴⁷ Sarajevo Radio, 8 February 1995. FBIS Vienna AU0802103995, 081039Z February 1995.

⁴⁸ Paris AFP, 9 February 1995. FBIS Vienna AU0902164995, 091649Z February 1995.

⁴⁹ Zagreb Hina, 10 February 1995. FBIS Vienna AU1002142995, 101429Z February 1995.

⁵⁰ Paris AFP, 14 February 1995. FBIS Vienna AU1402122195, 141221Z February 1995.

⁵¹ Sarajevo Radio, 14 February 1995. FBIS Vienna AU1402192795, 141927Z February 1995.

⁵² Zagreb Radio, 14 February 1995. FBIS London LD1402171395, 141713Z February 1995.

⁵³ Zagreb Hina, 14 February 1995. FBIS Vienna AU1402181995, 141819Z February 1995.

⁵⁴ Zagreb Hina, 5 January 1995 [sic]. FBIS Vienna AU0402145495, 041454Z February 1995.

⁵⁵ The SVK 21st Kordun rotated battalions from its three infantry brigades (11th Vojnic, 13th Slunj, and 19th Vrginmost) through Tactical Group 8 and the 39th Banija Corps rotated battalions from its four infantry brigades (24th Glina, 26th Kostajnica, 31st Petrinja, and 33rd Dvor) through Tactical Group 9. The VJ troops were drawn from the 63rd Airborne and 72nd Special Operations Brigades.

⁵⁶ The 5th Corps order of battle, working from left to right, had elements of the 517th Light Brigade near Johovica (it also guarded the border with the RSK running south toward Bihać), then elements of the 510th Liberation Brigade, elements of the 503rd Cazin Mountain Brigade (probably also combined with troops from the 501st and 502nd Bihać Mountain Brigades) south of Mala Kladusa, then the 506th and 505th Brigades covering the main sectors running through Podvizd and Vrnograc.

⁵⁷ Belgrade SRNA, 15 February 1995. FBIS London LD1502141995, 151419Z February 1995.

⁵⁸ Belgrade SRNA, 19 February 1995. FBIS London LD1902165495, 191654Z February 1995.

⁵⁹ Sarajevo Radio, 25 February 1995. FBIS London LD2502221695, 252216Z February 1995.

⁶⁰ The term "Z-4" stood for Zagreb 4—the four key diplomatic players which had crafted the plan, the United States, Russia, the EU and the UN. Zoran Radosavljevic, "Mediators Present Croat-Serb Peace Plan," Reuters 30 January 1995.

⁶¹ Reuters, "Krajina Serbs Refuse to Consider Peace Plan," 30 January 1995.

⁶² Reuters, "Croatia Says UN Pull-Out Not Negotiable," by Dvor Huic, 13 January 1995.

⁶³ Reuters, "Serbs Freeze Talks With Croatia, Declare Alert," by Mark Heinrich, 8 February 1995.

⁶⁴ Reuters, "Croatian Can Go Own Way Without UN—Croat General," by Davor Huic, 5 February 1995.

⁶⁵ Reuters, "Croatia Agrees UN Troops Can Stay for Now," by Nicholas Doughty, 12 March 1995.

⁶⁶ Reuters, "Rebel Serb Leader Rejects UN Mandate Changes," by Branimir Grulovic, 6 April 1995.

⁶⁷ Colonel General Ante Gotovina, *Offensive Battles and Operations of the Croatian Army and HVO*, Knin: Split Corps District, 1996, p. 38.

⁶⁸ Gotovina, pp. 38-39.

⁶⁹ Gotovina, pp. 38-40.

⁷⁰ From HV Main Staff directive for Operation "Bljesak-1," 5 December 1994 in Janko Bobetko, *Sve Moje Bitke (All My Battles)*, Zagreb: Vlastita Naklada, 1996, pp. 392-399.

⁷¹ *Sve Moje Bitke (All My Battles)*, pp. 392-399.

⁷² Bobetko states that,

During that period I got sick and spent three or four days at . . . the hospital . . . before the beginning of the attack in early May . . . I went to the command headquarters. There I found the Minister of Defense and the people who were to operationally lead the operation, or rather coordinate it. I designated General Basarac for the Novska area and General Stipetic for the Nova Gradiska area. Their basic task was to objectively assess the course of the operation, so that we would not have to call up the commanders every hour, because that would take them away from their duties I knew that their assessments—because they were acquainted with the overall mission and had checked on the situation in the units—would be realistic and would provide adequate substantiation for any addition to or change in specific decisions.

After firming things up at the command headquarters, I went to Minister Susak and asked him to install a communications system for me in the hospital and appoint an on-duty communications officer . . . Thus, I maintained contact with the commanders the whole time, inquiring into the situation every two hours.

Major General Marijan Marekovic, a senior Main Staff officer, headed the official Main Staff FCP in the village of Garesnica and was the main watchdog and point of contact for Bobetko. The key role in influencing the operation was to be played by Colonel General Petar Stipetic, however, the veteran ex-JNA staff officer, and now a senior deputy on the Main Staff. *Sve Moje Bitke (All My Battles)*, pp. 403-404.

⁷³ The HV order of battle on the main attack axes comprised the following units:

Novska Axis

- Elements, 1st Croatian Guards Brigade (1st HGZ).
- 2nd Battalion/1st Guards Brigade.
- 1st Battalion/2nd Guards Brigade (+).
 - Armored Company/2nd Guards Brigade.
- 1st Battalion/3rd Guards Brigade (+).
 - Armored Company/3rd Guards Brigade.
 - Reconnaissance Company/3rd Guards Brigade.
- 125th Home Defense Regiment.
- MUP Special Police (battalion-size).

Nova Gradiska Axis

- 4th Battalion/5th Guards Brigade.
- 81st Independent Guards Battalion.
- 121st Home Defense Regiment.
- Armored Company/123rd Infantry Brigade.
- 265th Reconnaissance-Sabotage Company.
- MUP Special Police (battalion-size).

The HV order of battle is based primarily on the maps and official HV documents included in Bobetko, as well as information in the HV newspaper, Zagreb *Velebit*. In addition to the Main Staff directive for "Bljesak," Bobetko also included a number of supporting orders assigning HV units outside the normal structure of the Bjelovar Corps District to the operation.

⁷⁴ The forces around Pakrac came from the 52nd Home Defense Regiment, the 105th Infantry Brigade, and a battalion-size MUP Special Police unit.

⁷⁵ The HV formed two artillery-rocket groups to support each primary axis.

Artillery-Rocket Group I supported the Nova Gradiska axis and comprised the following elements:

- 1st Battalion/16th Artillery-Rocket Brigade (+).
- 18th Artillery Battalion.

Artillery-Rocket Group II supported the Novska axis and comprised the following elements:

- Artillery-Rocket Battalion/2nd Guards Brigade.
- Artillery-Rocket Battalion/3rd Guards Brigade.
- 2nd Battalion/16th Artillery-Rocket Brigade.

⁷⁶ *Sve Moje Bitke (All My Battles)*, pp. 392-399, 401-403.

⁷⁷ Susak states that the offensive involved some 7,200 troops, although he probably is referring mainly to the first phase. The 15,000/7,500 total is based on order of battle estimates through identification of formations involved in the attack.

⁷⁸ *Sve Moje Bitke (All My Battles)*, 1996, p. 402-403.

⁷⁹ The 18th West Slavonian Corps was organized into:

- 51st Light Infantry Brigade, HQ Pakrac.
- 54th Light Infantry Brigade, HQ Okucani.
- 98th Light Infantry Brigade, HQ Rajic.
- 59th Daruvac Detachment, HQ vic Pakrac.
- U/I Slatina Detachment

SVK 18th Corps order of battle drawn from HV Main Staff directive for Operation "Bljesak-1," 5 December 1994 in Janko Bobetko, *Sve Moje Bitke (All My Battles)*, pp. 392-399.

See also Veljko Kadijevic, "More Than a Defeat," *Belgrade Vojska* 11 May 1995, pp. 14, 41.

⁸⁰ Bobetko was particularly concerned about the intervention of the 18th Corps' armored battalion from Stara Gradiska and claims to have worked with HRZ commander General Imre Agotic to use air assets, including Mi-24 gunships, to interdict the movement of this battalion toward Okucani. *Sve Moje Bitke (All My Battles)*, pp. 402-403.

⁸¹ On the left, the MUP Special Police and the 2nd Battalion/1st Guards Brigade attacked in the Kricke Brdo area. The 1st Guards troops then dropped down onto the secondary, "old" road to Okucani, paralleling the Belgrade-Zagreb highway, while the Special Police made for the Okucani-Pakrac road. The 2nd and 3rd Guards Brigade forces formed the spearhead of the main attack, driving down the Belgrade-Zagreb highway. Meanwhile, the 125th Home Defense Regiment, led by MUP Special Police troops, attacked south on the right flank, seizing Jasenovac and pushing along the Sava River. *Sve Moje Bitke (All My Battles)*, pp. 390-391, 404, and Boris Komadina, "A Tiger Fighting For Croatia," *Hrvatski Obzor*, 6 November 1995, pp. 28-29, which is an interview with Brigadier Jozo Milicevic, commander of the 1st Guards Brigade.

⁸² On the Nova Gradiska axis, the SVK—according to Bobetko—had developed strong defenses along the main route toward Okucani, near the village of Dragalic. The attack plan called for the 81st Guards Battalion to form the main spearhead, bypassing these defenses to the north, attacking from the Masicka Sagovina area toward the village of Cage, north of Okucani. The battalion would then push directly into Okucani itself. This part of the plan appears to have gone awry, however. Bobetko states that,

I spoke with General Stipetic three or four times. He had to personally go out to check on things, because of which the strike in the [Nova] Gradiska area came late. The 81st Guard Brigade (sic), which was responsible for that delicate task, learned of its mission only two and a half or three hours later. Accordingly, it set out for its target only after the enemy was prepared, after the operation had already begun. A similar thing happened with other units as well . . . In analyzing the mission in this region, General Stipetic concluded that the units were as much as two hours late. Viewed from that perspective, this was the most criminal and dangerous thing that could have happened in this operation. There was no reason for this, so that the underlying responsibility of who was in charge of that was sought.

As a result, the 4th Battalion/5th Guards Brigade and the 265th Recon Company, together with the Armored Company/123rd Infantry Brigade, were forced to intervene and bludgeon their way through the SVK 54th Light Infantry Brigade at Dragalic. The Guards troops then pushed on toward Okucani, while the recon company moved toward Nova Varos and Stara Gradiska to try and cut the main SVK withdrawal route. It appears that SVK rear guards were too strong, however, and the Serbs were able to withdraw across the river unhindered.

Colonel General Petar Stipetic played a major role in ensuring that this axis was put back on track and well coordinated. Bobetko says,

If it were not for General Stipetic, we probably would not have gotten a real picture of what was going on, because on such a broad front it is impossible to keep the situation under control. He moved about the key points and provided full reports to the staff war room, where Generals Vrbanac and Miljevac . . . and the Minister of Defense were the whole time.

Sve Moje Bitke (All My Battles), pp. 404-405. See also Vesna Puljak, "Always on the Central Route," *Zagreb Velebit*, 28 March 1997, pp. 18-19, an article on the 265th Reconnaissance-Sabotage Company.

Sve Moje Bitke (All My Battles), p. 404.

Sve Moje Bitke (All My Battles), p. 405; Zagreb Radio 2 May 1995.

⁸³ Reuters, "600 Rebel Serbs Surrender to Croatians," 2 May 1995.

⁸⁴ General Bobetko states,

At exactly 0900 I called up General Stipetic at his command headquarters and issued an order . . . We looked at the map and reached an agreement about where that grouping of [Serbs] north of Pakrac might be, probably waiting for nightfall to break through toward [the north]. I ordered him to use two to three 122-mm VBRs [multiple rocket launchers], 130-mm guns, and whatever he deemed necessary to shell one or two of those sections where that grouping might be waiting in the woods. I told him to superficially shell that part of the woods with two bursts each, because if they were there, they would not be able to hold out psychologically . . .

See *Sve Moje Bitke (All My Battles)*, pp. 405-406, pp. 414-415. In particular, pp. 414-415 have Bobetko's order to Stipetic to execute this attack and Stipetic's report on the action's success. See also Ivanka Toma, "Special Forces A Wall Against Terrorists," *Split Slobodna Dalmacija*, 23 May 1996, p. 5, an interview with Colonel General Mladen Markac, commander of MUP Special Police forces.

⁸⁵ Zagreb HTV 8 May 1995.

⁸⁶ Zagreb HINA 4 May 1995. President Tudjman's Address to Parliament, Zagreb Radio 15 January 1996.

⁸⁷ Reuters, "Krajina Serb Town on General Alert," by Jovan Kovacic, 2 May 1995. The RSK State Assembly convened a commission to investigate the loss of Western Slavonia. The commission was comprised of five members, including the RSK Internal Affairs Minister, the deputy chairman of the Assembly, two SVK colonels, and another senior RSK MUP officer. The commission found that RSK President Milan Martic was primarily responsible for the loss of Western Slavonia because of his closure of the Belgrade-Zagreb highway, refusal to reopen it, and failure to coordinate the defense of the RSK through the Supreme Defense Council. The commission also blamed SVK commander Lt. Col. General Milan Celeketic for failing to properly oversee the defense of Western Slavonia and ignoring the threat from Zagreb when he and Martic refused to reopen the highway on 30 April. SVK 18th Corps commander Colonel Lazo Babic was blamed for ignoring clear intelligence that the HV was going to attack and ignoring UNCRO warnings that failure to reopen the highway would lead to grave consequences.

The commission also blamed the corps command for poor coordination of its subordinate brigades during the fighting and criticized the relocation of the corps headquarters to the Bosnian side of the Sava River at Gradiska. "Such an attitude in the corps command seriously damaged the morale of the troops and weakened their determination to persevere in defense." Overall, the commission assessed that the SVK commanders "at all levels seriously underestimated the enemy's capacities, particularly those directly taking part" in the operation. The commission also criticized Martic and the SVK General Staff for failing to respond quickly and forcefully with attacks on Croatian strategic targets and cities than they did, in keeping with Krajina Serb strategy.

Radovan Kovacevic, "Who Is To Blame for the Fall of Western Slavonia," *Belgrade Politika* 17 July 1995 p. 17; Radovan Kovacevic, "Western Slavonia—A Victim of 'War' Games," *Belgrade Politika* 18 July 1995 p. 7.

⁸⁸ Tactical Group 5 normally comprised the following brigades (from right to left facing Orasje):

- 1st Celinac Light Infantry Brigade, vic. Krepsic.
- 11th Dubica Infantry Brigade, vic. Loncari.
- 2nd Krajina Infantry Brigade, vic. Obudovac.
- 2nd Posavina Infantry Brigade, vic. Bosanski Samac.

Djurkic's command appears to have been reinforced with the following units:

- One to two battalions/1st Armored Brigade.
- 1st Military Police Battalion.
- 1st Reconnaissance-Sabotage Detachment.
- 4th Battalion/43rd Prijedor Motorized Brigade.
- Elements, 1st Bijeljina Light Infantry Brigade "Panther."
- "Drina Wolves" special operations detachment.

In addition, 1st Krajina and East Bosnian Corps probably reinforced artillery units opposite Orasje with additional 1st Mixed Artillery Regiment 155-mm howitzers and other brigade-level artillery and mortar units in order to form a total of two to three corps artillery groups in support of the main attack axes.

⁸⁹ The Orasje Corps District was organized into the following formations (from right to left, facing the VRS):

- 202nd Home Defense Regiment, vic. Domaljevac-Grebnice.
- 106th Home Defense Regiment, vic. Ostra Luka.
- 201st Home Defense Regiment, vic. Vidovice-Vucilovac.
- 4th Guards Brigade (in reserve, opposite the HVO left wing.)

A MUP Special Police detachment with about 200 personnel also supported the HVO. The Orasje Corps District was originally organized into six brigades: the 101st Bosanski Brod, 102nd Odzak, 103rd Derventa, 104th Samac, 105th Modrica, and 106th Orasje. After heavy combat losses in 1992 and early 1993, the corps was reorganized during the early 1994 restructuring of the HVO. Five

of the six brigades (all of which had lost their home regions in the 1992 fighting) were combined to form two Home Defense regiments, the 201st and 202nd. Each of the former brigades were downsized to battalions but retained their old numeric designators. The 201st comprised the 101st and 103rd Battalions, and the 202nd comprised the 102nd, 104th, and 105th Battalions. At the same time, a new 4th Guards Brigade, drawing from the old brigades, was formed using the youngest and most experienced personnel. See Zvonko Zivkovic, "We Are Thorns in Serb Flesh," Zagreb *Vecernji List*, 6 June 1995, p. 7, an interview with Staff Brigadier Djuro Matuzovic; Neven Miladin, "Posavina Heroes in Armor," Zagreb *Velebit*, 13 December 1996, pp. 16-17; Anto Pranjikic and Gordan Radosevic, "Posavina Se Srecem Brani," Zagreb *Velebit*, 7 July 1995, p. 14; Anto Pranjikic and Gordan Radosevic, "202. Iz Pobjede U Pobjedu," Zagreb *Velebit*, 14 July 1995, p. 14.

⁹⁰ This narrative of the battle is based heavily on reporting from Zagreb Radio covering the periods 5 May to 20 June 1995. These reports detail the location and strength of the VRS attacks. Zagreb *Velebit* reporting (above) and the interview with Matuzovic also provided some detail. In addition, the following Reuters and AFP reports were useful, particularly in reporting UN information on the fighting:

- Reuters, Davor Huic, "Heavy Fighting Erupts Along Key Bosnia Corridor—UN," 10 May 1995.
- Reuters, Davor Huic, "Fighting Rages On Along Key Bosnia Corridor," 10 May 1995.
- Reuters, Sean Maguire, "Serbs Running the Game on Battlefield," 11 May 1995.
- Reuters, Davor Huic, "Bosnian Croats Fight Serbs, Rumours of Sellout," 11 May 1995.
- Reuters, "Heavy Fighting Continues Along Serb Corridor," 14 May 1995.
- Reuters, "Bosnian Serbs Bombard Croats Along Supply Line," 17 May 1995.
- Paris AFP, "UN Says Serbs Attacking Croat-Held Northeast Region," 5 May 1995.
- Paris AFP, "UN Officials Say Sarajevo Calm After Overnight Gunfire," 11 May 1995.
- Paris AFP, Florence Biedermann, "Croat Officer Tells AFP of Serb Attacks At Brcko Corridor," 11 May 1995.
- Paris AFP, "UN Monitors: '4,000 to 5,000 Rounds Fired' From Orasje," 17 May 1995.
- Paris AFP, "UN Reports Serbs Fail to Take Northeast Croat-Held Pocket," 18 May 1995.
- Paris AFP, "UN Monitors 'Uncountable Number of Explosions' Near Kladusa," 22 May 1995.

⁹¹ An HVO information officer, Ilijko Duminkovic, speaking to Reuters, stated that in the attack on Vidovice, the VRS had "attempted a combined tank and infantry attack from three directions, using 10 tanks, several APCs, and several hundred soldiers . . ." Reuters, "Heavy Fighting Continues Along Serb Corridor," 14 May 1995.

⁹² Colonel General Ante Gotovina, *Offensive Battles and Operations of the Croatian Army and HVO Knin: Split Corps District*, 1996, p. 45.

⁹³ Zagreb HTV 11 June 1995, interview with Major General Tihomir Blaskic, Chief of the HVO Main Staff.

⁹⁴ The HV/HVO Operational Group "Rujani" consisted of the following units. The first phase/left axis of the attack was to be carried out by the 4th Guards Brigade, attacking along the road through Crni Lug to the main pass and in the Dinara areas adjacent to the valley. The 3rd Battalion/126th Home Defense Regiment was to conduct the supporting attack, protecting the 4th Guards flank, in the border areas, inside the RSK. The Split Corps District's Tactical Sniper Company was also employed in this area. Along the second axis, on the northeastern side of the Livno Valley, the 3rd HVO Guards Brigade, a battalion of the 1st Croatian Guards Brigade (1st HGZ), and Bosnian Croat MUP Special Police were to attack and seize the northeastern rim of the valley. The HV

1st Battalion/1st Guards Brigade (not to be confused with the 1st HGZ) and the 264th Reconnaissance-Sabotage Company were in reserve and would be introduced in the second phase. Further south, southwest of Glamoc, the 2nd HVO Guards Brigade was to conduct holding attacks around Mali Golija to pin down VRS troop reserves. The HV/HVO also broadcast false communications implying that Glamoc was the primary objective in a further attempt to deceive the VRS. Colonel General Ante Gotovina, *Offensive Battles and Operations of the Croatian Army and HVO Knin: Split Corps District*, 1996, pp. 45-56.

⁹⁵ The 2nd Krajina Corps had arrayed two brigades—probably the composite 3rd Serbian Brigade or the 3rd Petrovac Light Infantry Brigade—and the 9th Grahovo Light Infantry Brigade on the VRS right and center and elements of the 5th Glamoc Light Infantry Brigade on the VRS left. Bits and pieces of other VRS brigades sent to the area as reinforcements were also integrated into the defenses. The SVK 7th North Dalmatian Corps had formed the Battle Group "Vijuga" from several of its brigades. The battle group and elements of the 1st Vrlika Light Infantry Brigade defended the long border front against the HV.

⁹⁶ This account is based almost exclusively on Colonel General Ante Gotovina, *Offensive Battles and Operations of the Croatian Army and HVO Knin: Split Corps District*, 1996, pp. 45-56. See also Eduard Milicevic, "Heroes Never Die," Zagreb *Velebit*, 15 March 1996, p. 11, an article on Staff Brigadier Ante Saskor, deputy commander of the 1st Croatian Guards Corps, of which the 1st Croatian Guards Brigade was the main combat formation; Zeljko Stipanovic, "Proven Countless Times," Zagreb *Velebit*, 10 January 1997, pp. 16-17, an article on the Tactical Sniper Company; "Hawks From the Lasva Valley," Zagreb *Velebit*, 19 July 1996, an article on the 3rd HVO Guards Brigade. These articles provide little detail on the operation itself, but do note the unit's presence in the battle.

⁹⁷ Gotovina, p. 50.

⁹⁸ Paris AFP, 9 March 1995. FBIS Vienna AU0903133995, 091339Z March 1995.

⁹⁹ Belgrade SRNA, 20 March 1995. FBIS London LD2003142295, 20 March 1995

¹⁰⁰ Sarajevo *Prva Linija*, "Operation Vlasic" by Hasib Musinbegovic, March-April 1998, pp. 93-109.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., pp. 93-109.

¹⁰² Belgrade Radio, 20 March 1995. FBIS Vienna AU2003155995, 201559Z March 1995.

¹⁰³ Banja Luka Srpski Televizija, 21 March 1995. FBIS Vienna AU2203172195, 221721 March 1995.

¹⁰⁴ Banja Luka Srpski Radio, 24 March 1995. FBIS Vienna AU2703125795, 271257Z March 1995.

¹⁰⁵ Reuters, "Bosnian Army Captures Serb Radio Towers—UN," 25 March 1995.

¹⁰⁶ Reuters, "Civilians Fear Serb Revenge for Moslem Success" by Davor Huic, 26 March 1995.

¹⁰⁷ Reuters, "Bosnian Troops Take Key Central Mountain" by Davor Huic, 4 April 1995.

¹⁰⁸ For example, the 1995 Mt. Vlasic operation consisted of a two-pronged flanking attack that eventually made the VRS position untenable and forced the Serbs to withdraw. Reuters, "Long, Low-Level War Likely, Say Observers in Bosnia" by Davor Huic, 11 April 1995.

¹⁰⁹ Reuters, "Fresh Fighting Reported Across Bosnia" by Kurt Schork, 3 April 1995.

¹¹⁰ Reuters, "Serb Attack on Aid Plane Closes Sarajevo Airport" by Kurt Schork, 8 April 1995.

¹¹¹ Reuters, "Bosnian Army Gaining Battlefield Credibility" by Kurt Schork, 10 April 1995.

¹¹² As the UN source characterized it, "It's a much more ambitious approach . . . The Bosnians have rethought their doctrine. What we've seen is that they're now prepared to take more risk, to move troops around." Reuters, "Long, Low-Level War Likely, Say Observers in Bosnia" by Davor Huic, 11 April 1995.

¹¹³ Reuters, "Long, Low-Level War Likely, Say Observers in Bosnia" by Davor Huic, 11 April 1995.

¹¹⁴ The 2nd Corps appears to have shifted almost all of its elite liberation and light brigades, as well as other elite units, to Colonel Refik Lendo's 25th Division sector. The 2nd Corps may also have given the 24th Division temporary command over part of the 25th Division's area of responsibility southeast of Stolice in order to better control the large number of formations deployed in the area. These formations included:

- 210th Liberation Brigade "Nesib Malkic," (24th Division).
 - 222nd Liberation Brigade (22nd Division).
 - 241st Muslim Light Brigade (24th Division).
 - 242nd Muslim Light Brigade (24th Division).
 - 251st Light Brigade (25th Division).
 - 24th Independent Sabotage Battalion "Black Wolves" (24th Division).
 - 24th Antiterrorist Company "Zivinice Wasps" (24th Division). The 25th Division's normal sector holding mountain brigades in the Stolice-Ugljevik sector included:
 - 250th Mountain Brigade, NE of Tuzla.
 - 252nd Mountain Brigade, E of Tuzla.
 - 253rd Mountain Brigade, SE of Tuzla.
 - 255th Mountain Brigade "Hajdrudin Mesic," vic. Teocak.
- See the following *Prva Linija* articles:
- Said Humremovic, "222nd Liberation Brigade: 'Young Lions' Standard-Bearers of Freedom," *Prva Linija*, March 1997, pp. 23-24 FBIS Reston VA 98E08102A 091712Z June 1998.
 - "Three Years of the 241st Spreca-Muslim-Light Brigade: Lisaca—A Victory That Will Be Inscribed in Gold Letters," *Prva Linija*, July 1997, p. 31 FBIS Reston VA 98E08088C 122020Z March 1998.
 - "On the Occasion of the Third Anniversary of the Formation of the 242nd Zvornik Muslim Light Brigade: Unforgettable Successes," *Prva Linija*, October 1997, p. 31 FBIS Reston VA 98E07020C 171631Z February 1998.
 - S. R., "On the Fifth Anniversary of the SDB 'Black Wolves,'" *Prva Linija*, October 1997, p. 11 FBIS Reston VA 98E08031A 121934Z January 1998.

¹¹⁵ The 2nd Majevica Light Infantry Brigade was part of Tactical Group "Majevica" in Major General Novica Simic's East Bosnian Corps. Together with the 2nd Majevica, the tactical group had about 6,000 troops organized into the:

- 1st Majevica Infantry Brigade, vic. Ugljevik (2nd Majevica's left flank).
- 3rd Majevica Infantry Brigade, vic. Lopare (2nd Majevica's right flank).
- 1st Semberija Infantry Brigade, vic. NW of Lopare.

The tactical group was supported a 155-mm howitzer battalion from the 3rd Mixed Artillery Regiment. Paris AFP, 21 March 1995. FBIS Vienna AU2103134895, 211348Z March 1995.

¹¹⁶ Belgrade Radio, 21 March 1995. FBIS Vienna AU2103221295, 212212Z March 1995.

¹¹⁷ Paris AFP, 23 March 1995. FBIS Vienna AU231229Z March 1995.

¹¹⁸ Reuters, "Fighting Breaks Out Again in Bosnia" by Kurt Schork, 21 March 1995.

¹¹⁹ Reuters, "UN Reports Heavy Combat in Northern Bosnia," 23 March 1995.

¹²⁰ Reuters, "Karadzic Promises Counter-Offensive," 24 March 1995.

¹²¹ Reuters, "Moslems Capture Serb Radio Towers" by Kurt Schork, 25 March 1995.

¹²² Reuters, "Fighting Spreads as Serbs Shell Enclave" by Kurt Schork, 25 March 1995.

¹²³ Reuters, "UN Says Moslems May Have Won Ground," 24 March 1995.

¹²⁴ Reuters, "Bosnian Serb Gunners Bombard Moslem-Held Towns" by Kurt Schork, 26 March 1995.

¹²⁵ Zagreb *Globus*, 31 March 1995. "At Minus 20 Degrees Celsius and Deep Snow, the Bosnia-Herzegovina Army Has Taken the Roof of Bosnia-Herzegovina and Opened the Way Toward Jajce!" by Denis Kuljic. FBIS Vienna AU0404152995, 041529Z April 1995.

¹²⁶ Reuters, "Moslems Battle to Capture Serb Radio Tower Intact" by Davor Huic, 28 March 1995.

¹²⁷ Belgrade SRNA, 26 March 1995. FBIS London LD2603113795, 261137Z March 1995.

¹²⁸ Belgrade Tanjug, 5 April 1995. FBIS London LD0504170395, 051703Z April 1995.

¹²⁹ Reuters, "Bosnians, Serbs Battle On, Ignoring Pleas to Halt" by Kurt Schork, 28 March 1995.

¹³⁰ Paris AFP, 4 April 1995. FBIS Vienna AU0404120895, 041208Z April 1995.

¹³¹ Belgrade Tanjug, 5 April 1995. FBIS London LD0504170395, 051703Z April 1995.

¹³² Paris AFP, 6 April 1995. FBIS Vienna AU0604122795, 061227Z April 1995.

¹³³ Reuters, "UN Says Fighting Flares in Bosnia" by Kurt Schork, 6 April 1995.

¹³⁴ Reuters, "Serbs Regain Ground in Bosnian Fighting" by Kurt Schork, 7 April 1995.

¹³⁵ Belgrade SRNA, 7 April 1995. FBIS London LD0704120395, 071203Z April 1995.

¹³⁶ Bosnian Serb Army operations in early- to mid-May retook some of the subordinate peaks—including Mt. Kolijevo, recaptured on 2 May—and further strengthened the VRS defensive line. Paris AFP, 2 May 1995. FBIS Vienna AU0205163295, 021632Z May 1995; Belgrade SRNA, 17 May 1995. FBIS London, 1705174595, 171745Z May 1995.

¹³⁷ Maribor *Vcer*, "There Will be Peace, If There Is Not That Kind of Cease-Fire," by Zarko Rajkovic, 22 April 1995, p. 35. FBIS Reston VA, 95BA0237A, 221848Z May 1995.

¹³⁸ Reuters, "Bosnian Army Says Jets Hit Serbs Near Tuzla," 30 August 1995.

¹³⁹ See RS Supreme Command Directive No. 7, 8 March 1995 and VRS Main Staff Directive 02/2-15, 31 March 1995, ICTY OTP Exhibits 425 and 426, Krstic Trial.

¹⁴⁰ The East Bosnian Corps and Drina Corps reinforced the 1st Majevica Light Infantry Brigade and the 1st Zvornik Infantry Brigade—which normally held the sectors opposite Teocak and Sapna—with select elements from most of their other formations. Sarajevo Radio, 4 April 1995. FBIS Vienna AU0404152595, 041525Z April 1995.

¹⁴¹ The 246th and 255th Mountain Brigades near Sapna and Teocak respectively, probably were reinforced with elements of the division's two assault brigades, the 241st and 242nd Light Brigades, and the elite 24th "Black Wolves" Recon-Sabotage Battalion and the "Zivinice Wasps" special operations unit. In addition, parts of the elite 222nd Liberation Brigade/22nd Division were shifted to the sector.

The ARBiH called this attack "Hammer and Anvil." See "Three Years of the 241st Spreca-Muslim-Light Brigade: Lisaca—A Victory That Will Be Inscribed in Gold Letters," *Prva Linija*, July 1997 p. 31; "On the Occasion of the Third Anniversary of the Formation of the 242nd Zvornik Muslim Light Brigade: Unforgettable Successes," *Prva Linija*, October 1997, p. 31; S. R., "On the Fifth Anniversary of the SDB 'Black Wolves'," *Prva Linija*, October 1997 p. 11.

Said Huremovic, "222nd Liberation Brigade: 'Young Lions' Standard Bearers of Freedom," Sarajevo *Prva Linija*, March 1997, pp. 23-24. The 222nd Liberation brigade had previously been designated the 212th.

¹⁴² Sarajevo Radio, 5 April 1995. FBIS Vienna AU0504145495 051454Z April 1995; Sarajevo Radio, 11 April 1995. FBIS Vienna AU1104145495 111454Z April 1995; Sarajevo Radio, 14 April 1995. FBIS Vienna AU2404104095 241040Z April 1995; Sarajevo Radio, 17 April 1995. FBIS Vienna AU1704181595 171815Z April 1995; Sarajevo Radio, 18 April 1995. FBIS Vienna AU1804190095 181900Z April 1995; Sarajevo Radio, 26 April 1995. FBIS Vienna AU2604111395 261113Z April 1995; Sarajevo Radio, 26 April 1995. FBIS Vienna AU2604193595 261935Z April 1995.

¹⁴³ Sarajevo Radio, 10 May 1995. FBIS Vienna AU1005154995 101549Z May 1995.

¹⁴⁴ Sarajevo Radio, 15 March 1995. FBIS Vienna AU1503173595, 151735Z March 1995.

¹⁴⁵ Paris AFP, 15 March 1995. FBIS Vienna AU1503180595, 151805Z March 1995.

¹⁴⁶ Split *Slobodna Dalmacija*, 25 March 1995. FBIS Reston 95BA0218A, 241828Z April 1995.

¹⁴⁷ Sarajevo Radio, 1 April 1995. FBIS London LD0104092995, 010929Z April 1995.

¹⁴⁸ Zagreb Hina, 7 April 1995. FBIS Vienna AU0704150095, 071500Z April 1995.

¹⁴⁹ Sarajevo Radio, 9 April 1995. FBIS London LD0904215695, 092156Z April 1995.

¹⁵⁰ The VRS 5th Battalion/43rd Prijedor Motorized Brigade, which was a component of the composite 1st Serbian Brigade, bore the brunt of the attack. Sarajevo Radio, 10 April 1995. FBIS Vienna AU1004140895 101408Z April 1995; Sarajevo *Prva Linija*, "Anniversary of the Battles Una-95 and Zora-95: Behind Una the Dawn," May-June 1998. FBIS Reston VA 98E08205A, 121326Z August 1998.

¹⁵¹ Zagreb Radio, 26 April 1995. FBIS London LD2604174595, 261745Z April 1995. Banja Luka Srpski Radio, 3 May 1995. FBIS Vienna AU0405171495, 041714Z May 1995.

¹⁵² Sarajevo Radio, 12 May 1995. FBIS Vienna AU1205101795, 121017Z May 1995.

¹⁵³ Paris AFP, 29 April 1995. FBIS Vienna AU2904171995, 291719Z April 1995.

¹⁵⁴ Sarajevo Radio, 29 April 1995. FBIS London LD2904173695, 291736Z April 1995.

¹⁵⁵ Paris AFP, 6 May 1995. FBIS Vienna AU0605132295, 061322Z May 1995.

¹⁵⁶ Sarajevo *Prva Linija*, "Anniversary of the Battles Una-95 and Zora-95: Behind Una the Dawn," May-June 1998. FBIS Reston VA 98E08205A, 121326Z August 1998.

¹⁵⁷ Zagreb Hina, 13 May 1995. FBIS Vienna AU1305151995, 131519Z May 1995.

¹⁵⁸ Paris AFP, 15 May 1995. FBIS Vienna AU1505114595, 151145Z May 1995.

¹⁵⁹ Paris AFP, 18 May 1995. FBIS Vienna AU1805134395, 181343Z May 1995.

¹⁶⁰ Sarajevo *Prva Linija*, "Anniversary of the Battles Una-95 and Zora-95: Behind Una the Dawn," May-June 1998. FBIS Reston VA 98E08205A, 121326Z August 1998.

¹⁶¹ Sarajevo Radio, 16 May 1995. FBIS Vienna AU1605092895, 160928Z May 1995.

¹⁶² Paris AFP, 17 May 1995. FBIS Vienna AU1705134695, 171346Z May 1995

¹⁶³ Zagreb Hina, 18 May 1995. FBIS Vienna AU1805140395, 181403Z May 1995.

¹⁶⁴ Paris AFP, 19 May 1995. FBIS Vienna AU1905083595, 190835Z May 1995.

¹⁶⁵ UN spokesmen issued conflicting statements at this time as to whether Dudakovic's 5th Corps forces were systematically burning Serb homes during its drive south of Bihać. A UN spokesman in Zagreb first stated that the Bosnian Army was torching Serb houses as part of its advance south and east of Bihać. An UNPROFOR spokeswoman stated later, however, on 19 May that only four houses had been set afire in Ripac and that no intentional damage had been seen around Bosanska Krupa. The final UN statements appeared to retract the initial reports out of Zagreb, but exactly what happened remains unclear. Paris AFP, 19 May 1995. FBIS Vienna AU1905180995, 191809Z May 1995; Zagreb Hina, 20 May 1995. FBIS Vienna AU2005141395, 201413Z May 1995.

¹⁶⁶ Paris AFP, 21 May 1995. FBIS Vienna AU2105140295, 211402Z May 1995.

¹⁶⁷ Isnam Taljic, "I Am Proud We Aided the Liberation of Croatia," Sarajevo *Ljiljan* 12-19 February 1997, p. 22, interview with Brigadier Mirsad Sedic, commander 511th Mountain Brigade, FBIS Reston 98E07025E 302107Z March 1998; Zemka Seferagic, "On the Occasion of the Liberation of Cojluk (11 July 1995) and the Victory of the 511th Glorious Brigade: The Great Victory of the Krajina Soldiers," Sarajevo *Prva Linija*, July 1997, p. 32. FBIS Reston 98E08088D 122141Z March 1998; Sarajevo Radio, 7 July 1995. FBIS Vienna AU0707095295 070952Z July 1995; Sarajevo Radio, 11 July 1995. FBIS Vienna AU1107111295 111112Z July 1995.

¹⁶⁸ Zemka Seferagic, "On the Occasion of the Liberation of Cojluk (11 July 1995) and the Victory of the 511th Glorious Brigade: The Great Victory of the Krajina Soldiers," Sarajevo *Prva Linija*, July 1997, p. 32. FBIS Reston 98E08088D 122141Z March 1998; Sarajevo Radio, 12 July 1995, AU1207193495 121933Z July 1995.

¹⁶⁹ Belgrade Tanjug, 16 April 1995. FBIS London LD1604181095, 161810Z April 1995.

¹⁷⁰ The 2nd Sarajevo Light Infantry Brigade covered the area around the airport to positions southeast of Mount Igman, while the 12th Kotorsko Light Infantry Brigade was deployed from Igman south to Trnovo. Elements of the 1st Sarajevo Mechanized Brigade appear to have supported these formations.

¹⁷¹ The 1st Guards Motorized Brigade, under the command of Tactical Group "Kalinovik."

¹⁷² The Sarajevo-Romanija Corps's 4th Reconnaissance-Sabotage Detachment "White Wolves," the Main Staff 65th Protection Motorized Regiment, plus elements of the MUP Special Police Brigade. In addition, the Herzegovina Corps usually formed a composite brigade from its formations to carry out major counterattacks.

¹⁷³ UN Observers corroborated Serb claims that the Bosnian Army used helicopters in the operation, in violation of the UN Security Council's No-Fly Zone resolution. These were almost certainly used for resupply and medical evacuation missions. Belgrade SRNA, 20 April 1995. FBIS London LD2004110195, 201101Z April 1995; Zagreb Hina, 20 April 1995. FBIS Vienna AU2004202295, 202022Z April 1995.

¹⁷⁴ Belgrade SRNA, 19 April 1995. FBIS London LD1904194595, 191945Z April 1995.

¹⁷⁵ Sarajevo Radio, 20 April 1995. FBIS London LD2004184195, 201848Z April 1995.

¹⁷⁶ Djokin Toranj is the Serb, and more common, name for this peak. The Bosnian Muslims also called the same peak by its older name, "Mala Caba."

¹⁷⁷ Reuters, "Bosnian Army Claims Capture of Strategic Peak," 20 April 1995.

¹⁷⁸ Sarajevo Radio, 20 April 1995. FBIS London LD2004184895, 201848Z April 1995.

¹⁷⁹ Brigadier General Karavelic stated publicly a few days later that the summit had actually been captured by recon-sabotage units several days earlier, on the night of 14-15 April. The news was kept secret for a time, with the announcement apparently timed for maximum publicity value.

¹⁸⁰ Banja Luka Radio, 26 April 1995. FBIS Vienna AU2604152995, 261529Z April 1995.

¹⁸¹ Belgrade SRNA, 3 June 1995. FBIS London LD0306203295, 032032Z June 1995.

¹⁸² Belgrade Tanjug, 4 May 1995. FBIS London LD0405225195, 042251Z May 1995.

¹⁸³ Belgrade SRNA, 3 June 1995. FBIS London LD0306115095, 031150Z June 1995.

¹⁸⁴ Belgrade SRNA, 7 May 1995. FBIS London 0705100995, 071009Z May 1995.

¹⁸⁵ Belgrade Tanjug, 11 May 1995. FBIS London LD1105164095, 111640Z May 1995.

¹⁸⁶ Reuters, "Serbs Running the Game on Battlefield, UN Says," 11 May 1995.

¹⁸⁷ Banja Luka Srpski Radio, 17 May 1995. FBIS Vienna AU1805105595, 181055Z May 1995.

¹⁸⁸ Belgrade SRNA, 19 May 1995. FBIS London LD1905112895, 191128Z May 1995.

¹⁸⁹ Banja Luka Srpska Televizija, 6 June 1995. FBIS Vienna AU0606190095, 061900Z June 1995.

¹⁹⁰ Sarajevo's city authorities chose to mark the beginning of the siege from 2 May 1992, when the JNA attacked the city directly for the first time and the field artillery shelling began. Many others chose instead to date the siege from 5 April 1992, when Serb residents in and around the city first set up barricades and fired at civilian demonstrators near Vrace hill. Counting from 5 April, the 1,000th day of the siege fell on 31 December 1994. Reuters, "Sarajevo Marks 1,000 Days of Siege," 27 January 1995; Reuters, "Truce Hopes as Sarajevo Siege is 1,000 Days Old" by Kurt Schork, 31 December 1994.

¹⁹¹ By comparison, when the Soviet Red Army drove on Berlin in April 1945 some 464,000 Soviet troops assaulted the city with some 12,700 heavy guns, 2,000 rocket launchers, 1,500 tanks, and tens of thousands of mortars and smaller weapons. Marshal Konev's 1st Ukrainian Front alone massed artillery pieces south of Berlin at an estimated density of 650 guns per kilometer; field guns were lined up almost literally wheel to wheel for as far as the eye could see. Keegan, Donald, *The Second World War*, pp. 823-824. Ziemke, Earl F., *Stalingrad to Berlin: The German Defeat in the East*. US Army Center for Military History, New York: Dorset Press, 1968.

¹⁹² Reuters, "Izetbegovic Vows to Break Sarajevo Siege," 24 May 1995.

¹⁹³ Reuters, "Lifting Serb Siege of Sarajevo a Mighty Task" by Kurt Schork, 12 June 1995.

¹⁹⁴ Ljubljana *Oslobodenje*, interview in two installments with Brigadier General Rifat Bilajac, Assistant Commander of the Bosnian Army General Staff, by Djuro Kozar "Some Croats Are Not Exactly Helping," 18-25 May 1995, p. 4. FBIS Vienna AU2505151395, 251513Z May 1995.

¹⁹⁵ Madrid *El Mundo* "Bosnian Military Plans to Open Up Sarajevo Could End Up in Slaughter" by Julio Fuentes, 15 June 1995. FBIS Brussels BR1506112195, 151121Z June 1995.

¹⁹⁶ The day before the Sarajevo offensive began, US President Clinton and French President Chirac expressed doubts that the Bosnian Army could prevail against the Bosnian Serbs, urging instead Bosnian Muslim acceptance of a political settlement. As Clinton stated, ". . . my judgment is . . . in the end, a military solution is not available to the Bosnian Government." Reuters, "UN Plays Down Fighting North of Sarajevo" by Kurt Schork, 15 June 1995.

¹⁹⁷ In theory, if the Bosnian Army's offensive had proved very successful, by interdicting Serb lines of communication they would also have cut off the VRS's preferred routes of retreat and made movement of Serb heavy equipment in any direction extremely difficult.

¹⁹⁸ Reuters, "Lifting Serb Siege of Sarajevo a Mighty Task" by Kurt Schork, 12 June 1995.

¹⁹⁹ Reuters, "Bosnian Army Massing to Break Sarajevo Siege—UN" by Kurt Schork, 13 June 1995.

²⁰⁰ The 1st Corps was organized into three divisions, five elite light brigades, plus support troops. The 12th Division (nine brigades) held Sarajevo city, the 14th Division (six brigades) covered the Pazaric (Hadzici)-Mount Igman-Mount Treskavica sector, and the 16th Division (five brigades) defended the Visoko-Breza-Vares sector. The General Staff probably committed its Guards Brigade and the elite "Black Swans" sabotage troops from the 120th Liberation Brigade. The 2nd Corps appears to have loaned the 1st Corps four liberation or light brigades—211th, 222nd, 241st, and 242nd—plus a sabotage battalion, while the 3rd Corps deployed at least the 7th Muslimski Liberation Brigade. The 7th Corps probably contributed the 17th Krajina Mountain, 705th Mountain, and possibly elements of the 706th and 708th Light Brigades.

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²⁰² The 12th Division was organized into the following formations:

- 101st Motorized Brigade, HQ Sarajevo-Mojmilo.
- 102nd Motorized Brigade, HQ Sarajevo-Stup.
- 105th Motorized Brigade, HQ Sarajevo-Kosevo.
- 111th Vitezka Motorized Brigade, HQ Sarajevo-Zuc Hill.
- 112th Vitezka Motorized Brigade, HQ Sarajevo-Rajlovac.
- 115th Mountain Brigade, Sarajevo-Bistrik.
- 124th Light Brigade "King Tvrtnko," HQ Sarajevo.
- 152nd Mountain Brigade, HQ Vasin Han.
- 155th Motorized Brigade, HQ Sarajevo-Dobrinja.

In addition, two elite light brigades were stationed in Sarajevo, the 141st and 143rd. The bulk of these formations were holding their normal defensive sectors and were unavailable for the main attack but carried out supporting raids and limited objective attacks.

²⁰³ The 14th Division normally controlled the 104th Motorized, 109th Mountain, 123rd Light, and 131st Light Brigades but was reinforced with the elite 145th and 146th Light Brigades from 1st Corps for the operation.

²⁰⁴ The 4th Corps had the following formations or elements of these formations deployed at Treskavica:

- 4th Muslim Light Brigade.
- 444th Mountain Brigade.
- 445th Mountain Brigade.

- 447th Liberation Brigade.
 - 450th Light Brigade.
 - 4th Reconnaissance-Sabotage Battalion.
 - 4th Mixed Artillery Regiment.
- ²⁰⁵ The Sarajevo-Romanija Corps was organized into the following formations:
- 1st Sarajevo Mechanized Brigade, vic. Sarajevo-Grbavica-Lukavica.
 - 2nd Sarajevo Light Infantry Brigade, vic. Lukavica-Sarajevo Airport-Mount Igman.
 - 3rd Sarajevo Infantry Brigade, vic. Vogosca-Semizovac-Rajlovac.
 - 4th Sarajevo Light Infantry Brigade, vic. Cemerska Hills/NE of Ilijas.
 - 1st Romanija Infantry Brigade, vic. Cemerska Hills/NE of Ilijas.
 - 1st Ilijas Infantry Brigade, vic. Ilijas-Cemerska Hills.
 - 1st Ilidza Infantry Brigade, vic. Ilidza-Nedzarici-Sarajevo Airport.
 - 1st Igman Infantry brigade, vic. Hadzici-Mount Igman.
 - 12th Kotorsko Light Infantry Brigade, vic. NW of Trnovo/Mount Igman (attached from 1st Krajina Corps).
 - 4th Mixed Artillery Regiment.
 - 4th Reconnaissance-Sabotage Detachment "White Wolves."
- ²⁰⁶ The 4th Drina Light Infantry Brigade was deployed to the Trnovo sector.
- ²⁰⁷ The 1st Guards Motorized Brigade (attached from the VRS Main Staff) was headquartered in Kalinovik and covered the Trnovo-Treskavica sector, including Djokin Toranj. The 18th Herzegovina Light Infantry Brigade was arrayed on its left.
- ²⁰⁸ Reuters, "UN Plays Down Fighting North of Sarajevo" by Kurt Schork, 15 June 1995.
- ²⁰⁹ Reuters, "Heavy Fighting Breaks Out North of Bosnia Capital" by Kurt Schork, 15 June 1995.
- ²¹⁰ Reuters, "War Fears as Heavy Fighting Erupts Near Sarajevo" by Kurt Schork, 15 June 1995.
- ²¹¹ Sefko Hodzic, "They Defended Sarajevo," *Sarajevo Oslobođenje*, 26 February 1996, an article on the ARBiH 12th Division, p. 3. FBIS Reston 969B0018B 221630Z July 1996.
- ²¹² An adjacent spearhead attempted to advance toward Ilijas, suggesting an intended move along the Visoko-Vogosca road which never panned out.
- ²¹³ See the following articles:
- Fikret Julardzija, "The Eight, Last Wound of the Legendary Koprdza," *Travnik Bosnjak*, 4 July 1995, p. 25, an article on the 7th Muslim Liberation Brigade during the Sarajevo relief operation.
 - 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, an interview with Major Ibrahim Salihovic, commander of the 211th Liberation Brigade.
 - Said Humremovic, "222nd Liberation Brigade: 'Young Lions' Standard-Bearers of Freedom," *Prva Linija*, March 1997, pp. 23-24. FBIS Reston VA 98E08102A 091712Z June 1998.
 - "Three Years of the 241st Spreca-Muslim-Light Brigade: Lisaca—A Victory That Will Be Inscribed in Gold Letters," *Prva Linija*, July 1997, p. 31. FBIS Reston VA 98E08088C 122020Z March 1998.
 - "On the Occasion of the Third Anniversary of the Formation of the 242nd Zvornik Muslim Light Brigade: Unforgettable Successes," *Prva Linija*, October 1997, p. 31. FBIS Reston VA 98E07020C 171631Z February 1998.
 - S. R., "On the Fifth Anniversary of the SDB 'Black Wolves,'" *Prva Linija*, October 1997, p. 11. FBIS Reston VA 98E08031A 121934Z January 1998.
- ²¹⁴ Sefko Hodzic, "They Defended Sarajevo," *Sarajevo Oslobođenje*, 26 February 1996, p. 3. FBIS Reston 969B0018B 221630Z July 1996, an article on the ARBiH 12th Division.
- ²¹⁵ Sarajevo Radio, 12 June 1995. FBIS London LD1206214295, 122142Z June 1995.
- ²¹⁶ Sarajevo Radio, 13 June 1995. FBIS Vienna AU1306191695 131916Z June 1995.
- ²¹⁷ As in most successful assaults by both sides, elite Bosnian MUP Special Police troops again supported the ARBiH units. Sarajevo Radio, 16 June 1995. FBIS Vienna AU1606083295, 160832Z June 1995.
- ²¹⁸ Sarajevo Radio, 19 June 1995. FBIS Vienna AU1906110995, 191109Z June 1995.
- ²¹⁹ Sarajevo Radio, 23 June 1995. FBIS London LD2306214595, 232145Z June 1995.
- ²²⁰ Reuters, "Bosnian Army Aiming to 'Besiege the Besiegers'" by Davor Huic, 24 June 1995.
- ²²¹ Sefko Hodzic, "They Defended Sarajevo," *Sarajevo Oslobođenje*, 26 February 1996, p. 3. FBIS Reston 969B0018B 221630Z July 1996.
- ²²² Zagreb *Globus*, "20,000 Soldiers of the Army of Bosnia-Herzegovina in the Great Sarajevo Offensive Manage To Take Only Three Small Villages on Mt. Igman" by Antun Masle, 23 June 1995, pp. 4, 6.
- ²²³ Sefko Hodzic, "They Defended Sarajevo," *Sarajevo Oslobođenje*, 26 February 1996, p. 3. FBIS Reston 969B0018B 221630Z July 1996.
- ²²⁴ The 65th, under the command of Colonel Milomir Savcic, received a commendation from General Mladic for its success in this action. Pale SRNA, 26 June 1995. FBIS London LD2606170595 261705Z June 1995.
- ²²⁵ Belgrade Tanjug, 19 June 1995. FBIS London LD1906155095, 191550Z June 1995.
- ²²⁶ Reuters, "Lifting Serb Siege of Sarajevo a Mighty Task" by Kurt Schork, 12 June 1995.
- ²²⁷ Belgrade SRNA, 4 July 1995. FBIS London LD04071095395, 041053Z July 1995.
- ²²⁸ Belgrade Tanjug, 4 July 1995. FBIS London LD0407140995, 041409Z July 1995.
- ²²⁹ Belgrade Tanjug, 7 July 1995. FBIS London LD0707100295, 071002Z July 1995.
- ²³⁰ Paris AFP, 21 July 1995. FBIS Vienna AU2107174195, 211741Z July 1995.
- ²³¹ Sarajevo Radio, 24 July 1995. FBIS Vienna AU2407153895, 241538Z July 1995.
- ²³² The Herzegovina Corps regularly formed a composite brigade, the "Combined Brigade of the Herzegovina Corps," from its many units to conduct offensive operations or act as a counterattack formation.
- ²³³ Belgrade SRNA, 2 August 1995. FBIS London LD0208124795, 021247Z August 1995.
- ²³⁴ Belgrade Tanjug, 3 August 1995. FBIS London LD0308174995, 031749Z August 1995.
- ²³⁵ Belgrade SRNA, 5 August 1995. FBIS London LD0508120595, 051205Z August 1995.
- ²³⁶ Paris AFP, 3 October 1995. FBIS Vienna AU0310122495, 031224 October 1995.
- ²³⁷ Pale Srpski Radio, 3 October 1995. FBIS London LD0310164995, 031649Z October 1995.
- ²³⁸ Belgrade SRNA, 5 October 1995. FBIS London LD0510143995, 051439Z October 1995.
- ²³⁹ Banja Luka Srpski Radio, 5 October 1995. FBIS Vienna AU0610194495, 061944Z October 1995.
- ²⁴⁰ Belgrade Tanjug, 4 October 1995. FBIS London LD0410211095, 042110Z October 1995.

²⁴¹ Sarajevo Radio, 10 October 1995. FBIS Vienna AU1010195295, 101952Z October 1995.

²⁴² Belgrade SRNA, 11 October. FBIS London LD1210141395, 121413Z October 1995.

²⁴³ Banja Luka Srpski Radio, 12 October 1995. FBIS Vienna AU1210214595, 122145Z October 1995.

²⁴⁴ Mustafa Borovic, "Anniversary of the Death of Zaim Imamovic, Legendary 14th Division commander: Zaim Died at the Dawn of Freedom," Sarajevo Ljiljan 16 October 1996, p. 30 FBIS Reston 98E07025A 301835Z March 1998.

²⁴⁵ Even the Bosnian Army essentially conceded that the offensive had originally aimed to open the road to Gorazde but that the exceptionally heavy casualties in the battles around Treskavica, Trnovo, and Kalinovik had contributed to the abandonment of this plan. Split *Nedjeljna Dalmacija*, "If the Serbs Shell Sarajevo, We Shall Shell Banja Luka," interview with Col. Ferid Buljubasic, Bosnia-Herzegovina Army General Staff Spokesman, by Zeljko Garmaz, 29 September 1995. FBIS Vienna AU2909151295, 291512Z September 1995.

²⁴⁶ One figure given says 36,666 residents. Jan Willem Honig and Norbert Both, *Srebrenica: Record of a War Crime*, UK: Penguin Books, 1996. p. xviii.

²⁴⁷ Another figure provided gives 37,211 residents. Rohde, David, *Endgame: The Betrayal and Fall of Srebrenica, Europe's Worst Massacre Since World War II*. New York, Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1997. p. xiv.

²⁴⁸ Honig and Both, p. xviii.

²⁴⁹ David Rohde gives a figure of "a prewar population of about 9,000" which may be more accurate but is less precise than the figure cited by Honig and Both. Rohde, *Endgame*, p. xiv.

²⁵⁰ Sudetic, Chuck, *Blood and Vengeance: One Family's Story of the War in Bosnia*. New York: W. W. Norton, 1998. p. 7.

²⁵¹ Note that this is almost a century after the Serb defeat at Kosovo Polje in 1389: the (narrow) Ottoman victory at Kosovo Polje did not immediately translate into Turkish domination over the region. Rather it marked the beginning of a long but steady process of Ottoman conquests. Belgrade successfully resisted a siege in 1456, but most of the rest of Serbia came under the domination of the Ottoman Turks at this time. Nine years later Sultan Mehmed directed his energies westward, over the Drina and into Bosnia.

²⁵² Although most reports claim Oric was in the Serbian special police, he may instead have served in the prewar Federal Secretariat for Internal Affairs' elite Special Police Brigade, which operated prominently in Kosovo. It seems unlikely that Oric was actually one of Milosevic's personal bodyguards, but it is plausible that while serving in the Federal police he took part in protecting Milosevic during some event. *The Christian Science Monitor*, "UN Convoy Relieves Siege on Bosnia Town," 30 November 1992.

²⁵³ Rohde, *Endgame*, pp. 56-61.

²⁵⁴ Halilovic, Sefer, *Lukava Strategija* ("Clever Strategy"), chapter 18.

²⁵⁵ Sarajevo *Ljiljan*, "A Journey Through Death" by Isnam Taljic, 6-13 June 1998, pp. 18-20.

²⁵⁶ *The Christian Science Monitor*, "Bosnian Serb Forces Obstruct UN Plan to 'Winterize' Enclaves," 10 November 1993.

²⁵⁷ Rohde, *Endgame*, p. 16.

²⁵⁸ Reuters, "Other Bosnia 'Safe Areas' Doomed" by Sean Maguire, 13 July 1995.

²⁵⁹ Reuters, "UN's Janvier Says No Mandate to Defend Safe Areas" 28 July 1995.

²⁶⁰ Rohde, *Endgame*, p. xv.

²⁶¹ Reuters, "UN Officials Lash Serbs for Srebrenica Attack" by Mark Heinrich, 13 April 1993.

²⁶² Reuters, "Death Marched Down Srebrenica's Main Street—Witness" by Michael Shields, 14 April 1993.

²⁶³ Another barrage the following day, 13 April, killed eight more and wounded 21. Reuters, "Eight Die in New Barrage of Srebrenica—UN," 14 April 1993.

²⁶⁴ *Time*, "Srebrenica Succumbs" by James L. Graff, 26 April 1993, pp. 34-35.

²⁶⁵ Amsterdam *De Volkskrant*, "Commander of Dutchbat-2 Admits Dislike of Muslims" by Ewoud Nysingh, 1 September 1995.

²⁶⁶ Amsterdam *De Volkskrant*, "UN Soldiers Accused of Serious Crimes—Dutchbat Lured Children Toward Mines in Srebrenica" by Ewoud Nysingh and Hella Rottenburg, 9 May 1995.

²⁶⁷ Laura Silber and Allan Little, *Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation*, Penguin USA, p. 356.

²⁶⁸ This figure is consistent with ARBiH commander Delic's statement in August 1995 that 2,700 Srebrenica survivors had joined up with a newly reconstituted 28th Division after the enclave's fall and with official Bosnian Army estimates stating that some 3,200 ARBiH soldiers remain unaccounted for from the Srebrenica battles, massacres, and escape attempt. Sarajevo *Prva Linija*, "A Tragedy That Must Not Be Forgotten: On The Second Anniversary of the Calvary of the People of Srebrenica" by Abdulah Suljkanovic, July 1997, pp. 26-26. FBIS Reston 98E08086B, 232120Z March 1998.

²⁶⁹ Halilovic, Sefer, *Lukava Strategija* ("Clever Strategy"), chapter 14.

²⁷⁰ Sarajevo *Oslobodjenje*, "How Srebrenica Fell: Defenders With Hunting Rifles" by Sead Numanovic, 20-27 July. FBIS Reston 95BA0303A 012248Z August 1995.

²⁷¹ After carefully assembling the smuggled weapon in a building next to the town hall in May 1995, one of the three operators accidentally hit the firing switch. The rocket took off, slammed into the inside wall of the building, and seriously injured the three soldiers. In the end it did not matter that they were not able to translate the instruction manual, since the trigger mechanism did not work. Rohde, *Endgame*, pp. 70-71, 74.

²⁷² Rohde, *Endgame*, p. 70.

²⁷³ Rohde, *Endgame*, p. 8.

²⁷⁴ It is unclear what role the Tactical Group "Pribicevac" headquarters played, if any, in directing the operation as it appears that the 1st Bratunac Brigade headquarters, under Lieutenant Colonel Vidoje Blagojevic, and a forward headquarters from the 1st Zvornik Brigade, under Lieutenant Colonel Vinko Pandurevic, controlled the troops in their sectors and probably reported directly to Drina Corps headquarters. Information on VRS organization, planning, and actions for and during "Krivaja 95"—including the battles against the 28th Division column after the enclave's fall—has been derived largely from the details found in the transcripts of General Krstic's trial at International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY). In particular, see testimony provided on 27, 28, 29, and 30 June 2000 available on the ICTY Web site.

²⁷⁵ *The New York Times*, "Bosnia Massacre Mars Do-Right Image the Dutch Hold Dear" by Marlise Simons, 13 September 1998.

²⁷⁶ *The New Yorker*, "Letter From Bosnia: We Hate You" by David Rieff, 4 September 1995, pp. 41-48.

²⁷⁷ *Newsday*, "UN's Deadly Deal: How Troop-Hostage Talks Led To Slaughter of Srebrenica" by Roy Gutman, 29 May 1996.

²⁷⁸ Many of the members of the support units apparently felt that they were not fully accepted by the members of the 13th Airmobile Infantry Battalion, although this does not appear to have seriously affected unit cohesion or overall operational effectiveness.

²⁷⁹ Silber and Little, p. 359.

²⁸⁰ Honig and Both, p. 6.

²⁸¹ *The New Republic*, "The Fall of Srebrenica" by Charles Lane, 14 August 1995.

²⁸² Jan Willem Honig and Norbert Both, *Srebrenica: Record of a War Crime*, UK: Penguin Books, 1996. p. 5.

²⁸³ Honig and Both, p. 5.

²⁸⁴ Ibid.

²⁸⁵ *Jane's Defence Weekly*, "This Week: UNPROFOR Casualty," 8 April 1995, p. 6.

²⁸⁶ Halilovic, Sefer, *Lukava Strategija* ("Clever Strategy"), chapter 14.

²⁸⁷ Bosnian Serb Army spokesman Lt. Col. Milovan Milutinovic articulated the Serb perception at the time:

There have been a number of incidents like this in the last 15 to 20 days . . . The Muslim soldiers who carried out this attack crossed lines patrolled by Dutch UN troops whose job it is to prevent just this kind of action. We therefore conclude that the UN forces are aligning themselves with the Muslim army.

The New York Times, "Bosnian Muslim Troops Evade UN Force To Raid Serb Village" by Stephen Kinzer, 27 June 1995.

²⁸⁸ *The Washington Post*, "Anybody Who Moved or Screamed Was Killed" by Michael Dobbs and Christine Spolar, 26 October 1995.

²⁸⁹ The number of VRS troops stationed around the enclaves had steadily declined since 1993 as the VRS raided the formations for manpower to bolster other sectors, transferring elements of different brigades piecemeal to shore up defenses across Bosnia. Nevertheless, a considerable number of complete units remained that could be released if the enclaves fell. The entire 1st Bratunac Light Infantry Brigade, for instance, was attached to the Sarajevo-Romanija Corps and dispatched to the threatened Trnovo sector after the fall of Srebrenica and Zepa.

²⁹⁰ Honig and Both, pp. 6-7.

²⁹¹ Rohde, *Endgame*, p. 4. According to the Drina Corps planning order cited by the ICTY, the Drina Corps forward command post under General Krstic was to be established on Pribicevac Hill, east of Srebrenica town, on 4 July. See 28 June transcript of Krstic trial.

²⁹² Honig and Both, p. 9.

²⁹³ By way of example, one of the UN peacekeepers related how the Bosnian Army had successfully concealed a 76-mm M-48 "mountain gun," as well as a hidden bunker, from the UN for over two years. The Dutch peacekeepers had been driving within about 30 meters of the artillery piece for the entire time without ever detecting it. The weapon—perhaps the only functioning ARBiH artillery piece in the enclave—was seen only after it was removed from its hiding place on 8 or 9 July. Rohde, *Endgame*, p. 67.

²⁹⁴ Honig and Both, p. 8.

²⁹⁵ Rohde, *Endgame*, p. 6.

²⁹⁶ Rohde, *Endgame*, pp. 29-33.

²⁹⁷ Honig and Both, p. 3.

²⁹⁸ Rohde, *Endgame*, pp. 34-39.

²⁹⁹ Rohde, *Endgame*, pp. 40-41.

³⁰⁰ Honig and Both, p. 10.

³⁰¹ Honig and Both, p. 11.

³⁰² Silber and Little, p. 357.

³⁰³ Four OPs, if one includes the former OP Echo that the Serbs had taken over in June.

³⁰⁴ Rohde, *Endgame*, p. 79.

³⁰⁵ Rohde, *Endgame*, pp. 83-84.

³⁰⁶ Honig and Both, p. 11.

³⁰⁷ Rohde, *Endgame*, p. 91.

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³⁰⁹ Rohde, *Endgame*, pp. 76-77.

³¹⁰ Honig and Both, p. 14.

³¹¹ Rohde, *Endgame*, pp. 84-88.

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³¹⁵ *The New York Times*, "Srebrenica: The Days of Slaughter" by Stephen Engelberg and Tim Weiner, with further reporting from Raymond Bonner and Jane Perlez, 29 October 1995.

³¹⁶ The UN's civilian authority, Yasushi Akashi, was in Croatia at the time and had delegated exclusive authority to approve Close Air Support requests to UNPROFOR commander Janvier.

³¹⁷ Silber and Little, p. 357.

³¹⁸ A similar but slightly different translation is offered in Rohde, *Endgame*, p. 73.

³¹⁹ *The New York Times*, "Srebrenica: The Days of Slaughter" by Stephen Engelberg and Tim Weiner, with further reporting from Raymond Bonner and Jane Perlez, 29 October 1995.

³²⁰ Rotterdam Algemeen Dagblad, "Dutchbat Once Again Discredited" by Othon Zimmerman, 17 February 1996, p. 7.

³²¹ Rohde, *Endgame*, pp. 143-144.

³²² Ibid.

³²³ This feeling of betrayal was further compounded by the Bosnian Government's unsupportive attitude after the refugees were deported from Srebrenica and taken to Tuzla airfield. UN officials—caught unprepared for the overnight influx of thousands upon thousands of refugees—sharply criticized the Bosnian Government for deliberately capitalizing on the suffering of its own citizens. The Bosnian authorities maximized the visibility and the suffering of the refugees by at first insisting they all be concentrated in one location where medical and sanitary facilities were inadequate, when the UN had 37 other facilities available that the government did not permit them to use. The Bosnian Government asserted that since they had become refugees because of the UN's failure to protect them, they were therefore a UN responsibility. While the debate raged, the refugees suffered. *The Washington Post*, "'We Count for Nothing' Srebrenica Refugees Unwelcome in Tuzla" by John Pomfret, 15 July 1995; *The New York Times*, "Bosnia Lets Refugees Leave Camp But 20,000 Others Are Missing" by Stephen Kinzer, 16 July 1995.

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³²⁶ Ibid.

³²⁷ Reuters, "Bosnian Serb Forces Break Into Srebrenica Town" 11 July 1995.

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³³⁰ *The New York Times*, "Total Takeover of UN Zone in Bosnia" by Chris Hedges, 13 July 1995.

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³³⁴ *The Washington Post*, "Dutch Government Absolves Troops in Fall of Srebrenica" by William Drozdiak, 31 October 1995.

³³⁵ *Jane's Defence Weekly*, "The Netherlands: Learning the Lessons of Srebrenica" by Joris Jansses Lok, 31 January 1996.

³³⁶ *The New York Times*, "Serbs Expel Thousands of Muslims from Srebrenica" by Tony Barber, 12 July 1995.

³³⁷ The inability of the Dutch peacekeepers and the handful of international aid workers to cope adequately with thousands of Muslim refugees was already producing a humanitarian catastrophe by 12 July. Shortages of food and water, the near absence of sanitary facilities, and summer temperatures above 95 degrees Fahrenheit combined to produce a Dantesque scene. For details on the VRS moves to shift buses and other vehicles to Srebrenica to move the population, see ICTY Krstic trial transcript for 28 June 2000.

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I owe it to the truth to say that up to now the contacts the French Government had made have not been positive. I deplore that. For the moment we are alone . . . Of course, if we want to do strictly nothing, then I don't see why UN forces should be . . . accomplices to this barbarism, accomplices to these practices of ethnic cleansing . . .
- Reuters, "Serbs Attack Zepa 'Safe Area,' Again Challenge UN" by Sean Maguire, 14 July 1995.

⁵⁰⁰ Brussels *Le Soir*, Interview With French Foreign Minister Herve De Charette, by Jaques Cordy, "Herve de Charette—On Bosnia, and the Nuclear Tests Envisaged by Chirac in the Pacific," 13 July 1995. FBIS Brussels BR1307153795, 131537Z July 1995.

⁵⁰¹ *The New York Times*, "Conflict in the Balkans: The Policy, US Weighs a Response to French Call on Bosnia" by Alison Mitchell, 15 July 1995.

⁵⁰² *Time*, "Tears and Terror: Mercilessly, the War Tramples 'Safe Areas'" by Bruce W. Nelan, 24 July 1995.

⁵⁰³ *The Times*, "Clinton Pledges All-Out Help to Allies" by Tom Rhodes, 13 July 1995.

⁵⁰⁴ Paris AFP, 13 July 1995. FBIS Vienna AU1307111595, 131115Z July 1995.

⁵⁰⁵ Reuters, "Bosnia Force Must be Deployed Quickly—Ruehe," 13 July 1995.

⁵⁰⁶ The Muslims of Gorazde had also taken their weapons from the UN cantonments when Srebrenica and Zepa were overrun.

⁵⁰⁷ Reuters, "US Mulling Proposal To Aid Bosnia's Gorazde" by Carol Giacomo, 14 July 1995.

⁵⁰⁸ Reuters, "Bosnia Says Britain Buying Time for Slaughter," 15 July 1995.

⁵⁰⁹ Reuters, "Serbs Press Attack Despite Western Threats" by Kurt Schork, 21 July 1995.

⁵¹⁰ *The New York Times*, "Clinton Agrees To Plan Defense of 'Safe Areas': French Seek Help in Shoring Up UN" by Ann Devroy and William Drozdiak, 15 July 1995.

⁵¹¹ Reuters, "World's Press Sees Only Empty Words on Bosnia" by Alan Raybould, 22 July 1995.

⁵¹² Reuters, "Silajdzic Disgusted by Bosnia London Conference," 21 July 1995.

⁵¹³ Reuters, "US Assures Bosnia NATO Will Defend Gorazde," 25 August 1995.

⁵¹⁴ Bosnian Government troops seized virtually all of the vehicles, weapons, ammunition, and equipment owned by the Ukrainian peacekeeping contingent on the night of 17-18 July. Reuters, "Government Troops Seize UN Weapons in Gorazde" by Kurt Schork, 17 July 1995.

⁵¹⁵ Reuters, "Doctors Group Denounces UN Gorazde Withdrawal," 24 August 1995.

⁵¹⁶ Reuters, "Troop Withdrawal Endangers Gorazde—UN Sources" by Kurt Schork, 24 August 1995.

⁵¹⁷ Reuters, "British Troops Join UN Withdrawal From Gorazde" by Kurt Schork, 26 August 1995.

⁵¹⁸ Belgrade Tanjug, 16 May 1995. For more details on Mrksic's appointment, see Major General Milisav Sekulic, *Knin Je Pao U Beogradu (Knin Fell in Belgrade)* as excerpted in *Belgrade Politika*, Online Edition. URL: <www.politika.co.yu/feljton> Accessed 18 July 2001.

⁵¹⁹ Mrksic was born in 1946 in Croatia. He graduated from the JNA Military Academy for Ground Forces in 1968. He was commissioned a 2nd Lieutenant in the armored forces and assigned to the "Tito Guards" Division in Belgrade. Mrksic graduated from the Command and General Staff Academy in 1980. Before assuming command of the 1st Guards Motorized Brigade, he served as its chief of staff. After Vukovar, Mrksic was given command of RSK Territorial Defense Zone Headquarters in Banija and Kordun. In mid-1992, he was appointed the first commander of the new VJ Corps of Special Units. When Lieutenant Colonel General Momcilo Perisic was made Chief of the VJ General Staff in August 1993, Mrksic became an Assistant Chief of the VJ General Staff. According to one report:

Among many JNA professional officers, Mrksic was selected for command of the premier combat brigade of the JNA during the Serbo-Croat war in 1991. For successful command during this period he was promoted to the rank of general over more senior officers. His strong personality

and professional leadership is considered beneficial toward improving the severely damaged morale of the Krajina Serb Army. His appointment from the VJ General Staff is seen as an effort to thwart the feeling of abandonment by Belgrade that prevails throughout the Krajina.

⁵²⁰ SRNA 11 June 1995.

⁵²¹ See Croatian Foreign Minister Granic's letter to the UN Secretary General 28 June 1995, which details information on the transfer of VJ officers and equipment to the SVK. The officers are identified by name and the unit from which they were transferred and that to which they were going. The amount of detail makes it apparent that Granic's information came from Croatian intelligence reporting.

⁵²² Belgrade Tanjug, 28 June 1995.

⁵²³ The KSJ comprised the following formations:

- 2nd Guards Brigade.
- 2nd Armored Brigade.
- 71st Special Operations Brigade.
- MUP Special Police Brigade.

The unit designators for the brigade mirrored those of its model, the VJ Corps of Special Units that included the Yugoslav Army's 1st Guards Brigade, 1st Armored Brigade, and 72nd Special Operations Brigade (in addition to the well-known 63rd Airborne Brigade).

⁵²⁴ See Frane Plancic, "The March-Past of the Possessed," Zagreb *Vecernji List*, 1 July 1995, p. 14; and Fran Visnar, "Only the 'Kosava' Is Something More Serious," Zagreb *Vjesnik*, 29 June 1995, p. 5, which reviews the parade and the formation of the KSJ.

⁵²⁵ Coordination among Milosevic, Mladic, the RSK Government, and Abdic had long been close. On 28 April 1995, Mladic, RSK Prime Minister Mikelic, and Abdic met with Milosevic in Belgrade, presumably to discuss objectives and strategy around Bihać. "Mikelic, Abdic, Mladic Visit Milosevic," Belgrade *Nasa Borba*, 22-23 April 1995, p. 1.

⁵²⁶ In addition to the sources cited directly later in the text, the combat narrative is based on Major General Milisav Sekulic, *Knin Je Pao U Beogradu (Knin Fell in Belgrade)* as excerpted in *Belgrade Politika*, Online Edition. URL: <www.politika.co.yu/feljton> Accessed 18 July 2001; Belgrade Tanjug, SRNA, and Sarajevo Radio reports of 15-26 July 1995; plus the Reuters and Paris AFP reporting—which provided UN information—as listed below:

- Reuters, "Serbs, Moslem Rebels Attack Bosnian Bihac Enclave," 19 July 1995.
- Reuters, "Croatian Serbs Gain Ground in Bosnia Enclave" by Mark Heinrich, 20 July 1995.
- Reuters, "Serb Attack on Bihac, Croatian Threat Alarms UN" by Mark Heinrich, 21 July 1995.
- Reuters, "Serbs Push Deeper Into Bosnian Enclave Bihac" by Davor Huic, 23 July 1995.
- Reuters, "Serb Push Continues in Bihac Enclave," 26 July 1995.
- Paris AFP, "UN Officials Say Two FROG 7 Missiles Fired on Bihac," 17 July 1995.
- Paris AFP, "Serbs Launch 'Three-Pronged Offensive' On Bihac Enclave," 23 July 1995.

⁵²⁷ Each tactical group probably had the 15th Light Infantry Brigade or one of the KSJ infantry brigades—2nd Guards, 71st Special, and MUP Special Police Brigades—at its core with armored elements attached from the 2nd Armored Brigade. TG-1 and 2 were reinforced with two to three battalions drawn from 21st Corps.

⁵²⁸ Isnam Taljic, "There Weren't Any Croatian Defense Council Soldiers To Even Photograph," Sarajevo *Ljiljan* 12-19 February 1997, p. 22, interview with Jusuf Lipovaca, commander of the 1st Battalion/502nd Mountain Brigade; Major General Milisav Sekulic, *Knin Je Pao U Beogradu (Knin Fell in Belgrade)* as excerpted in *Belgrade Politika*, Online Edition. URL: <www.politika.co.yu/feljton> Accessed 18 July 2001.

⁵²⁹ Isnam Taljic, "The Croatian State, Too, Was Liberated With the Tekbir," Sarajevo *Ljiljan* 12-19 February 1997, p. 23, an interview with Colonel Hamdija Abdic "Tigar," commander of the 502nd Mountain Brigade. Elements of the 510th Liberation Brigade, and elements of the 503rd Mountain Brigade—on the right of the 517th at the Velika Kladusa front—also probably shifted troops to help stem the tide. Elements of the 5th Independent Antitank Artillery-Rocket Battalion were dispersed among the infantry to help halt the SVK armor. See Z. S. "On the Anniversary of the 5th SPOARD [Samostalna Protiv-Okolno Artiljerski Raketen Divizion—5th Independent Antitank Artillery Rocket Battalion]." Sarajevo *Prva Linija* March 1997, p. 19.

⁵³⁰ The attack by TG-1 and 2 on this day, however, made little or no gain. Apparently, troops from the Serbian MUP 101st Special Police Detachment refused to attack again and sat down on the road, blocking the movement of SVK tanks. Zagreb HTV 25 July 1995, interview with Brigadier General Atif Dudaković; Major General Milisav Sekulic, *Knin Je Pao U Beogradu (Knin Fell in Belgrade)* as excerpted in *Belgrade Politika*, Online Edition. URL: <www.politika.co.yu/feljton> Accessed 18 July 2001.

⁵³¹ Petrinja Srpski Radio, 26 July 1995.

⁵³² Dudakovic was asked in a February 1996 interview what had been the toughest time for him. He answered:

In the seventh month of last year, when the Autonomists [Abdic's forces] and the Special Forces Corps of Serbian Krajina were attacking and took Pecka Brda, the villages of Krivaja and Likovac, when my driver was wounded and the unit with me decimated. There was a question whether Cazin would fall or not.

Vildana Selimbegovic and Ozren Kebo, "I Know My Fighting Men By Sight," Sarajevo *Dani*, February 1996, pp. 40-44, an interview with General Dudakovic.

⁵³³ Zagreb Radio 22 July 1995.

⁵³⁴ This narrative is based primarily on General Gotovina's account, Colonel General Ante Gotovina, *Offensive Battles and Operations of the Croatian Army and HVO*, Knin: Split Corps District, 1996, pp. 59-68.

⁵³⁵ The 3rd Battalion/1st Guards Brigade appears to have had a tank company attached for the operation.

⁵³⁶ The 2nd HVO Guards also had the company-sized "Gavran-2" (Ravens) Special Purpose Unit attached.

⁵³⁷ Colonel General Ante Gotovina, *Offensive Battles and Operations of the Croatian Army and HVO*, Knin: Split Corps District, 1996, pp. 59-68. See also the following articles on HV/HVO units:

- Boris Komadina, "A Tiger Fighting For Croatia," Zagreb *Hrvatski Obzor* 6 November 1995, pp. 28-29, an interview with Staff Brigadier Jozo Milicevic, commander 1st Guards Brigade.
- Zagreb *Velebit*, 2 February 1996, pp. 16-17, article on the Armored Battalion/1st Guards Brigade.
- Vesna Puljak, "Steel For the Puma's Leaps," Zagreb *Velebit*, 12 January 1996, pp. 16-17, an article on the Armored Battalion/7th Guards Brigade.
- Zoran Vukman, "Victorious Trail on All Battlefields," Split *Slobodna Dalmacija* 1 June 1996, p. 8, an article on the 114th Infantry Brigade.
- Nevin Miladin, "On the Wings of Victory," Zagreb *Velebit*, 12 July 1996, pp. 16-17, an article on the 2nd HVO Guards Brigade.
- Gordan Radosevic, "While There Are Hawks," Zagreb *Velebit* 23 January 1998, pp. 18-19, an article on the 3rd HVO Guards Brigade.

⁵³⁸ The 3rd Serbian Brigade's composite battalions appear to have been drawn from 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, and 11th Dubica Infantry Brigades—all from the 1st Krajina Corps—and the 1st, 2nd, 3rd Šemberija Infantry Brigades/East Bosnian Corps.

⁵³⁹ Gotovina's statement conflicts with Major General Sekulic's account, which claims that the VRS and SVK units "did not put up significant resistance." Major General Milisav Sekulic, *Knin Je Pao U Beogradu (Knin Fell in Belgrade)* as excerpted in *Belgrade Politika*, Online Edition. URL: <www.politika.co.yu/feljton> Accessed 18 July 2001; Colonel General Ante Gotovina, *Offensive Battles and Operations of the Croatian Army and HVO*, Knin: Split Corps District, 1996, pp. 59.

⁵⁴⁰ The SVK Main Staff attempted unsuccessfully to order the RSK MUP Special Police Brigade to move to Grahovo. Reuters, "UN Says Serbs Agree to Withdraw From Bihać" by Mark Heinrich, 30 July 1995. Major General Milisav Sekulic, *Knin Je Pao U Beogradu (Knin Fell in Belgrade)* as excerpted in *Belgrade Politika*, Online Edition. URL: <www.politika.co.yu/feljton> Accessed 18 July 2001.

⁵⁴¹ Zagreb HINA 31 July 1995.

⁵⁴² Tudjman stated:

If the Serb side shows no willingness to start serious negotiations, Croatia will be forced to carry out the reintegration of occupied areas by itself and extend maximum help to Bosnia to liberate Bihać.

Reuters, "Croatia Tells Reeling Serbs: Talk or Face Defeat" by Mark Heinrich, 30 July 1995.

⁵⁴³ Reuters, "War-Ready Croatians and Rebel Serbs Talk in Geneva" by Robert Evans, 3 August 1995.

⁵⁴⁴ Reuters, "US Says No Reason For Croatia War After Serb Pact" by Mark Heinrich, 3 August 1995.

⁵⁴⁵ This discussion of the Croatian offensive plans is based primarily on Janko Bobetko, *Sve Moje Bitke (All My Battles)*, Zagreb: Vlastita Naklada, 1996, which includes the photographed texts of the directives for all four operations comprising "Oluja." These directives, however, appear to have been modified prior to the start of "Oluja." The directives also include accurate, detailed intelligence assessments of the disposition of SVK forces, in many cases down to battalion level. In addition, some information from Major General Milisav Sekulic's study has been included. It is the most detailed account available of the decisions made in the SVK at the time. Sekulic was the Chief of Operations and Training on the SVK Main Staff. Major General Milisav Sekulic, *Knin Je Pao U Beogradu (Knin Fell in Belgrade)* as excerpted in *Belgrade Politika*, Online Edition. URL: <www.politika.co.yu/feljton> Accessed 18 July 2001

⁵⁴⁶ The photographed text for the original directive of Operation "Oluja-1," issued on 26 June 1995, is in Bobetko, pp. 422-432; Bobetko's discussion of the directive is on pp. 433-440.

⁵⁴⁷ See the interview with Brigadier Mirsad Selmanovic, the 5th Corps chief of staff, in Isnam Taljic, "The Chetniks Surrendered Petra Gora to the Croats To Avoid Falling Into the Hands of the Heavenly Forces," Sarajevo *Ljiljan* 5 February 1997, pp. 57-60.

⁵⁴⁸ The 6th Artillery Battalion and the 8th Howitzer Artillery Battalion, which was the only HV artillery unit equipped with 203-mm (8-inch) howitzers (US World War II-era M-2/M-115 pieces). For information on the 8th Battalion in "Oluja," see Zeljko Stipanovic, "Medals for the HTD [Howitzer Artillery Battalion]," Zagreb *Velebit* 28 March 1997, pp. 18-19.

⁵⁴⁹ The 2nd Battalion/15th Antitank Artillery-Rocket Brigade.

⁵⁵⁰ Tarbuk was the original commander of the 39th Corps during 1992-93, having served as a JNA brigade commander in the Petrinja area in 1991. The VJ sent him back to the 39th Corps in 1995 to help General Mrksic reinvigorate the SVK. He was considered a tough and experienced field commander.

⁵⁵¹ The photographed text for the original directive of Operation "Oluja-2," issued on 26 June 1995, is in Bobetko, pp. 441-451; Bobetko's discussion of the directive is on pp. 454-459.

⁵⁵² The group was formed from the corps' 10th Artillery Battalion.
⁵⁵³ The photographed text for the original directive of Operation "Oluja-3," issued on 26 June 1995, is in Bobetko, pp. 462-475; Bobetko's discussion of the directive is on pp. 476-481.

⁵⁵⁴ The Main Staff's 350th Sabotage Detachment was attached to the 1st Guards Brigade for the operation. Vesna Puljak, "A Small Unit for Big Assignments," Zagreb *Velebit* 18 October 1996, pp. 16-17.

⁵⁵⁵ The 5th Corps chief of staff, Brigadier Mirsad Selmanovic, indicates that the Croatian request for 5th Corps involvement in the operation came via the ARBiH military attache in Zagreb and that they asked the 5th Corps to attack in the directions discussed. Isnam Taljic, "The Chetniks Surrendered Petra Gora to the Croats To Avoid Falling Into the Hands of the 'Heavenly Forces,'" Sarajevo *Ljiljan* 5 February 1997, pp. 57-60.

⁵⁵⁶ Each corps artillery group probably was formed around the artillery-rocket battalion from each Guards Brigade, bolstered by the corps' 12th Artillery Battalion.

⁵⁵⁷ One brigade, the 70th Infantry Brigade, faced the Karlovac Corps District attack to the north, but part of one of its battalions was opposite the Gospic Corps. The 9th Motorized Brigade was focused primarily on the Velebit sector opposite the MUP Special Police forces, which worked in conjunction with the HV Split Corps District.

⁵⁵⁸ The photographed text for the original directive of Operation "Oluja-4," issued on 26 June 1995, is in Bobetko, pp. 484-491; Bobetko's discussion of the directive is on pp. 492-500.

⁵⁵⁹ The three artillery-rocket groups were formed from the corps artillery—the 14th and 20th Artillery Battalions—and a 203-mm howitzer battery attached from the 8th Howitzer Artillery Battalion, plus possibly the artillery-rocket battalions of the 4th and 7th Guards Brigades. The 14th Artillery Battalion appears to have been comprised primarily of M-46 130-mm field guns, and it contributed a battery to all three artillery-rocket groups. See Zeljko Stipanovic, "Lethal and Precise," Zagreb *Velebit* 20 December 1996, pp. 16-17.

⁵⁶⁰ The 7th North Dalmatian Corps was the lineal descendant of General Mladic's JNA 9th (Knin) Corps that had caused the Croatians so many problems in 1991.

⁵⁶¹ The narrative of Operation "Oluja" is based primarily on Croatian and Bosnian Army sources, augmented by Major General Sekulic's account. Except for Sekulic's study, there has been almost no reporting from the SVK military perspective.

⁵⁶² It seems unlikely that the HRZ had as much success at knocking out the SVK C3 system as the Croatians claim, given their small inventory—25 aircraft—and the limited capabilities of these aircraft—MiG-21s. In addition, these aircraft had no precision-guided munitions. Nevertheless, the HRZ is insistent in its writings that its aircraft knocked out several key communications centers. For example, the HRZ claims that:

Operating according to the use plan, enemy communication centers were knocked out the first day—the Celavac radio-relay junction and the transmitter on Petrova Gora, and the command post of one brigade and one corps in the village of Bunic in Lika and in Banski Grabovac destroyed, incapacitated, and neutralized four enemy communications centers, four command posts, and a number of points of resistance, facilities,

See Vinko Sebrek, "The Croatian Air Force in Operation 'Storm' Part 2," Zagreb *Hrvatski Vojnik*, 1 November 1996, pp. 56-59. During the operation, General Mrksic seemed to second the HRZ's claims, mentioning the same targets cited in the *Hrvatski Vojnik* article above. Interview with Lieutenant Colonel General Mile Mrksic, Belgrade Radio 4 August 1995. Whether through sabotage missions by ground troops or airstrikes from the HRZ, the SVK C3 system does appear to have suffered severe damage or disruption

during the HV offensive. In addition to these airstrikes, the HRZ conducted interdiction and Close Air Support missions (with Mi-24 gunships) throughout the operation.

⁵⁶³ General Bobetko states that:

. . . the aim was as follows: with MUP forces to force the Kupa River, by night, while with part of them and with a helicopter landing to pass to the west . . . and begin battle in Petrinja itself or east of Petrinja. . . . the commander of the corps district was left without Special Police forces that were trained for that task, which during almost all of 1994 were prepared for reconnaissance missions through training in various drills, exercises, and coordination with the entire system.

Janko Bobetko, *Sve Moje Bitke (All My Battles)*, Zagreb: Vlastita Naklada, 1996, p. 435.

⁵⁶⁴ Igor Alborghetti, "In Peacetime Croatia Will Have Only 50,000 Soldiers," Zagreb *Globus*, 31 May 1996, pp. 15-17, 59, an interview with Corps General Anton Tus, Military Adviser to President Tudjman.

⁵⁶⁵ *Sve Moje Bitke (All My Battles)*, p. 436. The commander of the 2nd Battalion/2nd Guards Brigade, which appears to have borne the brunt of the fighting on the heavily defended eastern approaches to Petrinja, was killed in action during an SVK counter-attack. Neven Miladin, "They Wove the Thread of Freedom," Zagreb *Velebit* 21 June 1996, pp. 16-17, an article on the 2nd Battalion/2nd Guards Brigade.

⁵⁶⁶ Bobetko makes a number of veiled references to the less than sterling fighting qualities of the Home Defense and reserve brigades. As he says, "The other Home Defense regiments . . . were nowhere near being the mainstays of the primary attack." *Sve Moje Bitke (All My Battles)*, p. 438. The reserve formations at Petrinja included the 57th Infantry Brigade, 12th Home Defense Regiment, 20th Home Defense Regiment, and the 140th Home Defense Regiment. In addition, a small secondary attack by the 153rd Infantry Brigade at Pokupsko to the right of the main assault failed to penetrate the defenses of the SVK 24th Infantry Brigade. See Sector North map in Rear Admiral Davor Domazet—"Loso," "The Military Aspect of the Strategic Determinants for Operations to Liberate the Occupied Areas of the Republic of Croatia," Zagreb *Hrvatski Vojnik* October 1996, pp. 6-13 and Vesna Puljak, "They Carried Out Their Tasks Conscientiously and Responsibly," Zagreb *Velebit* 6 December 1996, p. 12, an article on the 140th Home Defense Regiment.

⁵⁶⁷ Banja Luka Srpski Radio, 4 August 1995. Bobetko states that because the 81st Guards Battalion was unavailable:

[Basarac] had to remobilize and mobilize forces that had not seen fighting up to that point and were not trained, because the principle was that Home Defense units be incorporated into the structure for at least eight days before being sent into battle. Thus, . . . in the operational sense he could not develop the speed that he was supposed to . . .

Janko Bobetko, *Sve Moje Bitke (All My Battles)*, Zagreb: Vlastita Naklada, 1996, p. 435.

The 103rd Infantry Brigade, 151st Infantry Brigade, and the 17th Home Defense Regiment carried out the attack in this sector. The 125th Home Defense Regiment was reinforced with battle groups from the 24th and 52nd Home Defense Regiments of the Bjelovar Corps District for its attack. The spearhead of the 125th's attack, however, was the 265th Reconnaissance-Sabotage Company. See Vesna Puljak, "Always on the Central Route," Zagreb *Velebit*, 28 March 1997, pp. 18-19, an article on the 265th Recon-Sabotage Company; and Sector North map in Rear Admiral Davor Domazet—"Loso," "The Military Aspect of the Strategic Determinants for Operations To Liberate the Occupied Areas of the Republic of Croatia," Zagreb *Hrvatski Vojnik*, October 1996, pp. 6-13.

⁵⁶⁸ During a frank discussion of the SVK's status late on 4 August, General Mrksic made it clear that the 21st Corps had been able to hold its ground. Belgrade Radio, 4 August 1995.

⁵⁶⁹ Banja Luka Srpski Radio 4 August 1995; Sector North map in "The Military Aspect of the Strategic Determinants for Operations To Liberate the Occupied Areas of the Republic of Croatia," pp. 6-13. The SVK 11th Infantry Brigade was responsible for this sector.

⁵⁷⁰ Banja Luka Srpski Radio, 4 August 1995. The 14th and 137th Home Defense Regiments carried out the assault. The SVK 13th Infantry Brigade was the defending force. The 13th was able to stop part of the 137th's attack.

⁵⁷¹ The 143rd Home Defense Regiment attacked to the north of the town, while the 99th Infantry Brigade attempted to drive around the town from the south.

⁵⁷² Neven Miladin, "Invincible Armor of the Wolves," Zagreb *Velebit*, 15 December 1995, pp. 16-17, article on the Armored Battalion/9th Guards Brigade; Gordan Radosevic, Neven Miladin, Zeljko Stipanovic, Vesna Puljak, Nikolina Sutalo, and Kristina Matica Stojan, "Storm—The Culmination of Our Tempests," Zagreb *Velebit*, 2 August 1996, pp. 4-7, 10-11, an anniversary article describing in some detail the movement of HV formations during "Oluja." In addition to the 9th Guards, the HV attack force included the 111th Infantry Brigade and the 118th Home Defense Regiment attacking in the Ljubovo-Novi Licki Osik area, while the 150th Infantry Brigade, with elements of the 111th Infantry Brigade and 8th Home Defense Regiment attacked Medak. The SVK 18th Infantry Brigade was defending Ljubovo, while the 9th Motorized Brigade was holding Medak.

⁵⁷³ Boris Komadina, "A Tiger Fighting For Croatia," Zagreb *Hrvatski Obzor* 6 November 1995, pp. 28-29, an interview with Staff Brigadier Jozo Milicevic, commander of the 1st Guards Brigade; "Storm—The Culmination of Our Tempests," pp. 4-7, 10-11.

⁵⁷⁴ The 138th and 133rd Home Defense Regiments attacked in support of the 1st Guards Brigade on the right against the SVK 50th Infantry Brigade deployed around Vrhovine. South of Vrhovine, the 8th Home Defense Regiment and the 128th Infantry Brigade, supported by the 154th Home Defense Regiment, carried out additional attacks on the 50th and 18th Infantry Brigades.

⁵⁷⁵ During a radio interview, General Mrksic indicated that the only sector in which he was seriously concerned was that around Grahovo-Dinara Mountains. Belgrade Radio, 4 August 1995, 1500 local time.

⁵⁷⁶ Operational Group "Sinji" controlled this sector. The 126th Home Defense Regiment—probably the best formation of this type in the HV—and the 144th Infantry Brigade crushed the flank of the 1st Vrlika Light Infantry Brigade, while the 6th Home Defense Regiment mounted a frontal assault on its positions around Peruc Lake. The 126th's incursions along the border during the last eight months had effectively made the 1st Vrlika's defensive zone untenable. Zeljko Stipanovic, "Defense of the Homeland—A Sacred Task," Zagreb *Velebit*, 8 December 1995, p. 14, an article on the 126th Home Defense Regiment. While these units attacked on the left of the Guards, their right flank was covered by the special composite company of the 114th Infantry Brigade that had fought in "Ljeto 95." See Zoran Vukman, "Victorious Trail on All Battle-fields," Split *Slobodna Dalmacija*, 1 June 1996, p. 8, an interview with Colonel Marko Skejo, commander of the 114th Infantry Brigade.

⁵⁷⁷ In an interview less than a week after the operation, Special Police commander General Markac described the action in the Velebit:

The top priority was for us to break through the enemy's frontline on almost inaccessible terrain at 1,400 meters above sea level, where special conditions prevailed. After breaking through that frontline, we were supposed to advance extremely rapidly and destroy their defense at a pace that would prevent their forces from regrouping and creating a second line of defense. We carried out the assignment as planned . . .

We did not cross that frontline without a struggle, but rather by fighting for it for almost two days. When we broke through their line of defense, because of our rapid penetration, they were unable to form a second line. Anyone who wants to analyze the operation will see that that was the crucial moment. None of them really expected or planned for our lightning advance . . .

It was most difficult for us near Mali Alan, mainly because of the configuration of the terrain, and then also because the night just before our attack, that line was reinforced with another company of infantry. The battle there lasted for eight hours.

Ivanka Toma, "The Terrorists Did Not Have Time," Zagreb *Hrvatski Obzor*, 14 August 1995, pp. 14-15, an interview with Colonel General Mladen Markac, commander of the Croatian MUP Special Police.

See also Colonel General Ante Gotovina, *Offensive Battles and Operations of the Croatian Army and HVO*, Knin: Split Corps District, 1996, p. 73 for a short discussion of the role of the 2nd Battalion/9th Guards Brigade in the attack on the Mali Alan area.

⁵⁷⁸ The SVK claimed to have repelled a strong attack against the village of Gornji Zemunik, southwest of Benkovac. Belgrade Tanjug, 4 August 1995.

⁵⁷⁹ Colonel General Ante Gotovina, *Offensive Battles and Operations of the Croatian Army and HVO*, Knin: Split Corps District, 1996, p. 74. An article on the Armored Battalion/7th Guards Brigade, which attacked from the Dinara area, noted that the unit faced the "strongest resistance" on the first day, including SVK air-strikes, but that on 5 August, ". . . resistance weakened, and the enemy's line of defense was no longer organized well enough to offer any significant resistance." Vesna Puljak, "Steel For the Puma's Leaps," Zagreb *Velebit*, 12 January 1996, pp. 16-17; Major General Milisav Sekulic, *Knin Je Pao U Beogradu (Knin Fell in Belgrade)* as excerpted in *Belgrade Politika*, Online Edition. URL: <www.politika.co.yu/feljton> Accessed 18 July 2001.

⁵⁸⁰ General Mrksic stated in an interview late on 4 August that SVK units had withdrawn to the immediate vicinity of Knin to defend the town from there and that he intended to launch a counterattack against the approaching HV Guards units if the VRS 2nd Krajina Corps was able to carry out an attack against the HV around Grahovo. Belgrade Radio, 4 August 1995. The VRS appears to have been able to mount some kind of attack against Grahovo on 5 August—possibly carried out by the newly arrived composite 1st Drina Light Infantry Brigade—but it apparently made little impression against the HV 81st Guards Battalion. Belgrade Tanjug, 5 August 1995.

⁵⁸¹ The HV spokesman, Major General Ivan Tolj, claimed at the time that Benkovac fell in the early evening, while General Gotovina states in his postwar account that it fell in the early morning of 6 August. Elements of the 2nd Battalion/9th Guards Brigade entered Obrovac in the early evening of 5 August. Colonel General Ante Gotovina, *Offensive Battles and Operations of the Croatian Army and HVO*, Knin: Split Corps District, 1996, p. 74. Operational Group "Zadar," comprising the 112th Infantry Brigade, 7th Home Defense Regiment, and 134th Home Defense Regiment, also pushed forward into Benkovac and the Obrovac area against the SVK 92nd Motorized, 3rd Light Infantry, and 4th Light Infantry Brigades. Operational Group "Sibenik," comprising the 113th Infantry Brigade, 15th Home Defense Regiment, and 142nd Home Defense Regiment, had already had some success penetrating the front defense zone of the SVK 2nd Infantry Brigade and part of the 75th Motorized Brigades, supported by Operational Group "Sinji's" roll up the flank of the 1st Light Infantry and 75th Motorized Brigades. See Sector South map in Rear Admiral Davor Domazet- "Loso," "The Military Aspect of the Strategic Determinants for Operations to Liberate the Occupied Areas of the Republic of Croatia," Zagreb *Hrvatski Vojnik*, October 1996, pp. 6-13 and Zeljko Stipanovic, "Always Among the Best," Zagreb *Velebit*, 15 December 1995, an article on the 112th Infantry Brigade;

⁵⁸² Brigadier Mirsad Selmanovic, the 5th Corps chief of staff, states:

... at midnight on 4 August [i.e., morning of 5 August], units of the 5th Corps of the Bosnia-Herzegovina Army crossed the international border on the Izacic-Licko Petrovo Selo and Klokor-Zeljava line and, the same day, continued in the direction of Rakovica and the Plitvice Lakes. Participating in this operation were the 502nd Brigade, elements of the [military] police battalion, and the corps reconnaissance company ... they were joined by the 501st Brigade in the direction of Pljesevica-Titova Korenica.

General Dudakovic directly oversaw corps operations on this axis. See interview with Brigadier Mirsad Selmanovic, in Isnam Taljic, "The Chetniks Surrendered Petra Gora to the Croats To Avoid Falling Into the Hands of the 'Heavenly Forces,'" Sarajevo *Ljiljan*, 5 February 1997, pp. 57-60. "Heavenly Force" was one of 5th Corps' nicknames.

⁵⁸³ Colonel Hamdija Abdic- "Tigar" described his brigade's attack in a 1997 interview:

I ... "cooperated" with [Polish UN troops stationed on the Croatian-Bosnian border] at that time. Now we took advantage of it. Well, perhaps it is not nice to write about it, but we brought them some brandy, we got them drunk, and then we captured them; in the meantime we infiltrated two battalions behind the enemy's back. Actually we disarmed the Chetniks in their bunkers in the vicinity of the Poles. Thus we succeeded in infiltrating along the main road. At about 1600 on 5 August, two of our battalions arrived at Celopek Hill unobserved ... One battalion had to take Licko Petrovo Selo and then proceed to Preboj (sic) and Plitvice; the other, together with the "Tiger" Reconnaissance-Sabotage Company, had to advance to Grabovac and Rahovica (sic). At the same time a part of our forces blocked Chetnik units in their positions from the rear. A part of [one] battalion received orders to proceed in the direction of the Zeljava barracks; this was executed as ordered. The Chetniks were totally lost. At about 0800 we captured Licko Petrovo Selo, and part of the unit continued to Vaganac, Drenik, and Grabovica. Here we met with misfortune. The ammunition depot exploded, killing 12 men from the 2nd Battalion ... It was a huge depot, and it was boobytrapped. There were also many wounded, so the action slowed down a bit, but then we proceeded toward Plitvice, cutting the main road between

Korenica and Slunj. All this happened under combat conditions. We captured some 120 Chetniks ... In the afternoon, after part of our forces reached Grabovac and Rakovica, the orders came for us to halt. This was done in agreement with the Croatian Army, to prevent a possible confrontation with us.

The 502nd (and its neighbor the 501st) both used the ARBiH's standard infiltration tactics against the SVK. Abdic stated that:

We almost never attacked frontally, we always practiced reconnoitering and infiltration of our units ... We generally conducted our actions at night and always strove for surprise ... It was the same in Croatia.

Isnam Taljic, "The Croatian State, Too, Was Liberated With the Tekbir," Sarajevo *Ljiljan*, 12-19 February 1997, p. 23, an interview with Colonel Hamdija Abdic- "Tigar," commander of the 502nd Mountain Brigade. See also the interview with Major Senjad Mesic, commander of the 5th Military Police Battalion, in Isnam Taljic, "The Chetniks Surrendered Petra Gora to the Croats To Avoid Falling Into the Hands of the 'Heavenly Forces,'" Sarajevo *Ljiljan*, 5 February 1997, pp. 57-60.

⁵⁸⁴ Boris Komadina, "A Tiger Fighting For Croatia," Zagreb *Hrvatski Obzor*, 6 November 1995, pp. 28-29, an interview with Staff Brigadier Jozo Milicevic, commander of the 1st Guards Brigade; Isnam Taljic, "The Croatian State, Too, Was Liberated With the Tekbir," Sarajevo *Ljiljan*, 12-19 February 1997, p. 23, an interview with Colonel Hamdija Abdic- "Tigar," commander of the 502nd Mountain Brigade.

⁵⁸⁵ Velebit later described the advance of the 1st Guards Brigade on 4 and 5 August:

Its 1st Battalion first defeated the enemy in the area of Kapela, captured dominant elevations, and descended to Licka Jasenica, and then blocked the left flank from Plaski and the Slunj [SVK training] range. Part of the unit continued cleanup operations in the direction of Plaski, while the 2nd Battalion continued toward Saborski and then toward Rakovica, cutting off the enemy and linking up with the 5th Corps on the second day of the operation. During that time, the 1st Guard Brigade's 3rd Battalion advanced through Saborski and the Plitvice Lakes ... on the second day of the operation.

Gordan Radosevic, Neven Miladin, Zeljko Stipanovic, Vesna Puljak, Nikolina Sutalo, and Kristina Matica Stojan, "Storm—The Culmination of Our Tempests," Zagreb *Velebit*, 2 August 1996, pp. 4-7, 10-11, an anniversary article describing in some detail the movement of HV formations during "Oluja."

⁵⁸⁶ See interview with Brigadier Senad Sarganovic, commander of the 501st Mountain Brigade, and Captain Ahmo Selimovic, commander of the Recon-Sabotage Company/501st Mountain Brigade in Isnam Taljic, "The Chetniks Surrendered Petra Gora to the Croats To Avoid Falling Into the Hands of the 'Heavenly Forces,'" Sarajevo *Ljiljan*, 5 February 1997, pp. 57-60. Sarganovic also notes that in the short interlude between the end of the SVK offensive against Bihać and the start of "Oluja," the 501st Mountain Brigade had seized much of the territory southwest of Bihać city that the SVK and VRS had held for most of the war.

⁵⁸⁷ On the basis of comments from Colonel Ante Dosen, the 9th Guards Brigade chief of staff, Zagreb Velebit states:

Ljubovo was not liberated on the first day; it possibly could have been, but that would have required high infantry casualties. On the following day ... the Croatian forces changed

their tactics, and the enemy resistance was crushed by a combination of artillery support and infantry.

Gordan Radosevic, Neven Miladin, Zeljko Stipanovic, Vesna Puljak, Nikolina Sutalo, and Kristina Matica Stojan, "Storm—The Culmination of Our Tempests," Zagreb *Velebit*, 2 August 1996, pp. 4-7, 10-11, an anniversary article describing in some detail the movement of HV formations during "Oluja."

⁵⁸⁸ Major General Ivan Tolj, HV Press Conference, Zagreb Radio 5 August 1995.

⁵⁸⁹ Gordan Radosevic, Neven Miladin, Zeljko Stipanovic, Vesna Puljak, Nikolina Sutalo, and Kristina Matica Stojan, "Storm—The Culmination of Our Tempests," Zagreb *Velebit*, 2 August 1996, pp. 4-7, 10-11, an anniversary article describing in some detail the movement of HV formations during "Oluja."

⁵⁹⁰ Reuters "Croats Said to Enter Big Serb Town, Seize Roads" by Mark Heinrich, 5 August 1995; Prijedor Radio 5 August 1995. President Tudjman personally directed Stipetic to supervise the Petrinja-Sisak sector after the failure of the first day's attack.

Dragan Djuric, "New Commander of the Croatian Army," Zagreb *Nacional*, 15 March 2000, pp. 21-23, an interview with General Petar Stipetic.

⁵⁹¹ Prijedor Radio 5 August 1995. The ARBiH attack initially involved one battalion from the 505th Mountain Brigade and one battalion from the 511th Mountain Brigade. While General Dudakovic was leading 5th Corps operations in Lika, Brigadier Selmanovic headed a corps forward command post controlling this action and ongoing operations against APWB forces. See interview with Brigadier Mirsad Selmanovic, in Isnam Taljic, "the Chetniks Surrendered Petra Gora to the Croats To Avoid Falling Into the Hands of the 'Heavenly Forces,'" Sarajevo *Ljiljan*, 5 February 1997, pp. 57-60. The 511th Brigade commander described the 5th Corps plan:

One of our battalions, together with some other units, was engaged to break through to Velika Kladusa and reach the state border in that direction; the other was to break through to Dvor na Uni and meet the 505th Chivalrous Brigade on the road from Glina to Dvor. All preparations were concluded on 4 August, and the breakthrough planned for 5 August. There were some problems, so I decided with [505th Brigade commander] Izet Nanic to regroup our forces and get to Corkovaca and then . . . continue on with our goal

Isnam Taljic, "I Am Proud We Aided the Liberation of Croatia," Sarajevo *Ljiljan*, 12-19 February 1997, p. 22, interview with Brigadier Mirsad Sedic, commander 511th Mountain Brigade

During heavy fighting with the SVK 33rd Infantry Brigade, the 505th Mountain Brigade's famous commander, Colonel Izet Nanic, was killed in action. The shock of Nanic's death clearly had an effect on the 505th, and the brigade deputy commander/chief of staff temporarily halted the brigade advance when he was notified. The brigade operations officer, however, states that, before Nanic's death, the 505th had advanced 7 to 8 kilometers deep into the RSK on a 3-kilometer front. For more details of the 505th Brigade's actions in this sector, see Isnam Taljic, "Buzim Did Not Want To Be Shui Into a Pen," Sarajevo *Ljiljan*, 12-19 February 1997, p. 21, an interview with Major Sead Jusic, Assistant Chief of Staff for Operations and Training, 505th Mountain Brigade, and Isnam Taljic, "Buzim Military Leader Izet Nanic Was Killed," Sarajevo *Ljiljan*, 12-19 February 1997, p. 22, an interview with Major Hamdija Mustafic, deputy commander of the 505th Mountain Brigade.

⁵⁹² Colonel General Ante Gotovina, *Offensive Battles and Operations of the Croatian Army and HVO Knin: Split Corps District*, 1996, p. 74.

⁵⁹³ Neven Miladin, "Invincible Armor of the Wolves," Zagreb *Velebit*, 15 December 1995, pp. 16-17, article on the Armored Battalion/9th Guards Brigade; Neven Miladin, "Freedom Through Courage," Zagreb *Velebit*, 20 December 1996, p. 13, an article on the 154th Home Defense Regiment.

⁵⁹⁴ Zagreb Radio 6 August 1995.

⁵⁹⁵ Boris Komadina, "A Tiger Fighting For Croatia," Zagreb *Hrvatski Obzor*, 6 November 1995, pp. 28-29, an interview with Staff Brigadier Jozo Milicevic, commander of the 1st Guards Brigade; Gordan Radosevic, Neven Miladin, Zeljko Stipanovic, Vesna Puljak, Nikolina Sutalo, and Kristina Matica Stojan, "Storm—The Culmination of Our Tempests," Zagreb *Velebit*, 2 August 1996, pp. 4-7, 10-11, an anniversary article describing in some detail the movement of HV formations during "Oluja;" Isnam Taljic, "The Croatian State, Too, Was Liberated With the Tekbir," Sarajevo *Ljiljan*, 12-19 February 1997, p. 23, an interview with Colonel Hamdija Abdic "Tigar," commander of the 502nd Mountain Brigade.

⁵⁹⁶ The 14th and 143rd Home Defense Regiments. Gordan Radosevic, Neven Miladin, Zeljko Stipanovic, Vesna Puljak, Nikolina Sutalo, and Kristina Matica Stojan, "Storm—The Culmination of Our Tempests," Zagreb *Velebit*, 2 August 1996, pp. 4-7, 10-11, an anniversary article describing in some detail the movement of HV formations during "Oluja."

⁵⁹⁷ After 1st Guards took the town, the 99th and 119th Infantry Brigades were deployed to secure the area and free up the Guards. Gordan Radosevic, Neven Miladin, Zeljko Stipanovic, Vesna Puljak, Nikolina Sutalo, and Kristina Matica Stojan, "Storm—The Culmination of Our Tempests," Zagreb *Velebit*, 2 August 1996, pp. 4-7, 10-11, an anniversary article describing in some detail the movement of HV formations during "Oluja;" Major General Milisav Sekulic, *Knin Je Pao U Beogradu (Knin Fell in Belgrade)* as excerpted in *Belgrade Politika*, Online Edition. URL: <www.politika.co.yu/feljton> Accessed 18 July 2001.

⁵⁹⁸ Zagreb Radio 6 August 1995.

⁵⁹⁹ Gordan Radosevic, Neven Miladin, Zeljko Stipanovic, Vesna Puljak, Nikolina Sutalo, and Kristina Matica Stojan, "Storm—The Culmination of Our Tempests," Zagreb *Velebit*, 2 August 1996, pp. 4-7, 10-11, an anniversary article describing in some detail the movement of HV formations during "Oluja."

⁶⁰⁰ The 145th Infantry Brigade was the formation that the Main Staff released on 5 August to support the Kostajnica attack. An article on the brigade in *Velebit* describes the operations of the 145th and other formations on 5-6 August in this sector:

. . . the 145th Brigade was one of the last ones called up, because its status was a reserve for the Main Staff. In line with that, and under the command of Colonel Bruno Cavic, it received orders to carry out assignments in the area of Banovina, one of the most difficult areas in the entire operation, in the direction of Bobovac [near Sunja]-Strmen-Slovinci-Timirci, and toward Kostajnica. The brigade encountered the first strong organized resistance from the enemy in the village of Seliste Kostajnicko on 6 August and crushed it, with help from the Zagreb Corps reconnaissance-sabotage company, the 17th Home Defense Regiment, the 151st Brigade, three BOVs [air defense vehicles] from the 202nd Air Defense [Brigade] and two tanks from the 2nd Guards Brigade;

Neven Miladin, "Proven Throughout All of Croatia," Zagreb *Velebit* 26 January 1996, p. 14, an article on the 145th Infantry Brigade. See also Neven Miladin, "They Responded to Every Assignment," Zagreb *Velebit*, 19 January 1996, p. 12, an article on the 151st Infantry Brigade.

⁶⁰¹ Zagreb Radio 7 August 1995.

⁶⁰² Reuters, "Refugee Passage Deal Collapses, Fighting Erupts," 7 August 1995.

⁶⁰³ General Gotovina states that the Split Corps District was "... engaged in securing the liberated area." In addition, the corps were preparing for further operations.

After resting briefly and receiving additional supplies of ammunition and other material, Guard units (the 4th and 7th Guard Brigades, 2nd/9th Guard Brigade, and the 1st HGZ) were brought to the Gracac-Otric line. They took up positions from where they were to launch their final attack to liberate the last part of the territory in the Split [Corps District] zone of responsibility the following day.

Colonel General Ante Gotovina, *Offensive Battles and Operations of the Croatian Army and HVO Knin: Split Corps District*, 1996, pp. 74-75.

⁶⁰⁴ The 1st Guards were supported by the 14th and 143rd Home Defense Regiments on the brigade's left flank, while the 137th Home Defense Regiment and 110th Home Defense Regiment attacked from the west and north respectively. Neven Miladin, "Where It Was Needed Most," Zagreb *Velebit*, 8 December 1995, p. 15, an article on the 137th Home Defense Regiment; Gordan Radosevic, Neven Miladin, Zeljko Stipanovic, Vesna Puljak, Nikolina Sutalo, and Kristina Matica Stojan, "Storm—The Culmination of Our Tempests," Zagreb *Velebit*, 2 August 1996, pp. 4-7, 10-11, an anniversary article describing in some detail the movement of HV formations during "Oluja."

⁶⁰⁵ The original corps commander, General Bosanac, had a reputation as a hard fighting combat commander. He may have been killed in action around Karlovac. Colonel Bulat had commanded the 21st Corps since 1992 before Bosanac took over in 1994. Bulat appears to have been involved on the staff of OG "Pauk" with General Novakovic before "Oluja" and thus was readily available to step into the breach to lead his old corps out of danger.

⁶⁰⁶ Conversation between Colonel Cedomir Bulat and Colonel General Petar Stipetic in statement by Corps General Zvonimir Cervenko, Zagreb HTV 8 August 1995.

⁶⁰⁷ The 511th Brigade commander indicated that after Nanic's death:

It all took two more days. According to the amended plan, the 511th moved along the valley of the little Jannica River toward Dvor. There were no significant problems . . . some 6 to 7 kilometers inside Croatia.

Isnam Taljic, "I Am Proud We Aided the Liberation of Croatia," Sarajevo *Ljiljan*, 12-19 February 1997, p. 22, interview with Brigadier Mirsad Sedic, commander 511th Mountain Brigade; Isnam Taljic, "Buzim Did Not Want To Be Shut Into a Pen," Sarajevo *Ljiljan*, 12-19 February 1997, p. 21, an interview with Major Sead Jusic, Assistant Chief of Staff for Operations and Training, 505th Mountain Brigade; and Isnam Taljic, "Buzim Military Leader Izet Nanic Was Killed," Sarajevo *Ljiljan*, 12-19 February 1997, p. 22, an interview with Major Hamdija Mustafic, deputy commander of the 505th Mountain Brigade.

⁶⁰⁸ Personnel totals derived from statement by Colonel-General Petar Stipetic, Zagreb Radio 9 August 1995 and statement by Corps General Zvonimir Cervenko, "Slikom na Sliku," Zagreb HTV 8 August 1995.

⁶⁰⁹ Reuters, "Bosnian Troops Crush Moslem Rebels in Bihać—UN," 7 August 1995; Sarajevo Radio 7 August 1995.

⁶¹⁰ Sarajevo Radio 7 August 1995.

⁶¹¹ Colonel General Ante Gotovina, *Offensive Battles and Operations of the Croatian Army and HVO Knin: Split Corps District*, 1996, p. 75.

⁶¹² Statement by Colonel General Petar Stipetic, Zagreb Radio 9 August 1995; statement by Corps General Zvonimir Cervenko, "Slikom na Sliku," Television Program, Zagreb HTV 8 August 1995; and conversation between Colonel Cedomir Bulat and Colonel General Petar Stipetic in statement by Corps General Zvonimir Cervenko, Zagreb HTV 8 August 1995.

⁶¹³ HV and MUP forces continued to mop up isolated bands of SVK soldiers over the next few days, before the mission was turned completely over to the MUP. For a description of some of this actions, see Ivanka Toma, "The Terrorists Did Not Have Time," Zagreb *Hrvatski Obzor*, 14 August 1995, pp. 14-15, an interview with Colonel-General Mladen Markac, commander of the Croatian MUP Special Police.

⁶¹⁴ The UN concluded that Bosnian Serb forces were responsible for the attack based primarily on the estimated firing location about 3 km south of the impact area. As with the earlier Markale market massacre, Bosnian Serb authorities accused the Bosnian Government of staging an attack against its own people in an effort to sabotage the peace process. An article in the 1 October 1995 British *Sunday Times* accused the Bosnian Muslims of firing the mortar round that caused most of the casualties, as did a Russian Colonel, Andrei Demurenko, who was assigned to the UN at the time. UN officials subsequently dismissed the claims, however, citing inaccuracies in the article and indicating that the final conclusions of a panel of French, British, Spanish, and American experts had firmly concluded that the Bosnian Serbs were responsible.

⁶¹⁵ The SEAD plan had called for US Navy aircraft to fire radar decoys near Serb air defense positions, then for other aircraft to destroy these sites with HARM missiles when they turned on their radars. The Bosnian Serbs apparently learned of these tactics from the Iraqis during the Gulf war, however, and did not illuminate the decoys. *Air Force Magazine*, "Deliberate Force," by John A. Tirpak, October 1997, pp. 36-43.

⁶¹⁶ *Aviation Week and Space Technology*, "Air Power Alters Bosnia Equation" by Craig Covault, 4 September 1995.

⁶¹⁷ Reuters, "NATO Claims Significant Success in Air Strikes" by Philip Pullella, 31 August 1998.

⁶¹⁸ Ibid.

⁶¹⁹ Reuters, "UN Troops Fires 600 Shells at Bosnian Serbs" by Sabina Cosic, 30 August 1995.

⁶²⁰ *Aviation Week and Space Technology*, "Air Power Alters Bosnia Equation" by Craig Covault, 4 September 1995.

⁶²¹ On this day, Luftwaffe Tornado reconnaissance aircraft undertook the first combat missions by the German armed forces since the conclusion of World War II. The first German military actions in 50 years happened to coincide with the anniversary of the opening event of the Second World War, the German invasion of Poland on 1 September 1939.

⁶²² Reuters, "How The Clock Ticks in NATO Blitz on Bosnian Serbs," 1 September 1995.

⁶²³ Reuters, "NATO Jets Pause, Artillery Fires on in Bosnia" by Kurt Schork, 1 September 1995.

⁶²⁴ Reuters, "French Guns Counter Serb Mortar Near Sarajevo," 1 September 1995.

⁶²⁵ Reuters, "UN Guns Blast Serb Weapons Despite Air Pause," 1 September 1995.

⁶²⁶ Reuters, "NATO Calls Pause to Air Raids, but Big Guns Boom," 1 September 1995.

⁶²⁷ Reuters, "NATO Gives Bosnian Serbs Breather, But Mladic Defiant" by Douglas Hamilton, 2 September 1995.

⁶²⁸ Reuters, "Shell Hits Sarajevo in NATO Bombing Lull," 2 September 1995.

⁶²⁹ Reuters, "NATO and UN Move to Lift Sarajevo Siege" by Kurt Schork, 3 September 1995.

- ⁶³⁰ Reuters, "NATO Finger on Safety Catch as Ultimatum Nears" by Kurt Schork, 4 September 1995.
- ⁶³¹ Reuters, "UN Gives Ultimatum of Hours to Bosnian Serbs," 3 September 1995.
- ⁶³² Reuters, "UN Says No Strikes Yet, Under Consideration" by Steve Pagani, 4 September 1995.
- ⁶³³ Reuters, "UN Sees Little Serb Compliance With Weapons Demand," 5 September 1995.
- ⁶³⁴ Reuters, "Smoke Rises From Explosions Outside Sarajevo," 5 September 1995.
- ⁶³⁵ Reuters, "British Troops Strike Serb Mortar From Mount Igman" by Kurt Schork, 5 September 1995.
- ⁶³⁶ Reuters, "Shells Hit Sarajevo After NATO Air Strikes," 5 September 1995.
- ⁶³⁷ The 13 Tomahawk cruise missiles were fired using the Global Position System (GPS) guidance mode only. Of these, 11 were assessed to have landed within the 30-foot circular error probable (CEP) for the weapon; the other two missed. *Air Force Magazine*, "Deliberate Force," by John A. Tirpak, October 1997, pp. 43.
- ⁶³⁸ Ripley, Tim, *Air War Bosnia: UN and NATO Airpower*. Shrewsbury, UK: Airlife Publishing, 1996, pp. 92-93.
- ⁶³⁹ *Air Force Magazine*, "Deliberate Force" by John A. Tirpak, October 1997, pp. 36-43.
- ⁶⁴⁰ For a short discussion of ARBiH/HV/HVO coordination, see Zeljko Garmaz, "Not Even the Yugoslav Army Will Prevent Us From Entering Gorazde," Split *Nedjelja Dalmacija*, 20 October 1995, p. 12, an interview with Brigadier General Mustafa Hajrulahovic, Chief of ARBiH Military Intelligence.
- ⁶⁴¹ The VRS attack hit the 141st Infantry Brigade. One battalion each from the 4th and 7th Guards Brigades, supported by the 6th and 126th Home Defense Regiments, led the HV counterattack. Colonel General Ante Gotovina, *Offensive Battles and Operations of the Croatian Army and HVO Knin*: Split Corps District, 1996, p. 79.
- ⁶⁴² Description of the operational planning derived from Colonel General Ante Gotovina, *Offensive Battles and Operations of the Croatian Army and HVO Knin*: Split Corps District, 1996, pp. 85-87.
- ⁶⁴³ These additional units included the HV Main Staff Recon-Sabotage Company, the HVO 60th Guards Airborne Battalion and 22nd Sabotage Detachment, and Bosnian Croat Special Police. HVO Brigadier Zeljko Glasnovic was in command of OG "North," although General Gotovina appears to have exercised direct authority over the HV Guards formations. Colonel General Ante Gotovina, *Offensive Battles and Operations of the Croatian Army and HVO Knin*: Split Corps District, 1996, pp. 87, 194.
- ⁶⁴⁴ OG "South"—the former OG "Sinj" in "Oluja"—comprised the 6th and 126th Home Defense Regiments, plus the 141st Infantry Brigade, under Brigadier Ante Kotromanovic. OG "West"—the former OG "Zadar" in "Oluja"—comprised the 7th, 15th, 134th, and 142nd Home Defense Regiments, plus the 112th and 113th Infantry Brigades, under the command of Brigadier Mladen Fuzul. Colonel General Ante Gotovina, *Offensive Battles and Operations of the Croatian Army and HVO Knin*: Split Corps District, 1996, pp. 95, 194.
- ⁶⁴⁵ See Dudakovic interview quoted below in Danica Juricic, "We Will Liberate Banja Luka and Bijeljina," Split *Slobodna Dalmacija*, 21 September 1995, p. 4.
- ⁶⁴⁶ The OG, led directly by General Dudakovic, comprised the 501st Mountain, 502nd Mountain, 510th Liberation, and 517th Light Brigades, plus elements of the 5th MP Battalion.
- ⁶⁴⁷ This OG was headed by the corps chief of staff, Brigadier Mirsad Selmanovic, and comprised the 503rd Mountain, 505th Mountain, 506th Liberation, and 511th Mountain Brigades.
- ⁶⁴⁸ The 7th Corps appears to have been normally arrayed with eight brigades in line and four of its best brigades in reserve. The 77th Division, headquartered at Bugojno and directly opposite Donji

Vakuf, from south to north had the 707th Bugojno Mountain Brigade, 770th Donji Vakuf Mountain Brigade, and the 717th Gornji Vakuf Mountain Brigade holding its front, with the 705th Jajce Mountain Brigade in reserve. The rest of the corps frontage from south to north was held by the 708th Light Brigade, 712th Krajina Mountain Brigade, 706th Muslim Light Brigade, 733rd Busovaca Mountain Brigade, and the 725th Vitez Mountain Brigade. The 17th Krajina Mountain Brigade, 727th Banja Luka Mountain Brigade, and the 737th Muslim Light Brigade were normally in reserve near Travnik. Elements of the corps reserve brigades, plus the 7th "Bosnjak" Reconnaissance-Sabotage Battalion, probably reinforced 77th Division for the operation.

⁶⁴⁹ The 2nd Krajina Corps had the 1st Drvar Light Infantry and up to three Drina Corps composite formations, the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Drina Light Infantry Brigades—formed from elements of most of the Drina Corps' brigades—deployed to defend Drvar and its approaches. The 1st Drvar was directly in front of the city, facing the south and west, while the Drina Brigades covered the southeastern approaches. They held a front of about 20 kilometers. In addition, the corps may have had the remnants of the 9th Grahovo Light Infantry Brigade deployed near Drvar as well, although the brigade may have earlier been destroyed in "Ljeto 95." The reinforced 3rd Serbian Brigade manned the sector adjacent to the Drina brigades on their left, covering the important Mliniste pass. The 7th Kupres-Sipovo Motorized Brigade/30th Division took over from here, defending the most important terrain feature—Vitorog.

⁶⁵⁰ On the Grabez, the 2nd Krajina Corps had deployed the 15th Bihać, 17th Kljuc (with a battalion from the 6th Sanske Infantry Brigade), 3rd Petrovac, and probably the 1st Serbian Brigades. From Bosanska Krupa through Bosanska Otoka to Bosanski Novi (Novigrad) were the 11th Krupa Light Infantry and 1st Novigrad Infantry Brigades.

⁶⁵¹ From south to north, Zec arrayed the 31st Light Infantry Brigade, the 19th "Srbobran" (Donji Vakuf) Infantry Brigade, the 11th Mrkonjic Light Infantry Brigade (with a battalion from the 5th Kozara Light Infantry Brigade attached), the 1st Sipovo Light Infantry Brigade, the 22nd Krajina Infantry Brigade, and the 1st Kotor Varos Light Infantry Brigade.

⁶⁵² The VRS probably should have shifted the 1st Sipovo and 11th Mrkonjic Brigades to the Vitorog-Mliniste area where the two formations most likely would have fought tenaciously to defend their hometowns. The 11th Mrkonjic in particular had acquired an excellent reputation during defensive operations in the Donji Vakuf-Komar Mountains area.

⁶⁵³ This account of "Maestral" draws primarily on Colonel General Ante Gotovina, *Offensive Battles and Operations of the Croatian Army and HVO Knin*: Split Corps District, 1996, pp. 5-102 and a series of articles in Zagreb *Velebit* commemorating the one-year anniversary of the operation.

⁶⁵⁴ The 7th Guards attacked Mliniste with two battalions, each of which had one armored company attached from the brigade armored battalion. Vesna Puljak, "Steel for the Puma's Leaps," Zagreb *Velebit*, 12 January 1996, pp. 16-17.

⁶⁵⁵ "The Wartime Journey of the 1st Armored: A Striking Fist," *Krajiski Vojnik*, June 1996, pp. 26-29.

⁶⁵⁶ The HVO 60th Guards Airborne Battalion and the Bosnian Croat Special Police still appear to have been attached to the 1st HGZ.

⁶⁵⁷ Colonel General Ante Gotovina, *Offensive Battles and Operations of the Croatian Army and HVO Knin*: Split Corps District, 1996, p. 91.

⁶⁵⁸ There appears to be no basis to charges in the Serb press after this action that the "Drina Brigade"—actually three brigades—fled from the battle at Mlinista-Vitorog, leaving a gap for the HV/HVO to advance through; in addition, it seems clear from the evidence

that 3rd Serbian and 7th Motorized Brigades held that sector. There are indications, however, that on 15-17 September, elements of the 3rd Drina Brigade may have withdrawn precipitously from positions north of Kljuc during 5th Corps operations to seize the town. This withdrawal does not appear to have had any significant impact on the campaign. Colonel Vinko Pandurevic, the commander of the 1st Zvornik Infantry Brigade, claimed the elements of the composite formation that he was temporarily commanding—the 1st Drina Brigade—fought well at Drvar. Momcilo Joksimovic, "Organization on Perfect Principles," Pale *Oslobodjenje*, 8 May 1997, p. 4, an interview with Colonel Vino Pandurevic. For claims about the Drina Brigade's poor performance, see Djoko Kesić and Zoran Lukic, "Banja Luka Coincidentally Avoided Knin's Fate: About a Hundred Special Troops Prevented the Krajina's Fall," Belgrade *Telegraf*, 27 September 1995, p. 6.

⁶⁵ Colonel Antun Luburic's 1st HVO Guards Brigade "Ante Bruno Busic" had the 60th Guards Battalion and the HV Main Staff Recon-Sabotage Company attached. During the fighting around Sipovo the 1st HGZ chief of staff, Brigadier Ante Saskor, was killed in action. Eduard Milicevic, "Heroes Never Die," Zagreb *Velebit*, 15 March 1996, p. 11.

⁶⁶ The 2nd HVO Guards Brigade had the 22nd Sabotage Detachment, the "Gavran-2" Special Purpose Unit, and the Bosnian Croat Special Police attached. Neven Miladin, "On the Wings of Victory," Zagreb *Velebit*, 12 July 1996, pp. 16-17, an article on the 2nd HVO Guards Brigade; Colonel General Ante Gotovina, *Offensive Battles and Operations of the Croatian Army and HVO Knin: Split Corps District*, 1996, p. 92.

⁶⁷ Zagreb *Velebit* later described the HV/HVO drive on Sipovo and Jajce:

The operation to liberate Sipovo was carried out from two directions. The 'Busices' [1st HVO Guards] infantry, using the recently liberated town of Strojnicu as their starting point, rapidly liberated the town of Dragnic, supported by artillery, tanks, and air defense weapons. Sipovo was now within reach, but the enemy still did not surrender. During the morning of 12 September, the "Busices" 1st Infantry Battalion, accompanied by armor and air defense forces, entered Sipovo by the main road, following several hours later by the "Ludvig Pavlovic" HVO 60th Guard Battalion, and the HVO 22nd Sabotage Detachment. Next, the HVO 2nd Guard Brigade, commanded by Major General Stanko Sopta, the 81st HV Guard Battalion, the "Gavran-2" Special Purpose Unit, and members of the Herzeg-Bosna [Bosnian Croat] Special Police continued the operation. Moving from the direction of Dragnic on the slopes of Vitorog, the 2nd HVO Guard Brigade and the attached units penetrated along the villages of Vagon, Pribeljci, and Vukovo and the Vrbas River. During the night they received a new order to move along the route of the villages of Babic and Knezevici and point 1335 in Gorica. They were then to break through to Plivsko Lake, enter Jajce, occupy dominant points around the city, and break through to the canyons of the Rika River and the Ugar River.

Gordan Radosevic, Vesna Puljak, Zeljko Stipanovic, Nikolina Sutalo, and Neven Miladin, "Through Maestral to Freedom," Zagreb *Velebit*, 13 September 1996, pp. 10-15.

⁶⁸ Elements of the 7th Motorized Brigade managed to hold the important Previle Pass against the advancing HV 81st Guards Battalion, after a harrowing escape from Sipovo. The following narrative from the VRS journal *Srpska Vojska* gives a flavor of the VRS rear guard actions:

... when the line was broken in the general area of Vitorog, 2nd Lieutenant [Dragan] Boskan and 120 fighters from the 7th Motorized Brigade went to defend Sipovo. With no neighbor on the left and a vacillating neighbor on the right,

he did not manage to do anything more with his small forces because the front was largely dispersed. Dragan held out until the night of 12 September. Only thanks to his personal bravery and ability did he avoid dispersal of the unit, being cut off, having personnel captured, and he managed to pull out of the semi-encirclement with minor losses. Boskan distinguished himself during the battles for the defense of Mrkonjic Grad. With two tanks and about 100 fighting men, he defended the Previle Pass . . . he remained until 0200 hours on 14 September. He withdrew the personnel and equipment only when it seemed that the [Croatians] were pressing from the opposite direction—from Rogolj [to the northwest] . . . because it would have been too risky to remain on Previle with inadequate forces. And the next day, when it turned out that the [Croatians] had not dared to take the pass, with three tanks and "Praga" [self-propelled air defense weapon] he joined a company from the 43rd Motorized Brigade and thus prevented the [Croatians] from entering the city.

Because a complete line of defense was not established around Mrkonjic Grad, Boskan and [the commander] of the 11th [Mrkonjic] Light Infantry Brigade, and some 30 fighting men and scouts of the 11th Light Brigade who were from Mrkonjic rushed to take the dominant peaks of Lisina.

Steven Stojicic, "Dragan is the Best," *Srpska Vojska*, 28 December 1995, pp. 25-26; Slavisa Sabljic, "One Day in the Life of Officer Branislav Bojic's Unit: They Have Never Knuckled Under," *Krajiski Vojnik*, December 1995, p. 51, an article on the 4th Battalion/43rd Motorized Brigade. The 1st Armored Battalion/1st Armored Brigade also supported the 7th Motorized at Previle Pass. "The Wartime Journey of the 1st Armored: A Striking Fist," *Krajiski Vojnik*, June 1996, pp. 26-29. The HV 81st Guards Battalion was inserted in the second phase of "Maestral" to support the HVO exploitation force. During its short involvement in the combat operations around Mrkonjic Grad against the 7th Motorized Brigade, the battalion suffered relatively heavy casualties of eight killed and 32 wounded in action. Statement by Staff Brigadier Renato Romic, Zagreb *Velebit*, 13 September 1996, p. 13; Romic commanded the 81st.

⁶⁹ Colonel General Ante Gotovina, *Offensive Battles and Operations of the Croatian Army and HVO Knin: Split Corps District*, 1996, pp. 95-98.

⁷⁰ See Statement by Major General Ivan Korade, Zagreb *Velebit*, 13 September 1996, p. 14; Korade commanded the 7th Guards Brigade.

⁷¹ Belgrade SRNA, 24 July 1995. FBIS London LD2407230895, 242308Z July 1995.

⁷² Banja Luka Srpski Radio, 25 July 1995. FBIS Vienna AU2607150695, 261506Z July 1995.

⁷³ Banja Luka Srpski Radio, 27 July 1995. FBIS Vienna AU2707145595, 271455Z July 1995.

⁷⁴ Sarajevo Radio, 28 July 1995. FBIS Vienna AU2807192395, 281923Z July 1995.

⁷⁵ Banja Luka Srpski Radio, 30 July 1995. FBIS Vienna AU3007154695, 301546Z July 1995.

⁷⁶ Belgrade Tanjug, 12 August 1995. FBIS London LD1208133595, 121335Z August 1995.

⁷⁷ Mostar Croatian Radio, 12 August 1995. FBIS London LD1208164195, 121641Z August 1995.

⁷⁸ Paris AFP, 12 August 1995. FBIS Vienna AU1208183595, 121835Z August 1995.

⁷⁹ Paris AFP, 14 August 1995. FBIS Vienna AU1408080495, 140804Z August 1995.

⁸⁰ Reuters, "Bosnian Army Launches Major Attack in Central Bosnia" by Kurt Schork, 12 August 1995.

- ⁶⁷⁵ Paris AFP, 13 August 1995. FBIS Vienna AU1308135595, 131355Z August 1995.
- ⁶⁷⁶ Reuters, "Bosnian Army Keeps Up Attack Around Serb Town" 13 August 1995.
- ⁶⁷⁷ Reuters, "Government Gains Apparent Around Donji Vakuf" 14 August 1995.
- ⁶⁷⁸ Paris AFP, 14 August 1995. FBIS Vienna AU1408192595, 141925Z August 1995.
- ⁶⁷⁹ Sarajevo Radio, interview with Ferid Buljubasic, Spokesman for the Bosnia-Herzegovina Army General Staff, by Mladen Bosnjak, 21 August 1995. FBIS Vienna AU2108153795, 211537Z August 1995.
- ⁶⁸⁰ Sarajevo Radio, interview with Ferid Buljubasic, Spokesman for the Bosnia-Herzegovina Army General Staff, 11 September 1995. FBIS Vienna AU1109150995, 111509Z September 1995.
- ⁶⁸¹ Paris AFP, 11 September 1995. FBIS Vienna AU1109162995, 111629Z September 1995.
- ⁶⁸² Reuters, "Croats, Moslems Take Key Town From Serbs—UN" by Davor Huic, 13 September 1995.
- ⁶⁸³ See Dzemal Sefer, "We Are Ready 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 for a brief description of the 705th Brigade's move across the Komar, following up the VRS withdrawal.
- ⁶⁸⁴ Reportedly up to 6,000 Bosnian Serb troops were withdrawn from the area, Reuters, "Serbs Flee Croat, Muslim Advance in Central Bosnia" by Davor Huic, 13 September 1995.
- ⁶⁸⁵ Reuters, "Bosnian Army Confirms Capture of Donji Vakuf" by Kurt Schork, 14 September 1995.
- ⁶⁸⁶ Sarajevo Radio, 13 September 1995, interview with Brigadier General Mehmed Alagic, Commander of the 7th Corps of the Army of Bosnia-Herzegovina, by Senad Hazifeizovic. FBIS London LD1309231895, 132318Z September 1995.
- ⁶⁸⁷ Sarajevo Radio, 14 September 1995. FBIS Vienna AU1409182395, 141823Z September 1995.
- ⁶⁸⁸ Sarajevo Radio, Statement by Ferid Buljubasic, Spokesman for the Bosnia-Herzegovina Army General Staff, 14 September 1995. FBIS Vienna AU1409194095, 141940Z September 1995.
- ⁶⁸⁹ "Slavisa Sabljic, "Notes from the Agino Selo Front: We Have Nowhere Further to Go," *Krajiski Vojnik*, December 1995, p. 50, describes the ordered withdrawal of the 1st Sipovo Light Infantry Brigade from the Turbe area near Travnik; Sefko Hodzic, "Operation Werewolf," *Sarajevo Oslobodjenje*, 13 January 1996, p. 5.
- ⁶⁹⁰ Sarajevo Radio, 15 September 1995. FBIS Vienna AU1509105395, 151053Z September 1995.
- ⁶⁹¹ Sead Suskic, "With Rifle in Hand," *Travnik Bosnjak*, 7 November 1995, pp. 11-13; Sefko Hodzic, "An Honorable Departure Into History," *Sarajevo Oslobodjenje*, 10 January 1996, p. 6.
- ⁶⁹² Samira Dzanic, "In Memory of the Great Liberating March of the Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina Army: Sana 95," *Sarajevo Prva Linija*, October 1997, pp. 25-26. See also Sarajevo Radio reporting covering 13 September through 1 October.
- ⁶⁹³ Sanja Dzafic, "An Avalanche of Successes Has Been Started," *Travnik Bosnjak*, 17 October 1995, p. 19, an article on the 502nd Mountain Brigade. See Dudakovic's comments on HV artillery support in Danica Juricic, "We Will Liberate Banja Luka and Bijeljina," *Split Slobodna Dalmacija*, 21 September 1995, p. 4.
- ⁶⁹⁴ Zilhad Kljucanin, "I am Liberating My Own Country, but the Serbs Suffer From a Mania of Expulsion," *Travnik Bosnjak*, 3 October 1995, pp. 2-4, an interview with Division General Atif Dudakovic.
- ⁶⁹⁵ Sanja Dzafic, "An Avalanche of Successes Has Been Started," *Travnik Bosnjak*, 17 October 1995, p. 19, an article on the 502nd Mountain Brigade.
- ⁶⁹⁶ HV and ARBiH troops briefly clashed at Ostrelj after apparently mistaking each other for VRS personnel.
- ⁶⁹⁷ M. Smajic, "If You Had Been Just A Day Late, the Chetniks Would Have Massacred All of Us!" *Travnik Bosnjak*, 17 October 1995, pp. 14-15, an article on the 501st Mountain Brigade and the capture of Kljuc.
- ⁶⁹⁸ Senada Avdagic, "'511th Glorious' Came Back Home," *Travnik Bosnjak*, 3 October 1995, p. 5.
- ⁶⁹⁹ Dudakovic stated in a 21 September interview that:
- The 5th Corps was assigned the task of breaking through to the valley of the Japra River [near Bosanski Novi] and the valley of the Sana River, and our units moved from Bihać towards Bosanski Petrovac and onward to Kljuc, and from Bosanska Krupa toward Sanski Most. In the first three days of combat activity, our forces completed the first stage of their task. Bosanska Krupa, Bosanski Petrovac, and Kljuc were liberated. The second stage will require an additional effort on the part of the 5th Corps, but in practice it is underway. The aim is to break through to the Sana Valley across the Sana River toward Banja Luka.
- Danica Juricic, "We Will Liberate Banja Luka and Bijeljina," *Split Slobodna Dalmacija*, 21 September 1995, p. 4, an interview with Division General Atif Dudakovic.
- Dudakovic earlier stated in an interview on 17 September that: Tomorrow, we are advancing in three directions: Kljuc-Mrkonjic Grad, Kljuc-Sanski Most, and Bosanski Petrovac-Sanski Most. The fourth direction is Bihać-Bosanska Krupa.
- Zilhad Kljucanin, "I am Liberating My Own Country, but the Serbs Suffer From a Mania of Expulsion," *Travnik Bosnjak*, 3 October 1995, pp. 2-4, an interview with Division General Atif Dudakovic.
- ⁷⁰⁰ For details of the advance of the 505th, 506th, and 517th Brigades, see Zemka Seferagic, "The Anniversary of the Formation of the 517th Liberation-Light Brigade, 15 August 1997: On the Road to Freedom," *Sarajevo Prva Linija*, September 1997, p. 23, and Ibrahim Majdankic, "Ako Ikad, Sada Je Vakat!," *Travnik Bosnjak*, 21 November 1995, an interview with the 505th Brigade morale officer. Hussein Kovacevic, and Zemka Seferagic, "For the Heroes, Lest We Forget," *Sarajevo Prva Linija*, November 1997, pp. 19, for information on the 505th and 506th Brigades.
- ⁷⁰¹ For details of the advance of the 503rd, see Zemka Semeragic, "Fifth Anniversary of the Formation of the 1st Cazin/503rd Glorious Mountain Brigade, 17 August 1997: From Mokres to Sanski Most; Zemka Seferagic, "Smotra Gazije Koji Bosnu Zude Od Una Do Drine!" *Travnik Bosnjak*, 21 November 1995, p. 17, discussing the 503rd.
- ⁷⁰² Zeljaja had previously served as the commander of the 43rd Prijedor Motorized Brigade for most of the war. His chief of staff appears to have been Colonel Nikola Kajtez, the former chief of staff of the 30th Division and commander of the 6th Sanske Infantry Brigade. He most likely was transferred to Zeljaja because of his experience in the Sanski Most-Prijedor area. The main formations arriving were the 5th Kozara Light Infantry, 6th Sanske Infantry, 11th Dubica Infantry, the 16th Krajina Motorized, and major elements of the 43rd Motorized Brigade, plus the Main Staff's 65th Protection Motorized Regiment and the 1st Krajina Corps's 1st MP Battalion and 1st Recon-Sabotage Detachment. Bosnian Serb Vice President Plavsic was in Sanski Most when the reinforcements began to arrive and indicated that the difference in morale between the arriving 1st Krajina Corps troops and personnel of the Drina brigades—who were being withdrawn from battle—was considerable. Momo Joksimovic, "Absolutely Srpska," *Banja Luka Glas Srpski*, 20 September 1995, p. 3, interview with Biljana Plavsic.

⁷⁰³ Arkan had arrived in Sanski Most by 19 September; he and his deputy commander, Mihailo Ulemelek—"Legija," both led the SDG in battle. SRNA 19 September 1995. Presumably, the Serbian RDB troops, led by veteran RDB commander "Raja" Bozovic—last seen in Velika Kladusa—arrived at the same time. The SDG appears to have been organized into three 300-man battalions totaling about 1,000 troops. Borislav Pelevic, one of the leaders of Arkan's political party, stated on 22 September that the SDG had about 1,000 personnel in western Bosnia, while Arkan described the withdrawal of his "last battalion" of 300 men on 23 October 1995. In addition to serving as shock troops, the SDG and the RDB acted as military police, rounding up deserters and stragglers, whom they "disciplined," shaving their heads, tying them to lampposts, then sending them back to the front. The SDG lost 17 personnel killed in action and 118 wounded during the fighting in western Bosnia. Interview with Arkan, BK TV 4 June 1997. The "official" invitation for Arkan and the Serbian MUP troops to come to the Republika Srpska came from Bosnian Serb Internal Affairs Minister Tomo Kovac, Djoko Kesić and Zoran Lukic, "Banja Luka Coincidentally Avoided Knin's Fate: About a Hundred Special Troops Prevented the Krajina's Fall," Belgrade Tanjug 27 September 1995, p. 6 and D. A., "Journalists As Spies," Pale *Oslobodjenje*, 15 November 1995, p. 5, a press conference by Tomo Kovac.

⁷⁰⁴ *The Washington Post* "Bosnian Standoff: Serbs Stiffen Defenses Against Muslim, Croatian Forces" by John Pomfret, 21 September 1995.

⁷⁰⁵ The experience of the 5th Kozara Brigade is a good example of how rapidly the VRS units had been shifted and inserted into battle on 17-18 September. The counterattack involved one wing of the 5th Kozara and 6th Sanske attacking from Sanski Most toward Zegar on the western bank of the Sana while one battalion from the 5th Kozara crossed the Sana River further south at Vrpolje in an attempt to envelop the 502nd and 510th Brigades. Boro Grubic, "Life Is Flowing Upstream," *Krajiski Vojnik*, November 1995, pp. 36-37:

[The counterattack] began at about 0400 hours. There was a drizzling rain. The Sana was cold, it frothed as it flowed around what was left of the demolished bridge at Vrpolje. Someone had already stretched a cable to be used to get to the other shore. It came up to some people's chests, others to the neck, some to the waist . . . we had covered 300 kilometers; some of them went directly from the bus into combat, because there was no line of defense at all . . . You throw the enemy back, you get a break, and then you have to ford the Sana, to chase the Muslims and not give them a chance to dig in . . .

We mopped up the terrain by bringing one company after another of our battalion into the fighting over the course of an hour.

Boro Grubic, "Unit at the Ready," *Srpska Vojska*, 3 November 1995, pp. 22-23. See Zemka Seferagic, "5th LARD PVO [5th Light Air Defense Artillery-Rocket Battalion]: Successful War Road," *Sarajevo Prva Linija*, March 1997, p. 22, for a discussion of the 5th Air Defense Battalion's efforts to save the nearly encircled 510th Brigade.

For a firsthand account, see Anthony Loyd, *My War Gone By, I Miss It So*, London: Doubleday, 1999, pp. 295-311. Loyd was present at the 502nd Brigade forward command post.

⁷⁰⁶ Pale Srpska TV 21 September 1995; Mirjana Micic, "Sweating at Minus 10," *Srpska Vojska*, 3 November 1995, pp. 28-29, an article on the 65th Protection Regiment; Milan Celeketic, "Defense of the Krajina," *Krajiski Vojnik*, June 1996, p. 25, an article on the 16th Krajina Motorized Brigade; "Where It Was Hardest, There Was the 4th Battalion: From Romanija to the Una and Sava," *Krajiski Vojnik*, June 1996, p. 36, an article on the 4th Battalion/43rd Motorized Brigade.

⁷⁰⁷ The 505th Mountain Brigade's elite "Hamze" (Lions) Special Purpose Battalion lost its commander and two other senior personnel in heavy fighting at the village of Skucani Vakuf, northwest of Sanski Most. Ibrahim Majdankic, "Ako Ikad, Sada Je Vakat!" *Travnik Bosnjak*, 21 November 1995, an interview with the 505th Brigade morale officer, Hussein Kovacevic.

⁷⁰⁸ Major General Marijan Marekovic formerly served on the HV Main Staff and had coordinated "Oluja-2" and "Oluja-3" from a forward command post in Ogulin during "Oluja." He was appointed to replace Major General Ivan Basarac as commander of the Zagreb Corps District on 14 September 1995 because of the heavy casualties that HV troops took during the capture of Petrinja under Basarac's command. Zagreb Radio 14 September 1995; Davor Butkovic, "Why Have Croatian Generals Vinko Vrbanec, Nojko Marinovic, Ante Roso, and Djuro Basarac Been Dismissed," Zagreb *Globus*, 29 September, pp. 2, 50.

⁷⁰⁹ Because of "Una 95's" failure the HV has never discussed the operation. The most detailed description is in Zeljko Grigurinovic, "Action Stopped on Demand of the Americans? Why Croatian Army Action 'Una' Failed, in September 1995. About Which Generals Bobetko and Cervenko Still Polemicize," *Zagreb Obzor*, 13 September 1997, pp. 32-33. The attack was also covered in the contemporary Serb press reports, including SRNA, Banja Luka Srpski Radio, and Belgrade Tanjug, during the period 18-20 September 1995.

⁷¹⁰ Many of the VRS's brigades maintained a reserve garrison battalion that was manned by elderly reservists—over 50 and 60 years of age—who were only mobilized as a last resort. These reserve battalions in the 1st Novigrad Infantry, 11th Dubica Infantry, and 1st Gradiska Light Infantry Brigades had the responsibility of guarding the Una and Sava River sectors opposite Croatia.

⁷¹¹ Zeljko Grigurinovic, "Action Stopped on Demand of the Americans? Why Croatian Army Action 'Una' Failed, in September 1995. About Which Generals Bobetko and Cervenko Still Polemicize," *Zagreb Obzor*, 13 September 1997, pp. 32-33.

⁷¹² Banja Luka Srpski Radio described the destruction of elements of the "Black Mambas," the 1st Battalion/2nd Guards Brigade, in Dubica. Banja Luka Srpski Radio 19 September 1995.

⁷¹³ Zeljko Grigurinovic, "Action Stopped on Demand of the Americans? Why Croatian Army Action 'Una' Failed, in September 1995. About Which Generals Bobetko and Cervenko Still Polemicize," *Zagreb Obzor*, 13 September 1997, pp. 32-33.

⁷¹⁴ Bobetko was highly critical of the operation, slamming the HV for poor intelligence and preparation, as well as criticizing General Cervenko for failing to be present in Zagreb or on the scene during the action. Cervenko apparently was in Dubrovnik at the time. Janko Bobetko, *Sve Moje Bitke (All My Battles)*, Zagreb: Vlastita Naklada, 1996, pp. 511-512.

⁷¹⁵ Only one officer was relieved, Major General Vinko Vrbanec, the Chief of Operations on the HV Main Staff. Zagreb HTV 23 September 1995; Davor Butkovic, "Why Have Croatian Generals Vinko Vrbanec, Nojko Marinovic, Ante Roso, and Djuro Basarac Been Dismissed," Zagreb *Globus*, 29 September, pp. 2, 50.

⁷¹⁶ "Doboj" Operational Group 9 was under the command of Major General Vladimir Arsic.

⁷¹⁷ The "Ozren" Tactical Group consisted of the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th Ozren Light Infantry Brigades, usually reinforced with at least one or two additional light infantry brigades, often the 1st Prnjavor, 1st Vucjak, 1st Krnjin, and/or 1st Srbac Light Infantry Brigades. Up to a battalion from the 2nd Armored Brigade probably supported the tactical group, plus a battery from the 1st Mixed Artillery Regiment. OG-level units such as the 9th Reconnaissance Company and 9th Military Police Battalion, plus the 5th (Doboj) Detachment/MUP Special Police Brigade, could reinforce the TG as necessary.

- ⁷¹⁸ Sarajevo *Prva Linija*, "Great Victories of the Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina Army in the Defensive Liberating War: Bosnian Hurricane," October 1997, pp. 22-23.
- ⁷¹⁹ Paris AFP, 28 May 1995. FBIS Vienna AU2805183595, 281835Z May 1995.
- ⁷²⁰ The recently formed 9th Muslimski Brigade served as one of the 2nd Corps assault formations during this attack. "Second Anniversary of the 9th Muslim Liberation Brigade Marked: Heroes, Sons of the Drina" by Said Huremovic, Sarajevo *Prva Linija*, October 1997. FBIS Reston VA 98E08031C, 122007Z January 1998.
- ⁷²¹ The ARBiH 222nd Liberation Brigade also appears to have functioned as a spearhead unit involved in this attack. Banja Luka Srpska Televizija, 5 June 1995. FBIS Vienna AU0606190095, 061900Z June 1995.
- ⁷²² Reuters, "Bosnia Fighting Surges, Pressure on UN Grows" by Kurt Schork, 29 May 1995.
- ⁷²³ Belgrade Tanjug, 29 May 1995. FBIS London LD2905164895, 291648Z May 1995.
- ⁷²⁴ Sarajevo Radio, 11 June 1995. FBIS London LD1106174495, 111744Z June 1995.
- ⁷²⁵ Sarajevo Radio, 29 May 1995. FBIS Vienna AU2905222095, 292220Z May 1995.
- ⁷²⁶ Banja Luka Srpska Televizija, 9 June 1995. FBIS Vienna AU1206202695, 122025Z June 1995.
- ⁷²⁷ Belgrade SRNA 30 May 1995. FBIS London LD3005200995, 302009Z May 1995.
- ⁷²⁸ Reuters, "Bosnian Serbs, Facing Assault, Seek Volunteers" by Tim Judah, 30 May 1995.
- ⁷²⁹ The Serb proclamation called for
All those who bear a Serb name and have Serb blood in their veins to take a gun and march under the flag of liberation in order to resolutely stop the Muslim offensive on Ozren . . . This is a critical moment for the entire Serb nation, our 'to be or not to be . . . Let us raise the banner of victory and defeat the united enemies of Serbdom and the Orthodox Church and all the hellish plans of the world power players.
Belgrade SRNA, 30 May 1995. FBIS London LD3005160295, 301602Z May 1995.
- ⁷³⁰ Reuters, "Bosnian Army Squeezes Serb Bastion in Pincer" by Davor Huic, 30 May 1995.
- ⁷³¹ Belgrade Tanjug, 4 June 1995. FBIS London LD0406194895, 041948Z June 1995.
- ⁷³² Sarajevo Radio, 4 November 1995; London *The Guardian*, 28 November 1995; Paris AFP, 28 December 1995.
- ⁷³³ Sarajevo Radio, 28 July 1995. FBIS Vienna AU2807192395, 281923Z July 1995.
- ⁷³⁴ Banja Luka Srpska Televizija, 14 August 1995. FBIS Vienna AU1408202595, 142025Z August 1995.
- ⁷³⁵ Reuters, "Serb Commander Rejects Weapons Withdrawal Order," 30 August 1995.
- ⁷³⁶ Sarajevo Radio, 31 August 1995. FBIS Vienna AU3108113795, 311137Z August 1995.
- ⁷³⁷ The communications tower, atop 883-meter Kraljica Peak, the second-highest elevation on Mt. Ozren, was struck again by NATO aircraft on 6 and 7 September. Belgrade Tanjug, 6 September 1995. FBIS London LD0609132295, 061322Z September 1995. Belgrade Tanjug, 7 September 1995. FBIS London LD0709164995, 071649Z September 1995. The third strike, on 7 September, demolished the main relay tower. Sarajevo Radio, 7 September 1995. FBIS Vienna AU0709185895, 071858Z September 1995.
- ⁷³⁸ Reuters, "NATO Strikes Serbs After Shelling in Tuzla," 10 September 1995.
- ⁷³⁹ Reuters, "Croat Seize Serb Areas, NATO Bombing Continues," 12 September 1995.
- ⁷⁴⁰ Reuters, "Government Troops Report Gains Across Bosnia," 11 September 1995.
- ⁷⁴¹ Reuters, "Serbs Flee Croat, Moslem Advance in Central Bosnia," 13 September 1995.
- ⁷⁴² Paris AFP, 12 September 1995. FBIS Vienna AU1209174295, 121742Z September 1995.
- ⁷⁴³ Sarajevo *Prva Linija*, "Second Anniversary of the 9th Muslim Liberation Brigade Marked: Heroes, Sons of the Drina" by Said Huremovic, October 1997, p. 11. FBIS Reston VA 98E08031C, 122007Z January 1998.
- ⁷⁴⁴ The 222nd Liberation Brigade had been temporarily reassigned to help the 24th Division assist the survivors of the Srebrenica escape attempt in late July, but the brigade was transferred back to the 22nd Division before the start of this operation. Sarajevo *Prva Linija*, March 1997, pp. 23-24.
- ⁷⁴⁵ Travnik *Bosnjak*, Interview with Major Ibrahim Salihovic, Commander of the 211th Liberation Brigade of the Army of the Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina, by Edhem Ekmescic, "We Have to Have a Strong Army Because it is the Guarantee of Our Return Home!" FBIS Reston VA 96BA0155B, 060140Z March 1996.
- ⁷⁴⁶ Sarajevo *Prva Linija*, "Springtime in May" by Said Huremovic, May 1997, pp. 23-24. FBIS Reston VA 98E08093A, 022350Z April 1998.
- ⁷⁴⁷ An additional VRS brigade—probably the 1st Krnjin Light Infantry Brigade, but possibly the 1st Prnjavor or 1st Vucjak Brigade—may have been deployed between the 2nd and 4th Ozren Brigades near Seona.
- ⁷⁴⁸ Sarajevo *Prva Linija*, March 1997, pp. 23-24.
- ⁷⁴⁹ Sarajevo Radio 11 September 1995. FBIS London LD1109214795, 112147Z September 1995.
- ⁷⁵⁰ Reuters, "Government Troops Report Gains Across Bosnia" 11 September 1995.
- ⁷⁵¹ Sarajevo Radio, 12 September 1995. FBIS Vienna AU1209152295, 121522Z September 1995.
- ⁷⁵² Sarajevo Radio, 13 September 1995. FBIS Vienna AU1309153195, 131531Z September 1995.
- ⁷⁵³ Sarajevo Radio, 14 September 1995. FBIS Vienna AU1409182495, 141824Z September 1995.
- ⁷⁵⁴ Sarajevo Radio, 15 September 1995. FBIS Vienna AU1509105895, 151058Z September 1995.
- ⁷⁵⁵ Reuters, "Croats, Moslems Take Key Town from Serbs—UN," 13 September 1995.
- ⁷⁵⁶ International relief workers in the area also reported seeing surrounded Serb soldiers surrendering near Mt. Ozren, though the UN could not corroborate these reports. Reuters, "Bosnian Serb Refugees Flee North to Banja Luka" by Dan De Luce, 14 September 1995.
- ⁷⁵⁷ Pale Srpska Televizija, 12 September 1995. FBIS London LD1209210995, 122109Z September 1995.
- ⁷⁵⁸ Serb media sources later reported that some 1,500 Serb soldiers and civilians did not escape in time and that they remained in occupied Vozuca after the Muslim takeover. At least 12,000 refugees successfully fled the Vozuca area, streaming into Doboj in mid-September. Belgrade SRNA 20 September 1995, FBIS London LD2009124795, 201247Z September 1995; Banja Luka Srpski Radio, 19 September 1995. FBIS Vienna AU2009160995, 201609Z September 1995.
- ⁷⁵⁹ Sarajevo *Prva Linija*, "Five Years of the 7th Vitez Mechanized Brigade: Always in the First Rank," by T. Terovic, November 1997, pp. 22-23. FBIS Reston VA 98E08079C, 111455Z March 1998.
- ⁷⁶⁰ Sarajevo *Prva Linija*, "Five Years of the 7th Vitez Mechanized Brigade" by T. Terovic, November 1997, pp. 22-23. FBIS Reston VA, 98E08079C, 111455Z March 1997.

⁷⁶¹ Travnik *Bosnjak*, "Naprijed Should Not Have Been Burned" by R. Ibrahimofendic, 3 October 1995. FBIS Reston VA, 96BA0100B, 151942Z February 1996.

⁷⁶² Formerly the 2nd Corps's 2nd Operational Group.

⁷⁶³ Major Dragan Vasiljevic, commander of the 1st Ozren Light Infantry Brigade, described the situation VRS forces faced on 17 September in *Srpska Vojska*:

On 17 September, I was receiving reports from commander Jovicic of the 1st Battalion that the situation on his right flank was in order, and this was confirmed by commander Mecin of the 2nd Battalion of the 2nd Ozren Brigade, although . . . he lacked two or three platoons to close the line in the area of Micijevici. I decided at once to send another three platoons to that area . . . Less than an hour later, I myself went to make the rounds of the army sent to help the 2nd Ozren Brigade and to spend the night with them, because I expected a new attack in the morning. In the area of Azbest [an asbestos mine], I met some forces coming from the direction of Manastir [an Orthodox monastery near the frontline] with one of my platoons. They told me that there was no longer a line and that the entire 2nd Ozren Brigade had withdrawn. I sent them back, and then near Manastir I saw the chaotic situation; there were about 300 men, five or six tanks, self-propelled guns, three-barrel guns [air defense artillery], mortars, and material. I stopped a tank which headed a column, turned it athwart on the road, and thus prevented the column from retreating further. At that time, I learned from the commander of the 1st Battalion [of the 1st Ozren Brigade] that there was no line from Borice to Bukovica (a distance of about 15 km). I succeeded in persuading the soldiers to get down from the vehicle, although some of the soldiers were reluctant.

Srpska Vojska then writes:

That was where commander Vasiljevic called for an advance toward the village of Stupari in order to protect the right flank of the 1st Battalion and its possible withdrawal. It was nighttime, about 2200 hours. The men were uneasy because they did not know where the enemy was and whether he had already taken up new lines. Major Vasiljevic sat in the Puh [a light truck] and departed in the direction of Sizje.

Vasiljevic states:

I told my men that if I got through alive they were to go down to Stuparska Rijeka and set up the line there, and if I encountered the enemy, to organize defense at that place. Traveling crossroads, I realized Sizje at about 2400 hours. Here, I found commander Jovicic, who familiarized me with the situation at the moment, in the end asking me if the battalion could withdraw to a new line; I did not consent to that, because I expected that new forces would be arriving as promised throughout the day. I called for commander Djukic ["Ozren" TG commander LTC Novak Djukic], who arrived in Sizje at 0100 hours. I told him that we did not have a right flank and that unless new forces arrived during the night and closed the line, I would call for the withdrawal of the battalion to a new line. When it was established after detailed verification that nothing was to come of the arrival of fresh forces and closing the line, silence ensued. We exchanged looks, and then battalion commander Jovicic ordered the withdrawal of the unit according to plan, and Colonel Djukic did not react to that.

Troops from the 2nd Ozren Brigade finally closed the gap on the 1st Ozren's right flank on 19 September.

M. Djukvanovic, "We Had To Hold Out," *Srpska Vojska*, 28 December 1995, pp. 26-27. FBIS Reston 96BA0215D, 102058Z April 1996.

⁷⁶⁴ Sarajevo Radio, 18 September 1995. FBIS London LD1809220695, 182206Z September 1995.

⁷⁶⁵ Formerly known as Operational Group 7-South. 37th Division Elements known to have fought in Operation "Uragan" include the 327th Brigade from Maglaj and the 377th (formerly 207th) Mountain Brigade from Jelah. Other brigades almost certainly also contributed to the fighting east of Maglaj, including the 37th Division's elite 375th Liberation Brigade. See Sarajevo *Prva Linija*, "On the Anniversary of the 207th Chivalrous Mountain Brigade: the Fierce Pousorska: Chivalrous Brigade" by Said Huremovic, March-April 1998, pp. 34-35. FBIS Reston VA, 161818Z September 1998.

⁷⁶⁶ Zagreb HINA 18 September 1995. FBIS Vienna AU1809122595, 181225Z September 1995.

⁷⁶⁷ Reuters, "Bosnian Serbs in Mass Exodus as Tide of War Turns" by Dan De Luce, 15 September 1995.

⁷⁶⁸ Later figures suggest the number may have been closer to 7,000. In any case, the Bosnian Serb authorities responded by beating up and evicting hundreds of Bosnian Muslim residents from Doboj in retaliation and to make room for displaced Serb refugees streaming into the city. Reuters, "Serbs Expel Hundreds of Moslems From Doboj," 22 September 1995.

⁷⁶⁹ Belgrade Tanjug, 16 September 1995. FBIS London LD1609123395, 161233Z September 1995.

⁷⁷⁰ Belgrade SRNA, 16 September 1995. FBIS London LD1609144695, 161446Z September 1995.

⁷⁷¹ Sarajevo Radio, 16 September 1995. FBIS London LD1609175095, 161750Z September 1995.

⁷⁷² Sarajevo Radio, 16 September 1995. FBIS London LD1609203395, 162039Z September 1995.

⁷⁷³ Sarajevo Radio, 18 September 1995. FBIS Vienna AU1809111495, 181114Z September 1995.

⁷⁷⁴ Reuters, "Government Troops Sweep North on Ozren Mountain" by Kurt Schork, 19 September 1995.

⁷⁷⁵ Sarajevo Radio, 19 September 1995. FBIS Vienna AU1909112195, 191121Z September 1995.

⁷⁷⁶ The Doboj area was shelled heavily on 20 September 1995, with—unusually—many more Bosnian Army shells going in than Bosnian Serb shells coming out. Over 1,000 shells were fired at Doboj, according to UN officials, with only some 300 shells being fired back in response. Paris AFP 20 September 1995, FBIS Vienna AU2009095395, 200953Z September 1995.

⁷⁷⁷ Reuters, "Croatia Quits Offensive, Moslems Fight on in East" by Douglas Hamilton, 21 September 1995.

⁷⁷⁸ Reuters, "Serb Weapons Pullback Slow. Moslems Seize New Town" by Kurt Schork, 17 September 1995.

⁷⁷⁹ Skoric was severely wounded during the fighting. See M. Djukvanovic, "We Had To Hold Out," *Srpska Vojska*, 28 December 1995, pp. 26-27 FBIS Reston 96BA0215D, 102058Z April 1996 and "Colonel Miko Skoric: From Victory to Victory," Krajiski Vojnik June 1996, pp. 38-39. FBIS Reston 98E08008A, 282017Z October 1997. Colonel Stankovic's position at the time was unclear, but he probably was on the "Doboj" OG staff, possibly the chief of staff. Banja Luka Srpski Radio, 18 September 1995. FBIS Vienna AU1909164095, 191640Z September 1995.

⁷⁸⁰ The 35th Division/3rd Corps also hit the 3rd Ozren Brigade on 23 September, seizing three or four villages. Reuters, "Bosnian Government Unveils Cease-Fire Terms" By Kurt Schork, 22 September 1995.

⁷⁸¹ An ARBiH 3rd Corps advance captured several villages on 23 September. Sarajevo Radio, 23 September 1995. FBIS London LD2309192295, 231922Z September 1995.

⁷⁸² The ARBiH's measured advances continued on 24 September, when the ARBiH announced the capture of the town on Mladici. Sarajevo Radio, 24 September 1995. FBIS London LD2409185195, 241851Z September 1995.

⁷⁸³ Paris AFP, 21 September 1995. FBIS Vienna AU2109082295, 210821Z September 1995.

⁷⁸⁴ Zagreb HINA 5 October 1995. FBIS Vienna AU0510140895, 051404Z October 1995.

⁷⁸⁵ Sarajevo Radio, 6 October 1995. FBIS Vienna AU0610184795, 061847Z October 1995.

⁷⁸⁶ Reuters, "Bosnian Battlefields Static Pending Cease-Fire" by Kurt Schork, 5 October 1995.

⁷⁸⁷ Reuters, "Bosnian Army Claims Gains on Ozren Mountain," 7 October 1995.

⁷⁸⁸ The brigade was very quickly shifted back to western Bosnia, after the fall of Mrkonjic Grad. "The Infernal Fall of 1995: From Area to Area of Krajina," *Krajiski Vojnik*, June 1996, p. 22. FBIS Reston 98E08023B, 052000Z December 1997, an article on the 16th Krajina Motorized Brigade.

⁷⁸⁹ Sarajevo *Prva Linija*, "Great Victories of the Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina Army in the Defensive Liberating War: Bosnian Hurricane," October 1997, pp. 22-23.

⁷⁹⁰ The core of the "pursuit detachments" appears to have been most of the vehicles and personnel of the 2nd Corps' 2nd Armored Battalion (later to become the ARBiH 2nd Armored Brigade). Sarajevo *Prva Linija*, "Anniversary of the 2nd Armored Brigade of the Army of the Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina: Armored Units of the 2nd Corps" May 1997, pp. 20-21.

⁷⁹¹ Sarajevo *Prva Linija*, "Great Victories of the Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina Army in the Defensive Liberating War: Bosnian Hurricane" October 1997, pp. 22-23.

⁷⁹² See Belgrade Tanjug and Banja Luka Srpski Radio reporting from 22 September to 1 October. See also Milan Celeketic, "Defense of the Krajina," *Krajiski Vojnik*, June 1996, p. 25, an article on the 16th Krajina Motorized Brigade; "Where It Was Hardest. There Was the 4th Battalion: From Romanija to the Una and Sava," *Krajiski Vojnik*, June 1996, p. 36, an article on the 4th Battalion/43rd Motorized Brigade; Mirjana Micic, "Sweating at Minus 10," *Srpska Vojska*, 3 November 1995, pp. 28-29, an article on the 65th Protection Regiment.

⁷⁹³ Milan Celeketic, "Defense of the Krajina," *Krajiski Vojnik*, June 1996, p. 25.

⁷⁹⁴ See Sead Suskic, "With Rifle in Hand," *Travnik Bosnjak*, 7 November 1995, pp. 11-13, for a discussion of the 17th Krajina Mountain Brigade's movements during this action and Zarif Safic, "No One Can Prevent Us From Taking, Taking Back, What Belongs to Us!" *Travnik Bosnjak*, 9 January 1996, pp. 12-14. On the VRS side, the 17th Kljuc had the Mixed Battalion/6th Sanske Infantry Brigade attached, while the 4th Battalion/43rd Motorized Brigade was also fighting in this sector. In addition, the 2nd Krajina Infantry and 11th Mrkonjic Light Infantry Brigades probably was also arriving in the area, together with elements of the MUP Special Police Brigade. Slavisa Sabljic, "One Day in the Life of Officer Branislav Bojic's Unit: They Have Never Knuckled Under," *Krajiski Vojnik*, December 1995, p. 51, an article on the 4th Battalion/43rd Motorized Brigade; Interview with Rajko Vasiljevic, *War Bulletin of the 6th Sanske Infantry Brigade*, September 1995, p. 3.

⁷⁹⁵ The 501st Mountain Brigade reached the road junction at Cadjavica by 21 September, and the 17th Krajina Mountain Brigade appears to have taken the important 1,200-meter Tisovac mountain at the foot of the Manjaca area by 29 September. See Sead Suskic, "With Rifle in Hand," *Travnik Bosnjak*, 7 November 1995, pp. 11-13 on the 17th Krajina Mountain Brigade; Danica Juricic, "We Will Liberate Banja Luka and Bijeljina," *Split Slobodna Dalmacija*, 21 September 1995, p. 4, an interview with Division General Atif Dudakovic; and Reuters, "Bosnian Army Advances in Western Bosnia—Source," 29 September 1995.

⁷⁹⁶ Colonel Lazic was the chief of staff of the 30th Infantry Division. General Zec appears to have divided his division into two operational groups: OG-1 under his command on the left, defending the Travnik-Skender Vakuf (Knezovo) line over to the Vrbas River; and OG-2 under his chief of staff, Lazic, covering from the Vrbas over to Kljuc and the boundary with OG-10. Colonel Lazic

had previously commanded the VRS 1st Guards Motorized Brigade before taking over as 30th Division chief of staff in late summer or early fall.

⁷⁹⁷ "The Wartime Journey of the 1st Armored: A Striking Fist," *Krajiski Vojnik*, June 1996, pp. 26-29; Slavisa Sabljic, "Lest We Forget—The Government's Battle 'Steel Against Steel,'" *Srpska Vojska*, June 1996, p. 24.

⁷⁹⁸ Boro Grubic, "Life Is Flowing Upstream," *Krajiski Vojnik*, November 1995, pp. 36-37.

⁷⁹⁹ The 7th "Bosnjak" Reconnaissance-Sabotage Battalion reinforced the Sana River line. The 707th Mountain Brigade was the formation, however, which did not arrive on time. Sead Suskic, "With Rifle in Hand," *Travnik Bosnjak*, 7 November 1995, pp. 11-13.

⁸⁰⁰ Pale Srpska TV, SRNA, and Belgrade Tanjug reporting covering the period 3 to 6 October provide a detailed account of the VRS/MUP/SDG counterattack. For a description of the SDG's prominent role in this action, see "Guard Near Kljuc," *Belgrade Vecernje Novosti*, 4 October 1995. The commander of the Bosnian Serb Special Police Brigade, Goran Saric, also described the role of his men and the SDG in the Kljuc counterattack. See Darko Grabovac, "Serbs of a Special Breed," *Banja Luka Glas Srpski*, 21-22 October 1995, pp. 2-3, an interview with Goran Saric. See also "The Infernal Fall of 1995: From Area to Area of Krajina," *Krajiski Vojnik*, June 1996, p. 22, an article on the 16th Krajina Motorized Brigade.

⁸⁰¹ "The Infernal Fall of 1995: From Area to Area of Krajina," *Krajiski Vojnik*, June 1996, p. 22, an article on the 16th Krajina Motorized Brigade.

⁸⁰² The 708th Light and 712th Mountain Brigades helped block the 5th Kozara and 6th Sanske Brigades' attack at Krasulje, while the 707th and 717th Mountain Brigades bolstered the Sana River defenses at Kljuc. Sead Suskic, "With Rifle in Hand," *Travnik Bosnjak*, 7 November 1995, pp. 11-13.

⁸⁰³ The 5th Kozara and 6th Sanske Brigades were also reinforced with the 2nd Reconnaissance-Sabotage Detachment/2nd Krajina Corps.

⁸⁰⁴ This account of "Juzni Potez" is based primarily on General Ante Gotovina's account in *Offensive Battles and Operations of the Croatian Army and HVO Knin: Split Corps District*, 1996, pp. 103-115; the abbreviated version of "Juzni Potez" in Zagreb *Velebit* appears to be based on Gotovina's study. See Gordan Radosevic, "Southern Move," *Zagreb Velebit*, 11 October 1996, pp. 12-15.

⁸⁰⁵ Zeljko Stipanovic, "Defense of the Homeland—A Sacred Task," *Zagreb Velebit*, 8 December 1995, p. 14.

⁸⁰⁶ Colonel General Ante Gotovina, *Offensive Battles and Operations of the Croatian Army and HVO Knin: Split Corps District*, 1996, p. 106.

⁸⁰⁷ The Reconnaissance-Sabotage Company/4th Guards Brigade played a key role in forcing an opening through the VRS defenses by capturing the important Lisina Mountain, southwest of Mrkonjic Grad. The company captured it once, but a VRS counterattack forced it back off. It was recaptured against "extremely strong resistance." Zeljko Stipanovic, "Proven Countless Times," *Zagreb Velebit*, 19 January 1996, pp. 14-15, an article on the Reconnaissance-Sabotage Company/4th Guards Brigade. The commander of the Armored Battalion/4th Guards Brigade, Andrija Matijas—"Pauk," who had fought in the brigade throughout the war, including at Dubrovnik in 1992, was killed in action entering Mrkonjic Grad. Gordan Radosevic, "Southern Move," *Zagreb Velebit*, 11 October 1996, pp. 12-15.

⁸⁰⁸ Counterattacks along the northwest side of town, by the 11th Mrkonjic Light Infantry and 3rd Serbian Brigades and apparently supported by MUP Special Police units, failed to check the 4th Guards and 1st HGZ. Gordan Radosevic, "Southern Move," *Zagreb Velebit*, 11 October 1996, pp. 12-15.

⁸⁰⁹ Neven Miladin, "On the Wings of Victory," Zagreb *Velebit*, 12 July 1996, pp. 16-17, an article on the 2nd HVO Guards Brigade.

⁸¹⁰ Sefko Hodzic, "I Congratulate the People of Sarajevo," Sarajevo *Osvobodjenje*, 12 January 1996, p. 5, an interview with Division General Atif Dudakovic.

⁸¹¹ In OG "South," the 17th Krajina Mountain, 707th Mountain, and 717th Mountain Brigades, plus the 7th "Bosnjak" Reconnaissance-Sabotage Battalion and some MUP special police, appear to have led the attack, while the 708th Light and 712th Mountain Brigades guarded the right flank near Krasulje. Sead Suskic, "With Rifle in Hand," *Travnik Bosnjak*, 7 November 1995, pp. 11-13.

⁸¹² See Sead Suskic, "With Rifle in Hand," *Travnik Bosnjak*, 7 November 1995, pp. 11-13 for a short discussion of OG "South's" role in the fighting around Krasulje-Tomina-Gornja Tramosnja against the VRS 5th Kozara and 6th Sanske Brigades. The commander of the 708th Brigade was killed in action during the fighting.

⁸¹³ The 15th Bihać appears to have fallen back toward Sanski Most during the initial retreat from Bihać, while the 17th had been shifted to the Sanski Most area from Kljuc.

⁸¹⁴ The 502nd Mountain Brigade, the Guards Brigade, and the 5th Military Police Battalion "liberated" Sanski Most. Edin Zeljkovic, "Mozda Messa I Nije Napisao 'Tvrdani'?" *Travnik Bosnjak*, 7 November 1995, p. 18; "Where It Was Hardest, There Was the 4th Battalion: From Romanija to the Una and Sava," *Krajiski Vojnik*, June 1996, p. 36, an article on the 4th Battalion/43rd Motorized Brigade.

⁸¹⁵ "Where It Was Hardest, There Was the 4th Battalion: From Romanija to the Una and Sava," *Krajiski Vojnik*, June 1996, p. 36, an article on the 4th Battalion/43rd Motorized Brigade.

⁸¹⁶ The 5th Corps appears to have halted a VRS counterattack toward Sanski Most during these final clashes. See Zemka, Seferagic, "The Anniversary of the Formation of the 517th Liberation-Light Brigade, 15 August 1997: On the Road to Freedom," Sarajevo *Prva Linija*, September 1997, p. 23.

⁸¹⁷ General Mladić and the VRS believed that a cease-fire was vital to ensure that no additional territory was lost, and, if the same territory had to be given up in the negotiations, it was better to have achieved a cease-fire first so that the population could safely emigrate with their belongings rather than fleeing with only what they had on their backs. Belgrade *Telegraf* writes:

General Mladić demanded that the army remain in its current positions until peace is signed, and only later, if need be, have both the army and the civilians withdraw, so that the latter would be able to pack up their belongings in peace and not flee with plastic bags in their hands.

Djoko Kesic and Zoran Lukic, "Banja Luka Coincidentally Avoided Knin's Fate: About a Hundred Special Troops Prevented the Krajina's Fall," Belgrade *Telegraf*, 27 September 1995, p. 6.

⁸¹⁸ Reuters "US Brokers Ground-Breaking Yugoslav Talks" by Sean Maguire, 1 September 1995.

⁸¹⁹ Reuters "Yugoslav Parties Take Tentative Step To Peace" by Philippe Naughton, 8 September 1995; Reuters, "Holbrooke Statement on Bosnia Agreement," 8 September 1995; Reuters, "Eastern Slavonia Spills Good Day for Balkan Diplomacy" by Jovan Kovacic, 8 September 1995.

⁸²⁰ Reuters, "US Launches Fresh Round of Bosnia Peace Talks" by Jovan Kovacic, 13 September 1995. The key breakthrough during the September negotiations came on 26 September in New York, where the three sides agreed to constitutional principles for a Bosnian state. Reuters, "Yugoslav Parties Strike Key Deal at Talks" by Carol Giacomo, 26 September 1995; Reuters, "Text of Joint Statement on Bosnia," 26 September 1995.

⁸²¹ ARBiH commander General Rasim Delic begged Izetbegovic to let the fighting continue, arguing that the army could gain additional ground. Laura Silber and Allan Little, *Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation* (Revised) London: Penguin, 1996, p. 369; Reuters "Izetbegovic Demands Serb Concessions For Truce" by Kurt Schork, 28 September 1995. In many interviews and public statements at the time and in the immediate aftermath of the war, many ARBiH commanders and soldiers, including Generals Dudakovic and Alagic, claimed that the West had stopped them from gaining additional ground they could have taken. Despite these strongly held beliefs, it seems unlikely that the ARBiH could have gained significant amounts of territory on its own in the near term against strengthened VRS forces around Prijedor-Banja Luka.

⁸²² Reuters "Clinton Announces Bosnian Cease-Fire, Peace Talks" by Kurt Schork, 5 October 1995; Reuters "Factions Manoeuvre Before Bosnia Truce Begins" by Kurt Schork, 7 October 1995.

⁸²³ The US pressure to halt the HV/HVO operations apparently came in September after "Maestral." Silber and Little, p. 368. Nevertheless, Zagreb went ahead and ordered "Juzni Potec" in October.

⁸²⁴ Reuters "Croats, Serbs Strike Preliminary Deal on Slavonia" by Peter Humphrey, 4 October 1995; Reuters "Serbs, Croats to Continue Slavonia Talks" by Zoran Radosavljevic, 23 October 1995.

⁸²⁵ Reuters "Bosnian Enemies Sign Deal for Midnight Cease-Fire" by Angus MacSwan, 11 October 1995.

⁸²⁶ Reuters "Bosnian Foes Meet To Cement Truce in Northwest," by Angus MacSwan, 20 October 1995.

⁸²⁷ Reuters, "London Conference Takes on Daunting Bosnia Task" by Lyndsay Griffiths, 8 December 1995.

⁸²⁸ Reuters, "London Conference Discusses Yugoslav Refugees" by Lyndsay Griffiths, 9 December 1995.

⁸²⁹ Reuters, "Bosnia Framework Set by London Conference" 9 December 1995.

⁸³⁰ For the most detailed account of the Dayton talks, see Richard Holbrooke, *To End a War*, New York: Random House, 1998.

⁸³¹ President Tudjman announced in January 1996 that the HV lost 473 troops killed in action and 2,017 wounded in action during 1995, including 228 dead and 1,205 wounded during "Oluja" and 60 dead and 186 wounded in "Bljesak." Tudjman also claimed that 9,909 Bosnian Croats—both military and civilian—died during the entire Bosnian war, while 20,649 were wounded, about 1.3 percent of the population according to the 1991 census. The bulk of these, probably 65 to 70 percent, were HVO soldiers. The HVO Orasje Corps District lost 3,000 dead and 10,000 wounded alone. President Tudjman's Address to Parliament, Zagreb Radio 15 January 1996; Neven Miladin, "The Pride and Strength of Croatian Posavina," *Velebit*, 28 November 1997, pp. 14-15.

⁸³² Bosnian Army casualties during the war have not been publicly released. In early 1995, the Bosnian Government's Ministry of Health and Social Welfare claimed 105,000 Muslim civilians and soldiers had been killed. If true, the bulk of these probably died during 1992. It's unlikely that this exceptionally high death rate continued after 1992 but probably was more in line with the 1.3 to 1.5 percent dead associated with the VRS and HVO, although possibly somewhat higher, given that the ARBiH was often on the attack and relied heavily on its manpower. An estimate of 25,000 to 30,000 official ARBiH soldiers killed in action seems likely—as opposed to the many armed civilians who died in 1992 and probably were not on official Territorial Defense or ARBiH rolls—although it could be higher.

⁸³³ According to postwar statements from the Bosnian Serb Defense Ministry and from General Milovanovic—while serving as RS Defense Minister—the VRS lost 18,543 soldiers killed and about 53,000 wounded, of which 36,543 soldiers remain “disabled.” (It is unclear how the RS defines disabled.) The number of VRS dead is about 1.4 percent of the 1991 estimated Bosnian Serb population. The equivalent US killed figure, as a percentage of the US population (about 273 million, according to the official 1997 estimate), would be some 3.8 million. Clearly, Bosnian Serb soldiers knew how to fight—and die. Belgrade Beta, 10 March 1998; Mirha Dedic, “If They Try To Take Me to The Hague by Force, I Will Resist: They Should Arrest Me in a Dignified Manner as They Did Talic,” *Slobodna Bosna*, 13 April 2000, pp. 28-31, an interview with General Manojlo Milovanovic.

⁸³⁴ General Milovanovic has flatly denied that he was ordered to withdraw:

I spent most of the war on the Western Front . . . the western part of Bosnian Krajina. No one ever ordered me to retreat or to surrender part of our territory. I am not a politician. I can make no claims about what happened between that or below that. I cannot accuse a single person from the political sphere of having told me to retreat, abandon territory, surrender a city, or surrender a unit. No one actually ever told me that . . .

He does strongly criticize local officials, however, who ordered the premature evacuation of their municipalities without military authorization, which profoundly undermined the will to fight of many Serb soldiers:

. . . But there were some circumstances that prompted such actions. I will never forgive the state leadership for forming crisis staffs. These were crisis staffs by municipality, where the commander of the crisis staff was the president of the municipality. And he decided, say, on the problem of evacuating the population or evacuating physical property. Nowhere in the world is there a single unit in a war zone where decisions are made by other than the commander. Accordingly, the commander is the one who also decides on the evacuation of the population, on the evacuation of physical property, on any military retreat. Our military never retreated anywhere, but was pushed back because of technical superiority . . . The enemy enjoyed military, personnel, and technical superiority. We were pounded by the Croats . . . the Muslims, and the NATO Rapid Intervention Corps. Accordingly, the superiority in equipment and personnel was enormous, and there really was not any political manipulation here.

Ranko Vojvodic, “We Lost 13 Western Krajina Municipalities Militarily: Power is Power,” Banja Luka *Nezavisne Novine*, 21-27 May 1997, pp. 20-22.

VRS spokesman Lieutenant Colonel Milutinovic also criticized the local officials, nearly all of them SDS:

General Ratko Mladic’s orders on organizing the Krajina defense in September 1995 were carried out by the army to the best of its ability. However, not one wartime municipal presidency followed these orders. Instead, the population of 13 Krajina municipalities was evacuated without the agreement of military commands.

Lieutenant Colonel Milovan Milutinovic, “Loss of Supreme Command,” Belgrade *Nin*, 1 November 1996, pp. 19-22. See also Milja Vujsic, “The Truth About the General’s Dismissal,” Belgrade *Intervju*, 13 December 1996 (Internet Version), an interview with Lieutenant Colonel General Milan Gvero.

⁸³⁵ Dragan Stegic, “Place in History Already Reserved for Fighters of the 16th ‘Black’ Brigade: Sixty Days of Hell,” *Krajiski Vojnik*, December 1995.

⁸³⁶ With the reassignment of the 16th Krajina Motorized Brigade to the Manjaca sector, Colonel Lazic handed over command of the area to the 16th’s commander, Colonel Vlado Topic. As commander of a new Operational Group-1, Topic had under his control the 16th, the 7th Motorized, the 2nd Krajina Infantry, the 11th Mrkonjic Light Infantry, and the remnants of the 3rd Serbian Brigades. In addition, he probably would have received the entire 1st Armored Brigade (elements were already deployed to the area), the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th Banja Luka Light Infantry Brigades, the 1st Sipovo Light Infantry Brigade, and the 1st Celinac Light Infantry Brigade, plus much of the MUP Special Police Brigade.

⁸³⁷ The number of planes that flew strike missions is a little uncertain, but the total was approximately 200 land- and carrier-based combat aircraft. Additional aircraft were assigned for other, non-strike missions.

⁸³⁸ A total of 14 NATO nations participated in some aspect of air operations over Bosnia between 1992 and 1995. This included the provision of personnel and/or aircraft for the humanitarian airlift, the Deny Flight no-fly zone mission, and/or combat air operations against Bosnian Serb ground forces. The participating NATO nations included Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Turkey, United Kingdom, and the United States. Of these 14 countries, 12 provided aircraft for one or more of the UN-sponsored air missions. The nine nations that contributed aircraft for Deliberate Force itself were France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Netherlands, Spain, Turkey, United Kingdom, and the United States.

⁸³⁹ US aircraft, which flew about 66 percent of the Deliberate Force sorties, provided about 90 percent of the suppression of air defense (SEAD) sorties. Aircraft from Spain and Germany did the rest.

⁸⁴⁰ Laura Silber and Alan Little in *Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation* state that “. . . NATO flew 3,400 sorties, including 750 attack missions against 56 ground targets.” The authors do not state where they got their figures, but the numbers they provide are consistent with the other available figures.

⁸⁴¹ Of these 3,536 sorties, about 39 percent were ground attack, about 23 percent were SEAD, about 9 percent were combat air patrol, and about 30 percent were other support (recce, elint, etc.) flights.

⁸⁴² Precision-guided weapons comprised about 70 percent of the roughly 1,150 weapons dropped. US aircraft dropped about 88 percent of the precision-guided munitions. Other NATO Allies dropped about 85 percent of the general purpose weapons.

⁸⁴³ See *US News & World Report*, “Will This Lead to Peace?” 11 September 1995, for a contemporary discussion of the various factors pressing the Bosnian Serbs toward the negotiating table.

⁸⁴⁴ Statement by NATO Secretary General Willy Claes, Reuters, “NATO Planes Hit Serbs in Alliance’s Biggest Action” by Philip Pullella, 30 August 1998.

⁸⁴⁵ UNPROFOR commander Janvier later expanded on this initial statement by demanding that the Serbs withdraw their weapons from the Sarajevo TEZ, accept a cease-fire, and refrain from attacking the UN-declared safe areas of Gorazde or Tuzla. Reuters, “Serb Commander Rejects Weapons Withdrawal Order,” 30 August 1998.

⁸⁴⁶ Reuters, “Text of Statement on Air Strikes by NATO’s Claes,” 5 September 1995.

⁸⁴⁷ Reuters, “Serb Commander Rejects Weapons Withdrawal Order,” 30 August 1998.

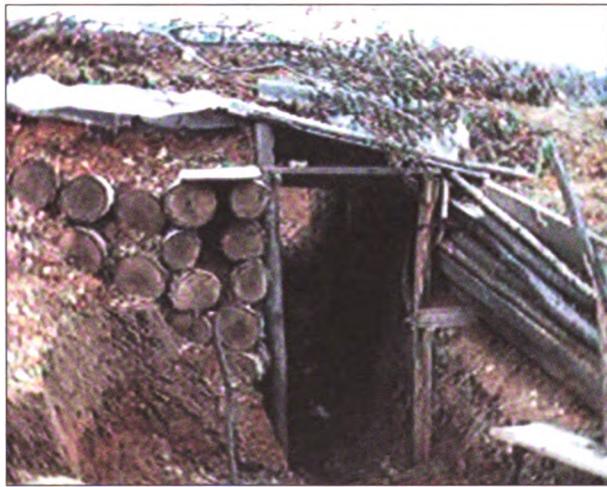
Bosnia and Croatia 1995



Trenchlines in northern Bosnia, as seen in early 1996.



Troops from the Bosnian Army (ARBiH) 211th Liberation Brigade near Brcko, as seen in spring 1996.



A Bosnian Serb Army (VRS) bunker and trench in the Ozren Mountains, as seen in early 1996.



Bosnia and Croatia 1995



Croatian Army (HV)
Mi-24 attack helicopters
at Zagreb-Pleso Airport,
as seen in early 1996.



Srebrenica area, as seen
in late 1996.



Trenchlines in northern
Bosnia, as seen in early
1996.

Bosnia and Croatia 1995



Bosnian Army (ARBiH) troops from the 9th Muslim Liberation Brigade, near Tuzla, as seen in early 1996.



A derelict UN Protection Force (UNPROFOR) BTR-80 armored personnel carrier, as seen in early 1996.



An M-1 Abrams tank from the 1st US Armored Division assigned to the NATO-led Implementation Force (IFOR), as seen in early 1996.

Appendix A

Order of Battle: Slovene Territorial Defense Forces (TO), June-July 1991

Janez Jansa, Slovene Minister of Defense
Jelko Kacin, Slovene Deputy Minister of Defense

Maj. Gen. Janez Slapar, Acting TO Commander
Maj. Gen. D. Ozbolt, Slovenian TO Chief of Staff

174th Territorial Defense Antisabotage Unit

1st Special Brigade of the Slovenian Ministry of Defense (1. Specialna Brigada MORiS)

Col. Tone Krkovic, Commander

—1st Detachment

Captain 1st Class Zvonko Zagar, Commander

—2nd Detachment

Captain 1st Class Antisa Grgantov, Commander

—3rd Detachment

Captain 1st Class Cveto Zorko, Commander

2nd (Doljenska) Regional Command of the Territorial Defense, HQ Novo Mesto*

Lt. Col. Albin Gutman, Commander

—21st Regional Detachment (21. Obm STO), HQ Novo Mesto

Captain 1st Class Janez Butara, Commander

—23rd Regional Detachment (23. Obm STO), HQ Crnomelj

Major Janez Dragos, Commander

—25th Regional Detachment (25. Obm STO), HQ Brezice

Major Ernest Breznikar, Commander

* The regional commands are brigade/division-equivalent headquarters controlling TO brigades and/or battalion-sized detachments in each local municipality.

—27th Regional Detachment (27. Obm STO), HQ Ribnica
Major Milan Bavdek, Commander

**3rd (Gorenjska) Regional Command of the Territorial Defense,
HQ Kranj**
Lt. Col. Peter Zupan, Commander

—31st Regional Detachment (31. Obm STO), HQ Kranj
Major Mihael Rauter, Commander

—33rd Regional Detachment (33. Obm STO), HQ Radovljica
Major Janez Smole, Commander

—35th Regional Detachment (35. Obm STO), HQ Skofja Loka
Major Vinko Bester, Commander

**4th (Juznoprimska) Regional Command of the Territorial Defense,
HQ Postojna**

Lt. Col. Franc Anderlic, Commander (before 30 June 1991)
Major Vojko Stembergar, Commander (after 30 June 1991)

—41st Regional Detachment (41. Obm STO), HQ Cerknica
Major Vojko Stembergar, Commander (until 30 June 1991)

—43rd Regional Detachment (43. Obm STO), HQ Izola
Major Slavko Dekleva, Commander

—45th Regional Detachment (45. Obm STO), HQ Sezana
Major Drago Bozac, Commander

**5th (Ljubljanska) Regional Command of the Territorial Defense,
HQ Ljubljana**

Lt. Col. Miha Butara, Commander (before 30 June 1991)
Janez Lesjak, Commander (after 30 June 1991)

—52nd Territorial Defense Brigade

—51st Regional Detachment (51. Obm STO), HQ Ljubljana
Major Rihard Urbanc, Commander

—53rd Regional Detachment (53. Obm STO), HQ Logatec
Captain 1st Class Joze Molk, Commander

—55th Regional Detachment (55. Obm STO), HQ Domzale
Captain 1st Class Marjan Mahnic, Commander

—57th Regional Detachment (57. Obm STO), HQ Grosuplje
Captain 1st Class Milos Sonc, Commander

**6th (Severnoprimska) Regional Command of the Territorial Defense,
HQ Nova Gorica**
Lt. Col. Bogdan Beltram

—61st Regional Detachment (61. Obm STO), HQ Nova Gorica
Major Rafael Mokorel, Commander

—63rd Regional Detachment (63. Obm STO), HQ Tolmin
Major Vito Berginc, Commander

**7th (Vzhodnostajerska) Regional Detachment of the Territorial
Defense, HQ Maribor**
Lt. Col. Vladimir Milosevic, Commander

—71st Regional Detachment (71. Obm STO), HQ Maribor
Major Franc Rudolf, Commander

—73rd Regional Detachment (73. Obm STO), HQ Ljutomer
Major Ljubo Draznik, Commander

—75th Regional Detachment (75. Obm STO), HQ Murska Sobota
Major Edvard Mihalic, Commander

—77th Regional Detachment (77. Obm STO), HQ Ptuj
Captain 1st Class Miran Fiser, Commander

—79th Regional Detachment (79. Obm STO), HQ Slovenska Bistrica
Major Marijan Strehar, Commander

8th (Zahodnostajerska) Regional Detachment of the Territorial Defense, HQ Celje

Major mag. Viktor Krajnc, Commander

—81st Regional Detachment (81. Obm STO), HQ Zalec
Major Adi Vidmajer, Commander

—83rd Regional Detachment (83. Obm STO), HQ Slovenj Gradec
Major Viktor Jeromel, Commander

—85th Regional Detachment (85. Obm STO), HQ Slovenske Konjice
Major Alojz Groleger, Commander

—87th Regional Detachment (87. Obm STO), HQ Trbovlje
Major Matjaz Piskur, Commander

—89th Regional Detachment (89. Obm STO), HQ Velenje
Major Joze Prislan, Commander

510th Training Center (510. Ucni Center), Ljubljana

Major Bojan Culigoj, Commander

710th Training Center (710. Ucni Center), Maribor

Major Andrej Kocbek, Commander

Slovenian Ministry Of Interior (MUP) Special Police Forces

Igor Bavcar, Slovenian Minister of Internal Affairs

Appendix B

Order Of Battle: Yugoslav People's Army (JNA) Fifth Military District During Slovenia Operations, June-July 1991*

V Military District (V. Vojno oblast—V. VO), HQ Zagreb

Col. Gen. Konrad Kolsek, Commander (to 1 July)

Col. Gen. Zivota Avramovic (from 1 July)

Lt. Col. Gen. Andrija Raseta, Deputy Commander

Lt. Col. Gen. Prascevic, Assistant Commander and Chief of Staff

—65th Protection Motorized Regiment, HQ Zagreb

—580th Mixed Artillery Brigade, HQ Karlovac

Col. Svetozar Marjanovic, Commander

—60th Mixed Artillery Regiment, HQ Slovenska Bistrica

—288th Mixed Antitank Artillery Brigade, HQ Vitovitica

—149th Medium Self-Propelled Air Defense Rocket Regiment

(SA-6/KUB-M), HQ Zagreb-Pleso

Col. Milan Torbica, Commander

—367th Communication Regiment, HQ Samobor

—47th Pontoon Bridge Battalion, HQ Novo Mesto

10th (Zagreb) Corps, HQ Zagreb [Elements deployed from Croatia into Slovenia]

Lt. Col. Gen. Dusan Uzelac, Commander

Maj. Gen. Ivan Stimac, Deputy Commander and Chief of Staff

—4th Armored Brigade, HQ Jastrebarsko

—140th Mechanized Brigade, HQ Zagreb

—622nd Motorized Brigade, Petrinja

Lt. Col. Slobodan Tarbuk, Commander

—6th Mixed Artillery Regiment, HQ Petrinja

—6th Mixed Antitank Artillery Regiment, HQ Petrinja

* JNA elements definitely known to have participated in the Slovenian conflict are shown in boldface. Order of battle does not include all JNA reserve partisan divisions and brigades.

13th (Rijeka) Corps, HQ Rijeka

Lt. Col. Gen. Marjan Cad, Commander

Maj. Gen. Trajce Krstovski, Deputy Commander and Chief of Staff

—6th Mountain Brigade, Delnice

Lt. Col. Anton Racki, Commander

—13th Motorized Brigade, HQ Ilirska Bistrica

—236th Motorized Brigade, HQ Gospic

—13th Mixed Artillery Regiment, HQ Rijeka

—13th Mixed Antitank Artillery Regiment, HQ Rijeka

—306th Light Air Defense Artillery Regiment, HQ Karlovac

14th (Ljubljana) Corps, HQ Ljubljana

Maj. Gen. Jovan Pavlov, Commander

Col. Jovan Miskov, Deputy Commander and Chief of Staff

Lt. Col. Emin Malkoc, Chief of Security

—1st Armored Brigade, HQ Vrhnika

Lt. Col. Pane Matic, Commander

—14th Motorized Brigade, HQ Ljubljana

Col. Jovan Miskov, Commander

—228th Motorized Brigade, HQ Postojna

[Armored Battalion/228th Motorized Brigade located at Pivka]

—253rd Motorized Brigade, HQ Ajdovscina

[Armored Battalion/253rd Motorized Brigade located at Vipava]

—345th Alpine Brigade, HQ Kranj

1st Battalion, HQ Tolmin

2nd Battalion, HQ Bovec

3rd Battalion, HQ Skofja Loka

—(13th Partisan Brigade, HQ Rakek)

- 14th Mixed Artillery Regiment, HQ Ribnica**
- 14th Mixed Antitank Artillery Regiment, HQ Postojna**
- 635th Light Air Defense Artillery Regiment, HQ Ljubljana**
- 14th Military Police Battalion, HQ Ljubljana**
- 61st Border Guard Battalion, HQ Radovljica**
- 62nd Border Guard Battalion, HQ Tolmin**
- 63rd Border Guard Battalion, HQ Nova Gorica**
- 64th Border Guard Battalion, HQ Sezana**
- Unidentified Engineer Regiment, HQ Skofja Loka
- 14th Communication Battalion, Ljubljana**

31st (Maribor) Corps, HQ Maribor
Maj. Gen. Mico Delic, Commander
Lt. Col. Ratko Katalina, Chief of Security

- 6th Motorized Brigade, HQ Celje**
- 195th Motorized Brigade, HQ Maribor**
- 145th Motorized Brigade, HQ Novo Mesto**
 - (11th Partisan Brigade, HQ Ptuj)
 - (27th Partisan Brigade, HQ Celje)
- 31st Mixed Artillery Regiment, HQ Maribor**
- 417th Mixed Antitank Artillery Regiment, HQ Ptuj**
 - Light Air Defense Artillery Regiment, HQ Maribor
- 31st Military Police Battalion, HQ Maribor**
- Dravograd Border Guard Battalion, HQ Dravograd**

- Maribor Border Guard Battalion, HQ Maribor
- Murska Sobota Border Guard Battalion, HQ Murska Sobota**
- 522nd Engineer Regiment, HQ Celje

32nd (Varazdin) Corps, HQ Varazdin [Elements deployed from Croatia into Slovenia]

Maj. Gen. Vlado Trifunovic, Commander
Col. Sreten Raduski, Deputy Commander and Chief of Staff

- 32nd Mechanized Brigade, HQ Varazdin**
Col. Berislav Popov, Commander
- 265th Mechanized Brigade, HQ Bjelovar
Col. Rajko Kovacevic, Commander
- 73rd Motorized Brigade, HQ Koprivnica
- 32nd Mixed Artillery Regiment, HQ Varazdin
- 411th Mixed Antitank Artillery Regiment, HQ Krizevci
- 32nd Military Police Battalion, HQ Varazdin
- 32nd Engineer Regiment, unlocated
- 42nd Border Guard Battalion, HQ Vitrovica
- 43rd Border Guard Battalion, HQ Koprivnica

5th Air and Air Defense Corps, HQ Zagreb-Pleso (Slovenia-based elements only) (subordinate to Air and Air Defense Force Headquarters)

- 82nd Air Brigade, HQ Cerklje**
237th Fighter-Bomber Squadron, HQ Cerklje
238th Fighter-Bomber Squadron, HQ Cerklje
351st Reconnaissance Air Squadron, HQ Cerklje
- 350th Air Defense Rocket Regiment, HQ Vrhnika (SA-3)**

Appendix C

**Skeleton Order of Battle,
Yugoslav People's Army (JNA) Strategic
Offensive, Late September 1991 to 1 January 1992***
JNA General Staff (Staff of the Supreme Command)
Colonel General Blagoje Adzic, Chief of the General Staff

Eastern Slavonia Campaign

Operational Group 3
(Headquarters, I Military District)

Colonel General Aleksandar Spirovski, Commander (to late September 1991)

Lieutenant Colonel General Zivota Panic, Commander (from late September 1991); Colonel General (from 29 November 1991)

Forward Headquarters: Sid

Operational Group "North"
(Headquarters, 12th [Novi Sad] Corps)
(activated late September 1991)

Forward Headquarters: Borovo Naselje

Operational Group "South"
(Headquarters, 1st Guards Motorized Brigade)

Forward Headquarters: Negoslavci
(activated late September 1991)

1st Guards Mechanized Division
Forward Headquarters: Negoslavci

12th (Novi Sad) Corps (-)**
Forward Headquarters: Dalj

* Does not include blockaded formations; only those corps and operational groups (OG) involved in ongoing combat operations.

** 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/south-east of Osijek, possibly reported to the corps chief of staff while the corps commander dealt directly with Vukovar as commander, OG "North."

Operational Group “Baranja”
Forward Headquarters: Beli Manistir

17th (Tuzla) Corps*

Western Slavonia Campaign

Operational Group 1
Major General Spiro Nikovic, Commander

5th (Banja Luka) Corps
Forward Headquarters: Stara Gradiska

Karlovac Campaign (and Banija-Lika-Kordun Minor Operations)

“Banija and Kordun” Operational Group 5
(Headquarters, 10th (Zagreb) Corps)

Lieutenant Colonel General Dusan Uzelac, Commander

Forward Headquarters: Dvor na Uni

10th (Zagreb) Corps
Forward Headquarters: Petrinja

Elements, 13th (Rijeka) Corps
Forward Headquarters: Plitvice

Mostar-Split/Dubrovnik Campaign

“Herzegovina” Operational Group 2
(Headquarters, Montenegrin Territorial Defense)

Lieutenant Colonel General Pavle Strugar, Commander
(Colonel General from 29 November)

Forward Headquarters: Trebinje

4th (Sarajevo) Corps (-)**
Headquarters: Sarajevo

* Involved in defensive role along Sava River; did not engage in major combat operations.
** Both the 4th and 37th Corps were originally earmarked for an operation in the direction of Split that the 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.

37th (Uzice) Corps (+)

Forward Headquarters: Nevesinje

2nd (Titograd) Corps

Forward Headquarters: unclear, probably west of Trebinje

9th (Boka Kotorska) Military-Maritime Sector

Forward Headquarters: Herceg-Novi (to mid-October)

Cavtat (from mid-October)

Knin-Zadar Campaign

Operational Group 4

Vice Admiral Fredrih Moreti, Commander (to late September 1991)

Major General Nikola Mladenic, Commander (from late September 1991)

Forward Headquarters: Split

9th (Knin) Corps

Headquarters: Knin

Naval Blockade

Fleet Command

Rear-Admiral Nikola Ercegovic, Commander

Other Major JNA Headquarters in Croatia

V Military District* Headquarters

Colonel General Zivota Avramovic, Commander

Forward Headquarters: Slunj Training Area

Military-Maritime District Headquarters

Vice Admiral Mile Kandic, Commander

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, 4, and 5 may have reported directly to the JNA General Staff rather than the military districts, probably leaving the military districts in a logistic support role.

Appendix D

**Skeleton Croatian Army
(Croatian National Guard) Order of Battle,
October 1991–January 1992**

Main Staff of the Croatian Army (*Glavni Stožer Hrvatske Vojske*)
Colonel General Anton Tus, Chief of the Main Staff

Eastern Slavonia-Baranja

1st Osijek Operational Zone

Headquarters: Osijek

Brigadier Karl Gorinsek, Commander

Operational Group “Osijek”

Headquarters: Osijek

Operational Group “Vinkovci-Vukovar-Zupanja”

Headquarters: Vinkovci

Western Slavonia

2nd Bjelovar Operational Zone (formed 1 October)

Headquarters: Bjelovar

Brigadier Miroslav Jerzecic, Commander

Operational Group “Posavina”

Headquarters: Novska

Operational Group “Pakrac”

Headquarters: Pakrac

Operational Group “Gradiska”/1st Osijek Operational Zone*

Headquarters: Nova Gradiska

* It is unclear whether this operational group was attached to 2nd Bjelovar Operational Zone or remained under the command of 1st Osijek Operational Zone during the Western Slavonia operations.

Banija-Karlovac/Kordun-Lika Operations

3rd Zagreb Operational Zone

Headquarters: Zagreb

Brigadier Stjepan Matesa, Commander

Operational Group “Sisak-Banija-Posavina”

Headquarters: Sisak

Zagreb City Defense Command*

Forward Headquarters: probably northwest/west of Sisak

4th Karlovac Operational Zone

Brigadier Izidor Cesnjaj, Commander

Forward Headquarters: Karlovac

Lika Operational Group (formed November)

(from Headquarters, 5th Rijeka Operational Zone)

Forward Headquarters: Krasno

5th Rijeka Operational Zone (formed 30 September 1991)

Brigadier Anton Racki, Commander

Headquarters: Rijeka

Zadar-Northern Dalmatia Operations

6th Split Operational Zone

Brigadier Mate Viduka, Commander

“Zadar” Sector

Dubrovnik-Southern Dalmatia Operations

Southern Sector/6th Split Operational Zone

Forward Headquarters: Metkovic

* This command served as the equivalent of an operational group headquarters along the Kupa River line west of Sisak.

Appendix E

The Organization of the Croatian Army, January 1995

Ministry of Defense

1st Croatian Guards Corps (*1. Hrvatski gardijski zbor—1. hgz*), HQ Zagreb

1st Croatian Guards Brigade (*1. hrvatski gardijski zdrug—1. hgz*),
HQ Rakitje

1st Guards Honor Battalion

2nd Guards Assault Battalion

3rd Guards Naval Honor Assault Battalion

4th Guards Special Purpose Battalion

Mixed Aviation Squadron

300th Central Logistics Base, HQ Zagreb

310th Maintenance Support Brigade, HQ Zagreb

311th Transportation Battalion, HQ Zagreb

Main Staff of the Croatian Army (*Glauni Stozer Hrvatske Vojska—GSHV*)

Reconnaissance-Sabotage Company of the Main Staff, HQ Zagreb

350th Sabotage Detachment, HQ Zagreb

1st Guards Brigade, HQ Zagreb

7th Guards Brigade, HQ Varazdin

15th Antitank Artillery-Rocket Brigade, HQ Krizevci

16th Artillery-Rocket Brigade, HQ Bjelovar

33rd Engineer Brigade, HQ Zagreb

40th Communications Regiment, HQ Samobor

50th NBC Defense Battalion, HQ Zagreb

66th Military Police Battalion, HQ Zagreb

“Petar Zrinski” Croatian Military University, HQ Zagreb

“Blago Zadro” Command/Staff School, HQ Zagreb

Officers School, HQ Zagreb

NCO School, HQ Jastrebarsko

“Damir Tomljanovic-Gavran” Guards Center for Special Training of NCOs, HQ Zadar-Sepurine

Military Police Training Center, HQ Zagreb

“Ban Krsto Frankopan” Center for Training and Education of Soldiers, HQ Koprivnica

“Muzil” Center for Training and Education of Soldiers, HQ Pula

“Pozega” Center for Training and Education of Soldiers, HQ Slavonska Pozega

“Petar Barislavic” Center for Training and Education of Soldiers, HQ Sinj

“Borongaj” Logistics Training Center, HQ Zagreb-Borongaj

Osijek Corps District, HQ Osijek

3rd Guards Brigade, HQ Osijek

5th Guards Brigade, HQ Vinkovci

106th Infantry Brigade, HQ Osijek

108th Infantry Brigade, HQ Slavonski Brod

122nd Infantry Brigade, HQ Djakovo
123rd Infantry Brigade, HQ Slavonska Pozega
127th Infantry Brigade, HQ Virovitica
132nd Infantry Brigade, HQ Nasice
5th Home Defense Regiment, HQ Osijek
9th Home Defense Regiment, HQ Osijek
10th Home Defense Regiment, HQ Vinkovci
107th Home Defense Regiment, HQ Valpovo
109th Home Defense Regiment, HQ Vinkovci
121st Home Defense Regiment, HQ Nova Gradiska
131st Home Defense Regiment, HQ Zupanja
136th Home Defense Regiment, HQ Podravska Slatina
157th Home Defense Regiment, HQ Slavonski Brod
81st Independent Guards Battalion, HQ Virovitica
261st Reconnaissance-Sabotage Company, HQ Osijek
68th Military Police Battalion, HQ Osijek
1st Antitank Artillery-Rocket Battalion, HQ Virovitica
2nd Artillery Battalion, HQ Djakovo
3rd Antitank Artillery Battalion, HQ Slavonski Brod
4th Artillery Battalion, HQ Osijek
201st Air Defense Artillery-Rocket Brigade, HQ Osijek
32nd Engineer Pontoon Battalion, HQ Nasice

37th Engineer Pontoon Battalion, HQ Slavonski Brod

2nd River Brigade, HQ Osijek

302nd Logistics Base, HQ Osijek

Bjelovar Corps District, HQ Bjelovar

104th Infantry Brigade, HQ Varazdin

105th Infantry Brigade, HQ Bjelovar

24th Home Defense Regiment, HQ Varazdin

52nd Home Defense Regiment, HQ Daruvar

117th Home Defense Regiment, HQ Koprivnica

265th Reconnaissance-Sabotage Company, HQ Bjelovar

69th Military Police Company, HQ Bjelovar

13th Antitank Artillery Battalion, HQ Koprivnica

18th Artillery Battalion, HQ Varazdin

34th Engineer Battalion, HQ Cakovec

312th Logistics Base, HQ Varazdin

Zagreb Corps District, HQ Zagreb

2nd Guards Brigade, HQ Sisak

57th Infantry Brigade, HQ Sisak

99th Infantry Brigade, HQ Zagreb

101st Infantry Brigade, HQ Zagreb-Susegrad

102nd Infantry Brigade, HQ Zagreb-Novi Zagreb

103rd Infantry Brigade, HQ Krapina

144th Infantry Brigade, HQ Zagreb-Sesvete

145th Infantry Brigade, HQ Zagreb

148th Infantry Brigade, HQ Zagreb-Trnje

149th Infantry Brigade, HQ Zagreb-Tresnjevka

150th Infantry Brigade, HQ Zagreb-Crnomerec

151st Infantry Brigade, HQ Zagreb-Samobor

153rd Infantry Brigade, HQ Velika Gorica

1st Home Defense Regiment, HQ Zagreb

2nd Home Defense Regiment, HQ Zagreb

4th Home Defense Regiment, HQ Zagreb

12th Home Defense Regiment, HQ Sisak

17th Home Defense Regiment, HQ Sunja

20th Home Defense Regiment, HQ Sisak

21st Home Defense Regiment, HQ Krapina

125th Home Defense Regiment, HQ Novska

140th Home Defense Regiment, HQ Jastrebarsko

67th Military Police Battalion, HQ Zagreb

5th Antitank Artillery Rocket Battalion, HQ Zagreb

6th Artillery Battalion, HQ Sisak

8th Howitzer Artillery Battalion (203 mm), HQ Zagreb

202nd Air Defense Artillery-Rocket Brigade, HQ Zagreb-Kerestinec

36th Engineer Pontoon Battalion, HQ Sisak

1st River Brigade, HQ Sisak

303rd Logistics Base, HQ Zagreb

Karlovac Corps District, HQ Karlovac

13th Home Defense Regiment, HQ Karlovac

14th Home Defense Regiment, HQ Ogulin

110th Home Defense Regiment, HQ Karlovac

137th Home Defense Regiment, HQ Duga Resa

143rd Home Defense Regiment, HQ Ogulin

266th Reconnaissance-Sabotage Company, HQ Karlovac

7th Antitank Artillery Rocket Battalion, Karlovac

70th Military Police Company, HQ Karlovac

10th Artillery Battalion, HQ Karlovac

38th Engineer Pontoon Battalion, HQ Karlovac

304th Logistics Base, HQ Karlovac

Gospic Corps District, HQ Gospic

9th Guards Brigade, HQ Gospic

111th Infantry Brigade, HQ Rijeka

119th Infantry Brigade, HQ Pula

128th Infantry Brigade, HQ Rijeka

8th Home Defense Regiment, HQ Rijeka

118th Home Defense Regiment, HQ Gospic
133rd Home Defense Regiment, HQ Otocac
138th Home Defense Regiment, HQ Delnice
154th Home Defense Regiment, HQ Pazin
268th Reconnaissance-Sabotage Company, HQ Rijeka
71st Military Police Battalion, HQ Rijeka
9th Antitank Artillery-Rocket Battalion, HQ Rijeka
12th Artillery Battalion, HQ Rijeka
203rd Air Defense Artillery-Rocket Brigade, HQ Rijeka
35th Engineer Pontoon Battalion, HQ Pula

Split Corps District, HQ Split

4th Guards Brigade, HQ Split
112th Infantry Brigade, HQ Zadar
113th Infantry Brigade, HQ Sibenik
141st Infantry Brigade, HQ Split
6th Home Defense Regiment, HQ Split
7th Home Defense Regiment, HQ Zadar
15th Home Defense Regiment, HQ Sibenik
126th Home Defense Regiment, HQ Sinj
134th Home Defense Regiment, HQ Biograd
142nd Home Defense Regiment, HQ Sibenik
264th Reconnaissance-Sabotage Company, HQ Split

72nd Military Police Battalion, HQ Split

11th Antitank Artillery Rocket Battalion, HQ Zadar

14th Artillery Battalion, HQ Zadar

20th Artillery Battalion, HQ Split

204th Air Defense Artillery Rocket Brigade, HQ Split

40th Engineer Battalion, HQ Split

306th Logistics Base, HQ Split

307th Logistics Base, HQ Zadar

Southern Front, HQ Dubrovnik

114th Infantry Brigade, HQ Split

115th Infantry Brigade, HQ Imotski

163rd Infantry Brigade, HQ Dubrovnik

116th Home Defense Regiment, HQ Metkovic

156th Home Defense Regiment, HQ Makarska

16th Artillery Battalion, HQ Dubrovnik

39th Engineer Battalion, HQ Dubrovnik

Key Naval Ground Forces Units

53rd Naval Landing Infantry Battalion, HQ Split

352nd Combat Diver Sabotage Battalion, HQ Split

73rd Military Police Battalion, HQ Split

Appendix F

The Organization of the Krajina Serb Army, January 1995

Main Staff of the Krajina Serb Army, HQ Knin

44th Air Defense Rocket Brigade, HQ Udbina

75th Mixed Artillery Brigade, HQ Vojnic

105th Aviation Brigade, HQ Udbina

107th Education Center for Reconnaissance and Sabotage Training
(Alpha Training Center), HQ Bruska

7th North Dalmatian Corps, HQ Knin

1st Light Infantry Brigade, HQ Vrlika

2nd Infantry Brigade, HQ Devrske

3rd Light Infantry Brigade, HQ Benkovac

4th Light Infantry Brigade, HQ Obrovac

75th Motorized Brigade, HQ Knin

92nd Motorized Brigade, HQ Benkovac

7th Mixed Artillery Regiment, HQ Knin

7th Mixed Antitank Artillery Regiment, HQ Benkovac

7th Light Air Defense Artillery Regiment

7th Military Police Company, HQ Knin

7th Rear Base, HQ Knin

11th East Slavonian-Baranja Corps, HQ Borovo Selo

35th Infantry Brigade, HQ Bijelo Brdo

40th Infantry Brigade, HQ Brsadin

43rd Infantry Brigade, HQ Tenja

45th Infantry Brigade, HQ Stari Jankovci

Baranja Division, HQ Beli Manistir

37th Infantry Brigade, HQ Darda

39th Infantry Brigade, HQ Beli Manistir

60th Border Guards Battalion, HQ Knezovi Vinogradi

15th Lika Corps, HQ Korenica

9th Motorized Brigade, HQ Gracac

18th Infantry Brigade, HQ Korenica

50th Infantry Brigade, HQ Vrhovine

70th Infantry Brigade, HQ Plaski

103rd Light Infantry Brigade, HQ Donji Lapac

37th Independent Infantry Battalion, HQ Zeljava

15th Light Air Defense Artillery-Rocket Battalion, HQ Korenica

15th Military Police Company, HQ Korenica

81st Rear Base, HQ Zeljava

18th West Slavonian Corps, HQ Okucani

51st Light Infantry Brigade, HQ Okucani

54th Light Infantry Brigade, HQ Pakrac

98th Light Infantry Brigade, HQ Jasenovac

21st Kordun Corps, HQ Vojnic

11th Infantry Brigade, HQ Vojnic

13th Infantry Brigade, HQ Slunj

19th Infantry Brigade, HQ Vrginmost

21st Light Air Defense Artillery-Rocket Battalion, HQ Slunj

21st Military Police Company, HQ Vojnic

39th Banija Corps, HQ Petrinja

24th Infantry Brigade, HQ Glina

26th Infantry Brigade, HQ Kostajnica

31st Infantry Brigade, HQ Petrinja

33rd Infantry Brigade, HQ Dvor

39th Light Air Defense Artillery-Rocket Battalion, HQ Petrinja

39th Rear Base, HQ Kostajnica

Appendix G

Skeleton Bosnian Serb Army Order of Battle, July 1995*

Main Staff of the Army of the Serb Republic (VRS), HQ Han Pijesak-Mount Zep

**1st Guards Motorized Brigade, HQ Kalinovik
(attached from VRS Main, Staff)**

65th Protection Motorized Regiment, HQ Han Pijesak-Mount Zep

10th Sabotage Detachment, HQ Bijeljina-Vlasenica

89th Rocket Artillery Brigade, HQ Banja Luka

“Rajko Balac” Center for Military Schools, HQ Banja Luka

67th Communications Regiment, HQ Han Pijesak

63rd Autotransport Battalion, HQ Zvornik

14th Rear Base, HQ Banja Luka

27th Rear Base, HQ Sokolac

30th Rear Base, HQ Bileca

35th Rear Base, HQ Bijeljina

410th Intelligence Center, HQ Banja Luka

Technical Repair Institute “Hadzici,” HQ Hadzici

Military Hospital, HQ Sokolac

1st Krajina Corps, HQ Banja Luka¹

1st Reconnaissance-Sabotage Detachment, HQ Banja Luka

1st Military Police Battalion, HQ Banja Luka

* This order of battle provides the normal distribution of VRS formations, but does not include task organization for specific operations ongoing in July 1995.

1st Communications Battalion, HQ Banja Luka

1st Mixed Antitank Artillery Brigade, HQ Banja Luka

1st Mixed Artillery Regiment, HQ Banja Luka

1st Light Air Defense Artillery Regiment, HQ Banja Luka

1st Engineer Regiment, HQ Banja Luka

1st Pontoon Engineer Battalion, HQ Banja Luka

1st Autotransport Battalion, HQ Banja Luka

1st Medical Battalion, HQ Banja Luka

“Doboj” Operational Group 9, HQ Doboj*

9th Reconnaissance Company, HQ Doboj

9th Military Police Battalion, HQ Doboj

9th Mixed Engineer Battalion, HQ Doboj

30th Infantry Division, HQ Sipovo

30th Reconnaissance Company, HQ Sipovo

30th Military Police Company, HQ Sipovo

30th Communications Battalion, HQ Sipovo

36th Independent Armored Battalion, HQ Sipovo

1st Armored Brigade, HQ Banja Luka

2nd Armored Brigade, HQ Doboj

2nd Krajina Infantry Brigade, HQ Banja Luka

* This skeleton order of battle does not show the normal tactical group structure within the “Doboj” Operational Group.

5th Kozara Light Infantry Brigade, HQ Prijedor-Omarska
6th Sanske Infantry Brigade, HQ Sanski Most
11th Dubica Infantry Brigade, HQ Kozarska Dubica
12th Kotorsko Light Infantry Brigade, HQ Kotorsko
16th Krajina Motorized Brigade, HQ Banja Luka
11th Mrkonjic Light Infantry Brigade, HQ Mrkonjic Grad
19th Krajina Light Infantry Brigade, HQ Srbobran (Donji Vakuf)
22nd Krajina Infantry Brigade, HQ Knezevo (Skender Vakuf)
27th Derventa Motorized Brigade, HQ Derventa
31st Light Infantry Brigade, HQ Srbobran (Donji Vakuf)
43rd Prijedor Motorized Brigade, HQ Prijedor

1st Doboj Light Infantry Brigade, HQ Doboj
1st Celinac Light Infantry Brigade, HQ Celinac
1st Srbac Light Infantry Brigade, HQ Srbac
1st Gradiska Light Infantry Brigade, HQ Gradiska
1st Novigrad Infantry Brigade, HQ Novigrad (Bosanski Novi)
1st Banja Luka Light Infantry Brigade, HQ Banja Luka
2nd Banja Luka Light Infantry Brigade, HQ Banja Luka
3rd Banja Luka Light Infantry Brigade, HQ Banja Luka
4th Banja Luka Light Infantry Brigade, HQ Banja Luka
1st Kotor Varos Light Infantry Brigade, HQ Kotor Varos
1st Prnjavor Light Infantry Brigade, HQ Prnjavor

1st Sipovo Light Infantry Brigade, HQ Sipovo

1st Teslic Infantry Brigade, HQ Teslic

2nd Teslic Light Infantry Brigade, HQ Teslic

1st Ozren Light Infantry Brigade, HQ Bosansko Petrovo Selo

2nd Ozren Light Infantry Brigade, HQ Tumare

3rd Ozren Light Infantry Brigade, HQ Gornja Paklenica

4th Ozren Light Infantry Brigade, HQ Vozuca

1st Trebava Infantry Brigade, HQ Modrica

1st Krnjin Light Infantry Brigade, HQ Krnjin

1st Vucjak Light Infantry Brigade, HQ Modrica

2nd Krajina Corps, HQ Drvar²

21st Independent Armored Battalion, HQ Petrovac

2nd Reconnaissance-Sabotage Detachment, HQ Drvar

2nd Military Police Battalion, HQ Drvar

2nd Communications Battalion, HQ Drvar

2nd Mixed Artillery Regiment, HQ Bosansko Grahovo

2nd Light Air Defense Artillery Regiment, HQ Drvar

2nd Engineer Regiment, HQ Kljuc-Laniste

2nd Autotransport Battalion, HQ Drvar

2nd Medical Battalion, HQ Drvar

1st Drvar Light Infantry Brigade, HQ Drvar

3rd Petrovac Light Infantry Brigade, HQ Petrovac

5th Glamoc Light Infantry Brigade, HQ Glamoc

7th Krajina Motorized Brigade, HQ Kupres

9th Grahovo Light Infantry Brigade, HQ Bosansko Grahovo

11th Krupa Light Infantry Brigade, HQ Krupa

15th Bihac Infantry Brigade, HQ Ripac

17th Kljuc Light Infantry Brigade, HQ Kljuc

East Bosnian Corps, HQ Bijeljina

3rd Military Police Battalion, HQ Bijeljina

3rd Communications Battalion, HQ Bijeljina

3rd Mixed Antitank Artillery Regiment, HQ Donji Polje

3rd Mixed Artillery Regiment, HQ Bijeljina

3rd Light Air Defense Artillery Regiment, HQ Vukosavci

3rd Engineer Regiment, HQ Dvorovi

3rd Pontoon Engineer Battalion, HQ Bijeljina

3rd Autotransport Battalion, HQ Bijeljina

3rd Medical Battalion, HQ Bijeljina

1st Posavina Infantry Brigade, HQ Brcko

2nd Posavina Light Infantry Brigade, HQ Bosanski Samac

3rd Posavina Light Infantry Brigade, HQ Pelagicevo

1st Semberija Light Infantry Brigade, HQ Bijeljina
2nd Semberija Light Infantry Brigade, HQ Bijeljina
3rd Semberija Light Infantry Brigade, HQ Bijeljina
1st Majevica Light Infantry Brigade, HQ Ugljevik
2nd Majevica Light Infantry Brigade, HQ Ugljevik
3rd Majevica Infantry Brigade, HQ Lopare
1st Bijeljina Light Infantry Brigade "Panthers," HQ Bijeljina

Sarajevo-Romanija Corps, HQ Sarajevo-Lukavica

4th Reconnaissance-Sabotage Detachment "White Wolves," HQ Pale
4th Military Police Battalion, HQ Lukavica
4th Communications Battalion, HQ Lukavica
4th Mixed Antitank Artillery Regiment, HQ Lukavica
4th Mixed Artillery Regiment, HQ Lukavica
4th Light Air Defense Artillery Regiment, HQ Lukavica
4th Engineer Battalion, HQ Pale
4th Autotransport Battalion, HQ Lukavica
4th Medical Battalion, HQ Pale

1st Sarajevo Mechanized Brigade, HQ Lukavica
2nd Sarajevo Light Infantry Brigade, HQ Vojkovici
3rd Sarajevo Infantry Brigade, HQ Vogosca
4th Sarajevo Light Infantry Brigade, HQ Pale
1st Romanija Infantry Brigade, HQ Han Pijesak

1st Ilijas Infantry Brigade, HQ Ilijas

1st Ilijas Infantry Brigade, HQ Ilijas

1st Igman Infantry Brigade, HQ Hadzici

Drina Corps, HQ Vlasenica

5th Military Police Battalion, HQ Vlasenica

5th Communications Battalion, HQ Vlasenica

5th Mixed Artillery Regiment, HQ Vlasenica

5th Engineer Battalion, HQ Vlasenica

5th Medical Battalion, HQ Vlasenica

1st Podrinje Light Infantry Brigade, HQ Rogatica

5th Podrinje Light Infantry Brigade, HQ Visegrad

1st Zvornik Infantry Brigade, HQ Zvornik-Karakaj

1st Birac Infantry Brigade, HQ Sekovici

1st Bratunac Light Infantry Brigade, HQ Bratunac

1st Vlasenica Light Infantry Brigade, HQ Vlasenica

1st Milici Light Infantry Brigade, HQ Milici

2nd Romanija Motorized Brigade, HQ Sokolac

Independent Infantry Battalion "Skelani," HQ Skelani

Herzegovina Corps, HQ Trebinje/Bileca³

7th Reconnaissance-Sabotage Detachment, HQ Bileca

7th Military Police Battalion, HQ Bileca

7th Communications Battalion, HQ Bileca
7th Mixed Antitank Artillery Battalion, HQ Bileca
7th Mixed Artillery Regiment, HQ Bileca
7th Light Air Defense Artillery Regiment, HQ Bileca
7th Engineer Battalion, HQ Bileca
7th Autotransport Battalion, HQ Bileca
7th Medical Battalion, HQ Bileca

1st Herzegovina Motorized Brigade, HQ Trebinje
2nd Herzegovina Light Infantry Brigade, HQ Borci
8th Herzegovina Motorized Brigade, HQ Nevesinje
11th Herzegovina Infantry Brigade, HQ Srbinje (Foca)
14th Herzegovina Light Infantry Brigade, HQ Cajnice
15th Herzegovina Infantry Brigade, HQ Bileca
18th Herzegovina Light Infantry Brigade, HQ Gacko

Air and Air Defense Force, HQ Banja Luka
474th Air Base, HQ Banja Luka-Mahovljani
474th Light Air Defense Artillery Regiment, HQ Banja Luka-Zaluzani
92nd Mixed Aviation Brigade, HQ Banja Luka-Zaluzani
474th Light Air Defense Artillery Regiment, HQ Banja Luka-Zaluzani
155th Air Defense Rocket Brigade, HQ Banja Luka
172nd Medium Self-Propelled Air Defense Rocket Regiment, HQ Sokolac
Early Warning Battalion, HQ Banja Luka

Endnotes, Appendix G

¹ The combat formations of the 1st Krajina Corps were normally assigned or attached to the corps's two division-level headquarters, "Doboj" Operational Group 9 and the 30th Infantry Division. The "Doboj" Operational Group was the larger of the two commands covering the vital Posavina corridor up to a boundary line with the East Bosnian Corps near Brcko. The operational group was further broken down into six tactical groups incorporating the bulk of the corps's combat brigades. In addition, one 1st Krajina Corps brigade was attached to the East Bosnian Corps at Brcko, while an East Bosnian Corps brigade was attached to the operational group near Orasje.

² The 2nd Krajina Corps also had at least two composite brigades formed from 1st Krajina Corps formations under command.

³ The Herzegovina Corps usually had one composite brigade, the "Combined Brigade of the Herzegovina Corps," under its command. It was formed from elements of all the corps's combat formations.

Appendix H

Skeleton Bosnian Army Order of Battle, October 1995

General Staff of the Army of Bosnia and Herzegovina (ARBiH), HQ Kakanj¹

Guards Brigade, HQ Sarajevo*

120th Liberation Brigade "Black Swans," HQ Kakanj*

Military School Center, HQ Zenica

Main Logistics Center, HQ Visoko

1st Corps, HQ Sarajevo

1st Mixed Artillery Regiment, HQ Sarajevo

1st Armored Battalion, HQ Sarajevo

1st Military Police Battalion, HQ Sarajevo

1st Reconnaissance-Sabotage Battalion, HQ Sarajevo*

1st Light Air Defense Artillery Battalion, HQ Sarajevo

1st Engineer Battalion, HQ Sarajevo

1st Medical Battalion, HQ Sarajevo

1st Logistics Base, HQ Sarajevo

1st Training-Recruit Center, HQ Sarajevo

17th Muslim Light Brigade, HQ Pazaric*

141st Light Brigade, HQ Sarajevo*

* Elite mobile/assault formation

143rd Light Brigade, HQ Sarajevo*

145th Light Brigade, HQ Fojnica*

146th Light Brigade, HQ Fojnica*

12th Division, HQ Sarajevo

101st Mountain Brigade, HQ Sarajevo-Mojmilo

102nd Motorized Brigade, HQ Sarajevo-Stup

105th Motorized Brigade, HQ Sarajevo-Kosevo

111th Vitezka Motorized Brigade, HQ Sarajevo-Zuc Hill

112th Vitezka Motorized Brigade, HQ Sarajevo-Rajlovac

115th Mountain Brigade, Sarajevo-Bistrik

124th Light Brigade "King Tvrko," HQ Sarajevo

152nd Mountain Brigade, HQ Vasin Han

155th Motorized Brigade, HQ Sarajevo-Dobrinja

14th Division, HQ Tarcin

104th Vitezka Motorized Brigade, HQ Hrasnica

109th Mountain Brigade, HQ Pazaric

123rd Light Brigade, HQ Bilalovac

131st Light Brigade, HQ Fojnica

181nd Mountain Brigade, HQ Pazaric

182nd Vitezka Light Brigade, HQ Pazaric

16th Division, HQ Vares

147th Light Brigade, HQ Vares

161st Slavna Olovo Mountain Brigade, HQ Olovo

162nd Mountain Brigade, HQ Vares

164rd Mountain Brigade, HQ Breza

165th Mountain Brigade, HQ Visoko

185th Light Brigade, HQ Vares

2nd Corps, HQ Tuzla

2nd Mixed Artillery Regiment, HQ Tuzla

2nd Armored Battalion, HQ Tuzla

2nd Military Police Battalion, HQ Tuzla

2nd Reconnaissance-Sabotage Battalion, HQ Tuzla*

2nd Light Air Defense Artillery Battalion, HQ Tuzla

2nd Engineer Battalion, HQ Tuzla

2nd Medical Battalion, HQ Tuzla

2nd Logistics Base, HQ Tuzla

2nd Training-Recruit Center, HQ Tuzla

9th Muslim Liberation Brigade, HQ Smoluca*

21st Division, HQ Srebrenik

211th Liberation Brigade, HQ Srebrenik*

212th Mountain Brigade, HQ Srebrenik

213th Vitezka Mountain Brigade, HQ Gradacac

215th Vitezka Mountain Brigade, HQ Gornji Rahic (Brcko)

217th Vitezka Mountain Brigade, HQ Gradacac

22nd Division, HQ Gracanica

221st Mountain Brigade, HQ Gracanica

222nd Liberation Brigade, HQ Gracanica*

223rd Mountain Brigade, HQ Lukavac

224th Mountain Brigade, HQ Klopotnica (Doboj)

225th Muslim Mountain Brigade, HQ Banovici

25th Division, HQ Tuzla

250th Liberation Brigade, HQ Tuzla*

252nd Slavna Mountain Brigade, HQ Tuzla

253rd Mountain Brigade, HQ Tuzla

254th Mountain Brigade, HQ Celic

255th Slavna Mountain Brigade "Hajrudin Mesic," HQ Teocak

3rd Corps, HQ Zenica

3rd Mixed Artillery Regiment, HQ Zenica

3rd Armored Company, HQ Zenica

3rd Military Police Battalion, HQ Zenica

3rd Reconnaissance-Sabotage Battalion, HQ Zenica*

3rd Light Air Defense Artillery Battalion, HQ Zenica

3rd Engineer Battalion, HQ Zenica

3rd Medical Battalion, HQ Zenica

3rd Logistics Base, HQ Zenica

3rd Training-Recruit Center, HQ Zenica

7th Vitezka Muslim Liberation Brigade, HQ Zenica*

303rd Vitezka Mountain Brigade, HQ Zenica*

314th Slavna Liberation Brigade, HQ Zenica*

319th Liberation Brigade, HQ Zepce*

330th Liberation Brigade, HQ Zenica*

35th Division, HQ Zavidovici

327th Vitezka Mountain Brigade, HQ Maglaj

328th Mountain Brigade, HQ Zavidovici

329th Mountain Brigade, HQ Kakanj

351st Liberation Brigade, HQ Zavidovici*

37th Division, HQ Tesanj

372nd Vitezka Mountain Brigade, HQ Tesanj

373rd Slavna Mountain Brigade, HQ Tesanj (Doboj)

374th Slavna Light Brigade, HQ Tesanj

375th Liberation Brigade, HQ Tesanj*

377th Vitezka Mountain Brigade, HQ Tesanj (Jelah)

37th Armored Company, HQ Tesanj

4th Corps, HQ Jablanica

4th Mixed Artillery Regiment, HQ Mount Igman

4th Military Police Battalion, HQ Mostar

4th Reconnaissance-Sabotage Battalion, HQ Jablanica*

4th Light Air Defense Artillery Battalion, HQ Konjic

4th Engineer Battalion, HQ Bradina

4th Medical Battalion, HQ Jablanica

4th Logistics Base, HQ Celebici

4th Training-Recruit Center, HQ Jablanica

4th Muslim Light Brigade, HQ Bradina*

443rd Mountain Brigade, HQ Konjic

444th Mountain Brigade, HQ Jablanica

445th Mountain Brigade, HQ Bijelo Polje

446th Light Brigade, HQ Prozor
447th Liberation Brigade, HQ Dreznica*
450th Light Brigade, HQ Bijelimici

41st Division, HQ Mostar

441st Vitezka Mountain Brigade, HQ Mostar

442nd Mountain Brigade, HQ Mostar

448th Liberation Brigade, HQ Mostar*

449th Eastern Herzegovina Mountain Brigade, HQ Mostar

5th Corps, HQ Bihac

5th Mixed Artillery Regiment, HQ Bihac

5th Armored Battalion, HQ Bihac

5th Military Police Battalion, HQ Bihac

5th Reconnaissance-Sabotage Battalion, HQ Bihac*

5th Light Air Defense Artillery Battalion, HQ Bihac

5th Engineer Battalion, HQ Bihac

5th Medical Battalion, HQ Bihac

5th Logistics Base, HQ Bihac

5th Training-Recruit Center, HQ Cazin

501st Slavna Mountain Brigade, HQ Bihac*

502nd Vitezka Mountain Brigade, HQ Bihac*

503rd Slavna Mountain Brigade, HQ Cazin*

505th Vitezka Mountain Brigade, HQ Buzim*

506th Mountain Brigade, HQ Velika Kladusa

510th Bosnian Liberation Brigade, HQ Cazin*

511th Slavna Mountain Brigade, HQ Bosanska Krupa*

517th Light Brigade, HQ Sturlica

7th Corps, HQ Travnik

7th Mixed Artillery Regiment, HQ Travnik

7th Armored Company, HQ Travnik

7th Military Police Battalion, HQ Travnik

7th "Bosnjak" Reconnaissance-Sabotage Battalion, HQ Travnik*

7th Light Air Defense Artillery Battalion, HQ Travnik

7th Engineer Battalion, HQ Travnik

7th Medical Battalion, HQ Travnik

7th Logistics Base, HQ Travnik

7th Training-Recruit Center, HQ Travnik

17th Vitezka Mountain Brigade, HQ Travnik*

706th Muslim Mountain Brigade, HQ Travnik

708th Mountain Brigade, HQ Novi Travnik

712th Mountain Brigade, HQ Travnik

725th Light Brigade, HQ Vitez

727th Slavna Mountain Brigade, HQ Travnik*

733rd Mountain Brigade, HQ Busovaca

737th Muslim Light Brigade, HQ Travnik*

77th Division, HQ Bugojno

705th Slavna Mountain Brigade, HQ Rostovo (Bugojno)*

707th Slavna Mountain Brigade, HQ Bugojno

717th Slavna Mountain Brigade, HQ Gornji Vakuf

770th Slavna Mountain Brigade, HQ Donji Vakuf (Bugojno)

28th Independent Division, HQ Zivinice**

210th Vitezka Liberation Brigade "Nesib Malkic," HQ Zivinice*

240th Muslim Mountain Brigade, HQ Zivinice

241st Spreca Muslim Light Brigade "Gazije," HQ Kalesija*

242nd Zvornik Muslim Light Brigade, HQ Kalesija*

243rd Muslim-Podrinje Mountain Brigade, HQ Kladanj

244th Mountain Brigade, HQ Kladanj

245th Mountain Brigade, HQ Kalesija

246th Vitezka Mountain Brigade, HQ Sapna

286th Mountain Brigade, HQ Stupari

287th Mountain Brigade, HQ Vitalj

24th Sabotage Battalion "Black Wolves," HQ Donje Vukovije

24th Antiterrorist Company "Zivinice Wasps," HQ Zivinice

* This division was formed from a merger of the 24th Division, HQ Zivinice, and the remnants of the Srebrenica-based 28th Division in July-August 1995. The division was then subordinated directly to the General Staff from the 2nd Corps.

81st Independent Division, HQ Gorazde

801st Light Brigade, HQ Gorazde

802nd Light Brigade, HQ Gorazde

803rd Light Brigade, HQ Gorazde

807th Muslim Liberation Brigade, HQ Gorazde*

808th Liberation Brigade, HQ Gorazde*

843rd Light Brigade, HQ Gorazde

851st Vitezka Liberation Brigade, HQ Gorazde*

81st Reconnaissance-Sabotage Company, HQ Gorazde

Endnote, Appendix H

¹ The Bosnian Army awarded its formations two honorifics for superior performance in battle, “Vitezka”(Chivalrous or Knights) and “Slavna” (Glorious or Famous), of which “Vitezka” was the most prestigious. Brigades designated “liberation” (as well as some light brigades) were usually formations of picked troops organized as elite shock units. In addition, many ARBiH brigades were given the appellation “Muslim.” In some cases, such as the 225th Muslim Mountain Brigade, this designator had no particular religious significance—most ARBiH brigades were virtually all Muslim. Some “Muslim” brigades, however—such as the 4th Muslim Light Brigade, 7th Vitezka Muslim Liberation Brigade, 9th Muslim Liberation Brigade, and possibly 737th Muslim Light Brigade—had a much larger percentage of practicing Muslims, followed Muslim dietary restrictions, and included daily prayer and other Muslim religious duties.

Appendix I
Croatian Defense Council Order of Battle,
October 1995

Main Staff of the Croatian Defense Council (HVO), HQ Posusje

10th Artillery-Rocket Regiment, HQ Siroki Brijeg

15th Independent Air Defense Artillery-Rocket Battalion

1st Military Police Battalion, HQ Ljubuski

60th Guards Airborne Battalion "Ludvig Pavlovic," HQ Capljina

22nd Sabotage Detachment, HQ Siroki Brijeg

"Gavran-2" (Ravens) Special Purpose Unit, HQ Citluk

33rd Communication Company, HQ Posusje

88th Electronic Warfare Center, HQ Posusje

Training Center, HQ Capljina

11th Mixed Aviation Squadron, HQ Posusje

Tomislavgrad Corps District, HQ Tomislavgrad

2nd Military Police Battalion, HQ Livno

14th Independent Air Defense Artillery-Rocket Battery, HQ Tomislavgrad

71st Communication Company, HQ Tomislavgrad

154th Logistics Base, HQ Livno

1st Guards Brigade "Ante Bruno Busic," HQ Tomislavgrad

1st Home Defense Regiment, HQ Posusje

55th Home Defense Regiment, HQ Kupres

79th Home Defense Regiment “King Tomislav,” HQ Tomislavgrad

80th Home Defense Regiment “King Petar Kresimir IV,” HQ Livno

42nd Independent Home Defense Battalion, HQ Prozor

43rd Independent Home Defense Battalion “Dr. Ante Starcevic,”
HQ Gornji Vakuf (Uskoplje)

Mostar Corps District, HQ Mostar

12th Air Defense Artillery Rocket Battalion, HQ Mostar

3rd Military Police Battalion, HQ Capljina

72nd Communication Company, HQ Mostar

150th Logistics Base, HQ Citluk

2nd Guards Brigade, HQ Mostar

50th Home Defense Regiment “Knez Domogoj,” HQ Capljina

51st Home Defense Regiment “Stjepan Radic,” HQ Ljubuski

56th Home Defense Regiment “Herceg Stjepan,” HQ Konjic

81st Home Defense Regiment, HQ Mostar

82nd Home Defense Regiment, HQ Mostar

83rd Home Defense Regiment “Mario Hacak Cikota,” HQ Siroki Brijeg

40th Independent Home Defense Battalion “Ratko Boban,” HQ Grude

41st Independent Home Defense Battalion “Knez Bramani,” HQ Citluk

Vitez Corps District, HQ Vitez

35th Artillery-Rocket Battalion, HQ Vitez

99th Air Defense Artillery-Rocket Battalion, HQ Vitez

4th Military Police Battalion, HQ Vitez

73rd Communication Company, HQ Vitez

154th Logistics Base, HQ Vitez

3rd Guards Brigade “Hawks,” HQ Vitez

90th Home Defense Regiment “Stjepan Tomasevic,” HQ Novi Travnik

91st Home Defense Regiment, HQ Travnik

92nd Home Defense Regiment, HQ Vitez

93rd Home Defense Regiment “Nikola Subic Zrinski,” HQ Busovaca

94th Home Defense Regiment “Ban Josip Jelacic,” HQ Kiseljak

95th Home Defense Regiment “Marinko Bosnjak,” HQ Kresevo

96th Home Defense Regiment “Bobovac,” HQ Vares

110th Home Defense Regiment “Usora,” HQ Rosulje (Jelah)

111th Home Defense Regiment, HQ Zepce

44th Independent Home Defense Battalion “Jure Francetic,” HQ Vitez

45th Independent Home Defense Battalion, HQ Zepce

Orasje Corps District, HQ Orasje

5th Independent Military Police Company, HQ Orasje

74th Communication Company, HQ Orasje

162nd Logistics Base, HQ Orasje

4th Guards Brigade "Sons of Posavina," HQ Orasje

106th Home Defense Regiment, HQ Orasje

108th Home Defense Regiment, HQ Ravne-Brcko

201st Home Defense Regiment, HQ Orasje

202nd Home Defense Regiment, HQ Domaljevac

Bihac Military District

6th Independent Military Police Company, HQ Bihac

101st Home Defense Regiment, HQ Bihac

Appendix J

Sketches and Photos of Key Wartime Commanders

Sketches and Photos of Key Wartime Commanders

Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia/Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and Yugoslav People's Army (JNA)/Yugoslav Army (VJ)



**Army General
Veljko Kadijevic**
Federal Secretary
for National Defense,
1990-91



Slobodan Milosevic
President, League of Communists
of Serbia, 1986-89; President of
Republic of Serbia, 1989-97



**Colonel General
Blagoje Adzic**
Chief of the General Staff,
1990-91; Acting Federal
Secretary for National
Defense, 1992



**Lieutenant Colonel General
(later Colonel General)
Zivota Panic**
Commander First Military District,
Late 1991; Chief of the Yugoslav
Army (VJ) General Staff, 1992-93



**Colonel General
Milutin Kukanjac**
Commander Second
Military District, 1992



**Major General
Aleksandar Vasiljevic**
Chief of the Security
Directorate, Federal
Secretariat for National
Defense, 1991-92



**Lieutenant Colonel General
(later Colonel General)
Momcilo Perisic**
Chief of the General Staff,
1993-98



Janez Jansa
Minister of Defense,
Republic of Slovenia,
1991

Slovenian Territorial Defense (Slovenian TO)

Sketches and Photos of Key Wartime Commanders

Bosnian Serb Army (VRS)



Lieutenant Colonel General
(later Colonel General)
Ratko Mladić
*Commander of the Main Staff,
1992-96*



Major General
(later Lieutenant
Colonel General)
Manojlo Milovanović
*Chief of the Main Staff,
1992-96*



Major General (later Lieutenant
Colonel General)
Milan Gvero
*Assistant Commander of the Main
Staff for Morale, Religious, and
Legal Affairs, 1992-96*



Colonel
(later Major General)
Zdravko Tolimir
*Assistant Commander of the Main
Staff for Intelligence and Security,
1992-96*



Major General
(later Lieutenant
Colonel General)
Momir Talic
*Commander 1st
Krajina Corps, 1992-97*



Colonel
(later Major General)
Radivoje Tomanic
*Commander 2nd
Krajina Corps, 1994-95*



Colonel
(later Major General)
Novica Simić
*Commander East Bosnian
Corps, 1992-97*



Colonel
(later Major General)
Stanislav Galic
*Commander
Sarajevo-Romanija
Corps, 1992-94*

Sketches and Photos of Key Wartime Commanders

Bosnian Serb Army (VRS) *continued*



**Major General
Dragomir Milosevic**
*Commander Sarajevo-Romanija
Corps, 1994-95*



**Major General
Radislav Krstic**
*Commander Drina
Corps, 1995-96*



**Colonel
(later Major General)
Radovan Grubac**
*Commander Herzegovina
Corps, 1992-96*

Krajina Serb Army (SVK)



Milan Martic
*Minister of Internal Affairs, Serbian
Autonomous Region of Krajina and
Republic of Serb Krajina, 1990-94;
President of Republic of
Serb Krajina, 1995*



**Lieutenant
Colonel General
Mile Mrksic**
*Chief of the Main
Staff, 1995*



**Major General
(later Lieutenant Colonel General)
Mile Novakovic**
*Chief of the Main Staff, 1992-94;
National Security Advisor to Milan Martic,
1994-95; Joint Commander of Operational
Group "Pauk," 1994-95*

Sketches and Photos of Key Wartime Commanders

Croatian Army (HV)



**Colonel General
Martin Spegelj**
Minister of Defense, 1990-91



Gojko Susak
*Minister of Defense,
1991-98*



**Corps General
Anton Tus**
*Chief of the Main Staff,
1991-92*



**Corps General
(later Staff General)
Janko Bobetko**
*Chief of the Main Staff,
1992-95*



**Corps General
Zvonimir Cervenko**
*Chief of the Main Staff,
1995-97*



**Colonel General
Peter Stipetic**
*Deputy Chief of the Main Staff,
1991; Commander Posavina Front,
1992; Commander Zagreb Corps
District, 1993-94; Assistant Chief of
the Main Staff, 1995*



**Brigadier
(later Major General and
Colonel General)
Marijan Marekovic**
*Commander 1st Guards Brigade,
1991-93; Assistant Chief of the
Main Staff, 1994-95; Commander
Zagreb Corps District, 1995*



**Major General
(later Colonel General)
Ante Gotovina**
*Commander
Split Corps District,
1993-96*

Sketches and Photos of Key Wartime Commanders

Croatian Army (HV) *continued*



**Major General
Luka Dzanko**
*Commander Bjelovar Corps
District, 1994-95*



**Major General
Mirko Norac**
*Commander Gospic
Corps District, 1994-95*



**Colonel
Branko Borkovic**
*Commander 204th
Vukovar Brigade, 1991*

Bosnian Croat Defense Council (HVO)



**Colonel
(later Major General)
Milivoje Petkovic**
Chief of the Main Staff, 1992-94



**Major General
Tihomir Blaskic**
*Chief of the Main
Staff, 1995*



**Major General
Slobodan Praljak**
*Commander of the Main Staff,
1993-94*



**Major General
Ante Roso**
*Commander of the
Main Staff, 1993-94*



**Staff Brigadier
Zeljko Glasnovic**
*Commander 1st
Guards Brigade,
1994; Commander
Tomislavgrad Corps
District, 1995*

Sketches and Photos of Key Wartime Commanders

Bosnian Army (ARBiH)



Army General
Rasim Delic
Commander of
the General Staff,
1993-97



Brigadier General
Enver Hadzihasanovic
Commander, Third
Corps 1992-93; Chief
of the General Staff
1993-97



Brigadier (later
Brigadier General)
Sead Delic
Commander 2nd Corps,
1993-2000



Brigadier (later
Brigadier General)
Sakib Mahmuljin
Commander 3rd
Corps, 1994-97



Brigadier (later
Division General)
Atif Dudakovic
Commander 5th
Corps, 1993-97



Brigadier General
Mehmet Alagic
Commander
3rd Corps, 1993;
Commander 7th Corps,
1994-96

Autonomous Province of Western Bosnia (APWB) People's Defense



Fikret Abdic
President, 1993-95

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