

= Croatian National Guard =

The Croatian National Guard (Croatian : Zbor narodne garde ? ZNG) was an armed force established by Croatia in April and May 1991 during the Croatian War of Independence . Although it was established within the framework of the Ministry of the Interior for legal reasons , the ZNG was under the direct command of the Ministry of Defence . It was tasked with the protection of Croatia 's borders and territory , and with tasks normally associated with police forces . The ZNG was formed with the transfer of special police units to the ZNG , establishing four all @-@ professional brigades in May 1991 , and was presented to the public in a military parade in Zagreb on 28 May . It was commanded by Defence Minister General Martin ?pegelj before his resignation in early August . ?pegelj was replaced by General Anton Tus , who became the first head of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Croatia (established on 21 September) .

During its development the ZNG experienced a number of problems , including shortages of weapons and ammunition , lack of uniforms , inadequate training and an overall deficiency in trained officers , and poor staff work and command structures (preventing the effective coordination of multiple units) . These problems were offset by good morale , clear objectives and high levels of mobilisation . After the Battle of the Barracks , the ZNG expanded significantly with arms captured from the Yugoslav People 's Army (Jugoslovenska Narodna Armija) . By the end of October 60 new brigades and independent battalions were established , and on 3 November the ZNG was renamed the Croatian Army (Hrvatska vojska) .

= = Background = =

In 1990 , after the electoral defeat of the government of the Socialist Republic of Croatia by the Croatian Democratic Union (Croatian : Hrvatska demokratska zajednica , HDZ) , ethnic tensions between Croats and Croatian Serbs worsened . The Yugoslav People 's Army (Jugoslavenska narodna armija ? JNA) believed that Croatia would use the Croatian Territorial Defence Force 's (Teritorijalna obrana ? TO) equipment to build its own army and confront the JNA . To minimize the expected resistance , the JNA confiscated the TO 's weapons . On 17 August tensions escalated into an open revolt by the Croatian Serbs , centred on the predominantly Serb @-@ populated areas of the Dalmatian hinterland near the southern town of Knin , parts of the Lika , Kordun and Banovina regions and eastern Croatia . They established a Serbian National Council in July 1990 to coordinate opposition to Croatian President Franjo Tu?man 's policy of pursuing independence for Croatia . Milan Babi? , a dentist from Knin , was elected president and Knin police chief Milan Marti? established paramilitary militias . The two men eventually became the political and military leaders of the SAO Krajina , a self @-@ declared state incorporating the Serb @-@ inhabited areas of Croatia .

The JNA learned about Croatia 's intention to develop its own military force from JNA Captain Vladimir Jager , a double agent employed by Croatia and the JNA Counterintelligence Service (KOS) . The JNA devised Operation Shield (?tit) , aimed at disarming the Croatian forces and the arrest and trial of the Croatian leadership , in response . Although the operation was prepared by December 1990 , federal Defence Minister General Veljko Kadijevi? never sought authorisation to carry it out from the Yugoslav Presidency . Instead , he ordered the KOS to stand down on the morning the operation was scheduled to begin .

At the beginning of 1991 Croatia had no regular army , and to bolster its defence Croatia doubled the size of its police force to about 20 @,@ 000 . The most effective part of the force was the 3 @,@ 000 @-@ strong special police , deployed in a military organisation of 12 battalions ; in addition , there were 9 @,@ 000 ? 10 @,@ 000 regionally @-@ organised reserve police officers . Although the reserve police were set up in 16 battalions and 10 companies , they lacked weapons (which were needed to arm the troops) .

= = History = =

== Establishment ==

Preparations for the ZNG began on 12 April 1991 . Its formation as a police force with military capability was considered necessary by Croatian authorities after March clashes in Pakrac and at Plitvice Lakes and the possibility of further confrontation with the JNA . Since it was illegal to establish a separate military in a constituent republic of Yugoslavia , the ZNG was planned as part of the police force under the Ministry of the Interior . Parliament amended the Internal Affairs Act on 18 April , and the ZNG was formally established five days later . It was tasked with the protection of the constitutional order , the maintenance of public order , anti @-@ terrorist operations , the protection of Croatia 's borders , territory , coast and territorial waters , valuable structures and high @-@ profile individuals . Although the ZNG was formally subordinate to the Ministry of the Interior , its founding legislation stipulated that it would be commanded by the Ministry of Defence .

On 5 May the number of ZNG troops and their composition was determined , followed by operational guidelines issued by Defence and Interior Ministers Martin ?pegelj and Josip Boljkovac for the transfer of police personnel to the ZNG on 10 May . By 15 May several special police units (SPU) transferred to the ZNG , forming four brigades . By July the ZNG had approximately 8 @,@ 000 troops and , unlike other Croatian forces , were fully equipped with small arms . The reserve police force , numbering about 39 @,@ 000 in April , was also transferred to reserve ZNG brigades and independent battalions . On 18 May the Zrinski Battalion was established as a special forces unit of the ZNG , its core consisting of 27 volunteers drawn from the Kumrovec SPU . Initially , it also relied on former French Foreign Legion troops . By July , the reserve force of 40 @,@ 000 ZNG troops was assigned to 19 brigades and 14 independent battalions ; however , they did not possess sufficient heavy or small arms for all their personnel . The Croatian police had approximately 15 @,@ 000 small arms , with less than 30 @,@ 000 additional weapons obtained from abroad by August .

On 28 May , the ZNG was presented to the public in a military parade at the Kranj?evi?eva Street Stadium to boost morale . The parade featured approximately 800 soldiers , a dozen anti @-@ aircraft systems , armoured cars and several armoured personnel carriers ; the Presidential Guards and Alkars also participated .

== Development problems ==

To command individual units , regional ZNG commands were established in eastern Slavonia , the Banovina ? Kordun area , Lika , central and northern Dalmatia , southern Dalmatia and Zagreb in late July and August . Crisis headquarters , which also had command authority of ZNG units , were established down to the municipal level . The command structure was particularly poor , preventing effective coordination between units . Although the many crisis headquarters were entrusted with a high level of authority , they consisted of politicians with little (if any) military training other than JNA service . Multiple units deployed to a single area often had no authority coordinating their activities . TO command systems were reactivated in some places (such as Zagreb) , somewhat improving the situation .

Other problems faced by the ZNG included a shortage of trained officers , inadequate troop training , a shortage of weapons and especially a shortage of ammunition . Mobilisation proved particularly successful , however , and troops were plentiful ; in Zagreb , approximately 80 percent of those called up in September and October reported for service . The ZNG were short of uniforms ; 20 percent of those drafted in Zagreb during this period received uniforms , while the remainder fought in civilian clothes . The ZNG also relied on the civilian infrastructure for food , fuel and medical care .

?pegelj was replaced by ?ime ?odan as Defence Minister in July . He remained in command of the ZNG until 3 August , when he resigned over Tu?man 's refusal to authorise attacks against JNA barracks . After ?pegelj 's resignation , command of the ZNG was entrusted to General Anton Tus .

== Transition to the Croatian Army ==

In mid September the regional commands were replaced by six operational zones , headquartered in Osijek , Bjelovar , Zagreb , Karlovac , Rijeka and Split . The zones possessed uneven strength ; those in Slavonia and Dalmatia were heavily equipped , and the Zagreb zone had twice the average troop strength . After capturing a stockpile of weapons during the Battle of the Barracks , the ZNG expanded to 60 reserve brigades and independent battalions by the end of October (in addition to the four all professional guards brigades) . Although each brigade was planned to have 1 , 800 troops , in reality their size varied from 500 to 2 , 500 . Three named special forces battalions were also established within the ZNG (in addition to the Zrinski Battalion) : the Frankopan , Kralj Tomislav and Matija Vlačić Battalions .

On 20 September Parliament enacted the Defence Act , specifying that the ZNG and the Croatian Army (Hrvatska vojska ? HV) comprised the Armed Forces of the Republic of Croatia . At the same time , the armed forces were formally subordinated to the Ministry of Defence rather than the Ministry of the Interior . The legislation also designated the TO reserve units as a constituent part of the ZNG reserve force . The following day the General Staff of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Croatia was established , headed by Tus . On 8 October (the day Croatia declared its independence) the Defence Act was amended , with the ZNG redefined as a part of the HV . ZNG reserve units became the HV reserve , named the Home Guard (Domobranstvo) , leaving the ZNG an all professional force . The ZNG was renamed the HV on 3 November 1991 .

== Service ==

ZNG units participated in a number of significant battles in the early part of the war , attempting to hold back Yugoslav forces . These include the battles of Gospić , Šibenik and Zadar , where the ZNG defended cities in Lika and along the Dalmatian coast against the JNA and its allies . The ZNG also took part in the battles of Vukovar and Osijek in eastern Slavonia , defended Dubrovnik and contributed to the capture of the JNA barracks and Operation Hurricane in 1991 (an attempt to push the JNA out of western Slavonia .

== Legacy ==

The HV continued to grow , numbering about 200 , 000 troops by the end of 1991 . Although the force successfully countered the JNA that year , the HV was deficient in organisation , training and heavy weapons support . By the end of 1991 , the HV still lacked sufficient resources to push back the JNA and continued experiencing inadequate work by their staff . Nonetheless , like the ZNG it benefited from its troops ' high morale and the well defined purpose of its mission . The growth and systematic improvement of HV capability accelerated in 1992 , continuing throughout the Croatian War of Independence . The anniversary of the ZNG parade at the Kranjčevićeva Street Stadium is celebrated annually in Croatia as Armed Forces Day and Croatian Army Day .