



SPECIAL INTELLIGENCE REPORT

DCI Interagency Balkan Task Force

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Croatia: Army Pushing for Krajina Offensive

President Tudjman so far has rebuffed some senior Croatian Army officers who believe that an offensive should soon be launched to retake key parts of the Krajina. He has, however, approved contingency plans for a Croatian attack in UN Sector North if the Serbs appear close to defeating Bosnian Government forces in the Bihac enclave.

- *Bosnian Government offensive operations in the Sarajevo, Kupres, and Northern Corridor regions are tying down large numbers of Bosnian Serb troops that Pale could not send to the Krajina if the Croats attack. Without such reinforcements, Croatian military leaders probably assess that prospects for a successful offensive are greatly enhanced.*
- *Some senior Croatian Army officers, who claim their forces are ready to mount an offensive, favor joint action with Bosnian Government forces. Two recent large-scale combined arms exercises suggest that Croatian Army capabilities have improved.*

The Croatian Army probably can regain some key lines of communication in UN Sectors North, South, and West, but it almost certainly lacks the heavy weapons and skilled leadership to gain a decisive victory over Krajina Serb forces.

- *Renewed fighting would lead to Krajina Serb retaliation against Croatian cities and could spark "Yugoslav" Army intervention.*

Croatian Military Favors Attack

Some senior Croatian Army officers are trying to convince President Tudjman to authorize an offensive to retake key parts of the Krajina.

The officers, favor joint action with Bosnian Government forces.

- *Two recent large-scale combined arms exercises suggest that Croatian Army capabilities have improved. Croatia also is continuing to acquire arms, including helicopters and anti-tank guided missiles.*

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- Croatian Chief of the General Staff Bobetko told the US Defense Attache that the Croatians could "work with" the Bosnian Government commander in Bihac, suggesting a coordinated attack is possible.
- The Krajina Serbs--already stretched thin--almost certainly have been forced to move some troops from the frontlines opposite Croatian forces to the border with Bosnia. We assess there are some 1,000 to 2,000 Krajina Serb troops and special police deployed inside Bosnia with another 1,000 to 2,000 deployed along the border.
- The Croatian military hopes believes that an apparent rift between Serb political leaders in Belgrade, Pale, and Knin related to Milosevic's recent embargo on the Bosnian Serbs will work to Zagreb's advantage--particularly by worsening an already serious Krajina Serb fuel problem.
- Bosnian Government offensive operations in the Sarajevo, Kupres, and Northern Corridor regions currently are tying down key elements of two Bosnian Serb Corps that Pale could not send to the Krajina if the Croatians attack. Without such reinforcements, prospects for a successful Croatian offensive are greatly enhanced.

Tudjman Probably Will Attempt to Delay Action

President Tudjman currently is opposed to using force and wants to buy time for more thorough military preparations, according to Croatian officials. **Tudjman appears to want to delay until after the 20 January report to the Security Council on the UN's progress in fulfilling its mandate in Croatia. Tudjman probably also will want to wait to determine if negotiations on the Zagreb Four proposal for a political settlement are progressing.**

- On 4 November President Tudjman stated publicly that Zagreb and Knin must agree by 21 November on a number of economic measures now under negotiation, or he would not renew the UN's peacekeeping mandate in Croatia. **The withdrawal of UN troops--inevitable if their mandate is revoked--would prompt another round of fighting in Croatia.**

Pressure on Tudjman to act sooner would grow if no progress has been made at the negotiating table, if Muslim forces make significant military gains in Bosnia, or if Serb counterattacks--especially in the Bihac enclave--directly threaten Croatian interests. Tudjman would be even more likely to approve action if he is given assurances that sanctions would not be imposed against Croatia.

- **If Bosnian Serb troops threaten to defeat government forces in the Bihac enclave, Knin could focus all of its military efforts on Croatia. Zagreb also would be faced with an influx of up to 200,000 mostly Muslim refugees if the Bihac pocket collapses.**
- Croatian Defense Minister Susak recently told the US Ambassador that

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Zagreb would attack the Krajina Serbs if Bosnian Government forces in the Bihac enclave appear close to defeat, according to State Department reporting. President Tudjman reportedly has approved contingency plans to attack Krajina Serb positions in UN Sector North to support the Bosnians.

- **If Croatia attacks soon, Zagreb almost certainly would not change its original plans to take key lines of communication in UN Sectors North, South, and West.** [redacted]

Renewed Fighting Likely in Any Case

[redacted] Tudjman is likely, in our view, to authorize at least limited attacks to retake portions of the Krajina by next spring.

- The Croatian Army, however, would probably prefer to attack when winter's heavy snows have effectively cut off key passes between Krajina Serb and Bosnian Serb-held territory, according to the US Defense Attache. This would free up Croatian troops from having to take and hold the passes and help isolate the Krajina battlefield from Bosnian Serb or "Yugoslav" Army reinforcements. [redacted]

Implications

A Croatian attack probably would regain some territory--especially in UN Sectors North, South and West--but not without high costs. The Croatian Army probably can regain some key lines of communication in UN Sectors South, and West, but it still lacks the heavy weapons and skilled leadership to achieve a decisive victory over Krajina Serb forces.

- The Croatians expect Krajina Serb forces to retaliate with artillery and rocket attacks on Croatian cities--including Zagreb--as they did after the Croatian attack in Sector South last fall.
- The "Yugoslav" Army would probably intervene on Knin's behalf if the Croatians attack Krajina Serb positions in UN Sector East.
- A new round of fighting almost certainly would prompt the UN initially to withdraw isolated units. UN forces probably would pull out of Croatia altogether if they suffer significant casualties, but a complete withdrawal could be hampered by Krajina Serb forces reluctant to see the UN leave. [redacted]

This report was prepared by [redacted] analysts with the DCI Interagency Balkan Task Force, in support of US policymaking on Croatia. Comments and queries are welcome and may be directed to Chief, Balkan Task Force on [redacted]

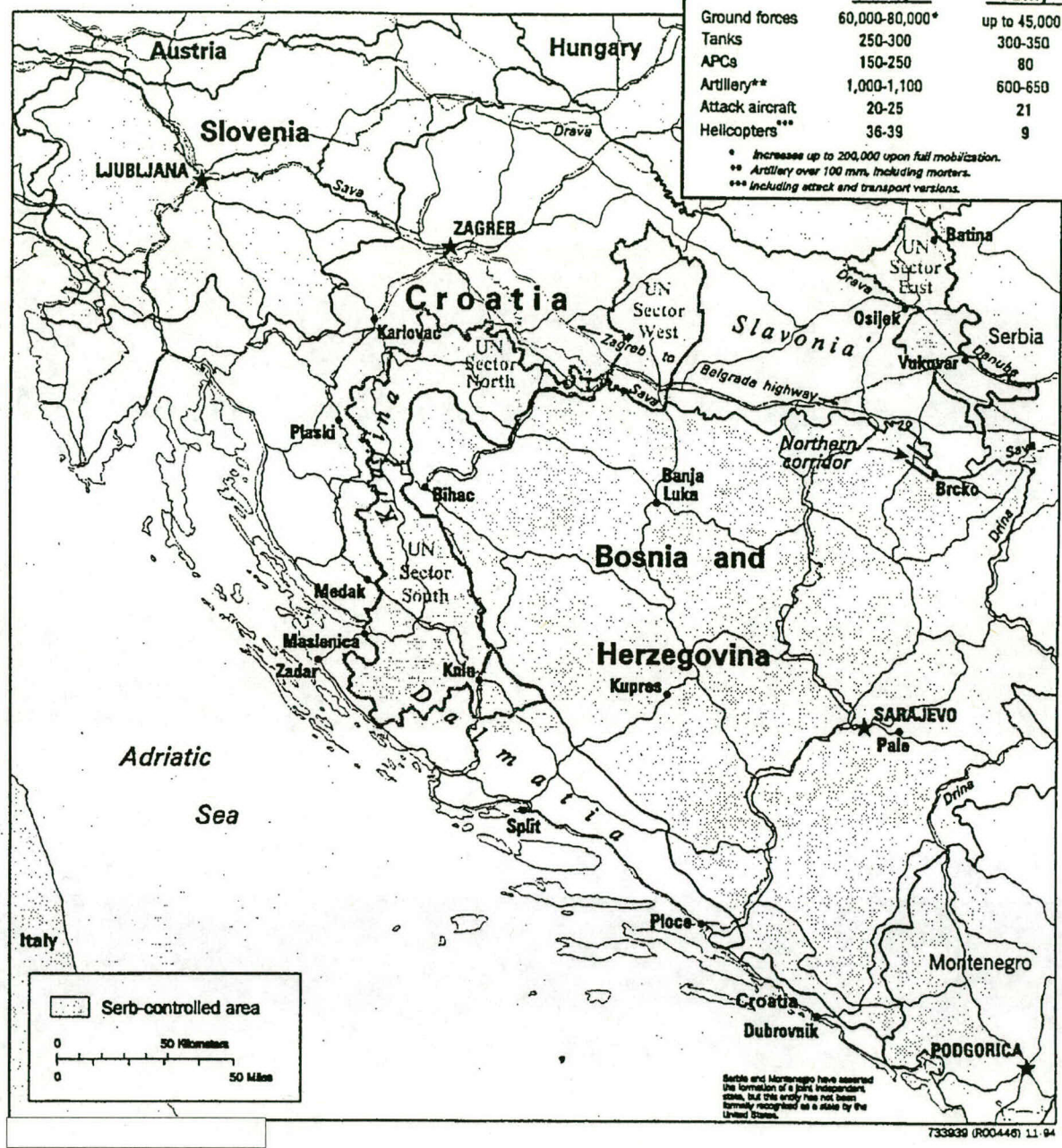
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	Croatian Army	Krajina Serb Army
Ground forces	60,000-80,000*	up to 45,000
Tanks	250-300	300-350
APCs	150-250	80
Artillery**	1,000-1,100	600-650
Attack aircraft	20-25	21
Helicopters***	36-39	9

* Increases up to 200,000 upon full mobilization.
 ** Artillery over 100 mm, including mortars.
 *** Including attack and transport versions.



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