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Intelligence Report

Office of Resources, Trade, and Technology

Croatia's Ethnic Serb- Controlled Areas: A Geographic Perspective



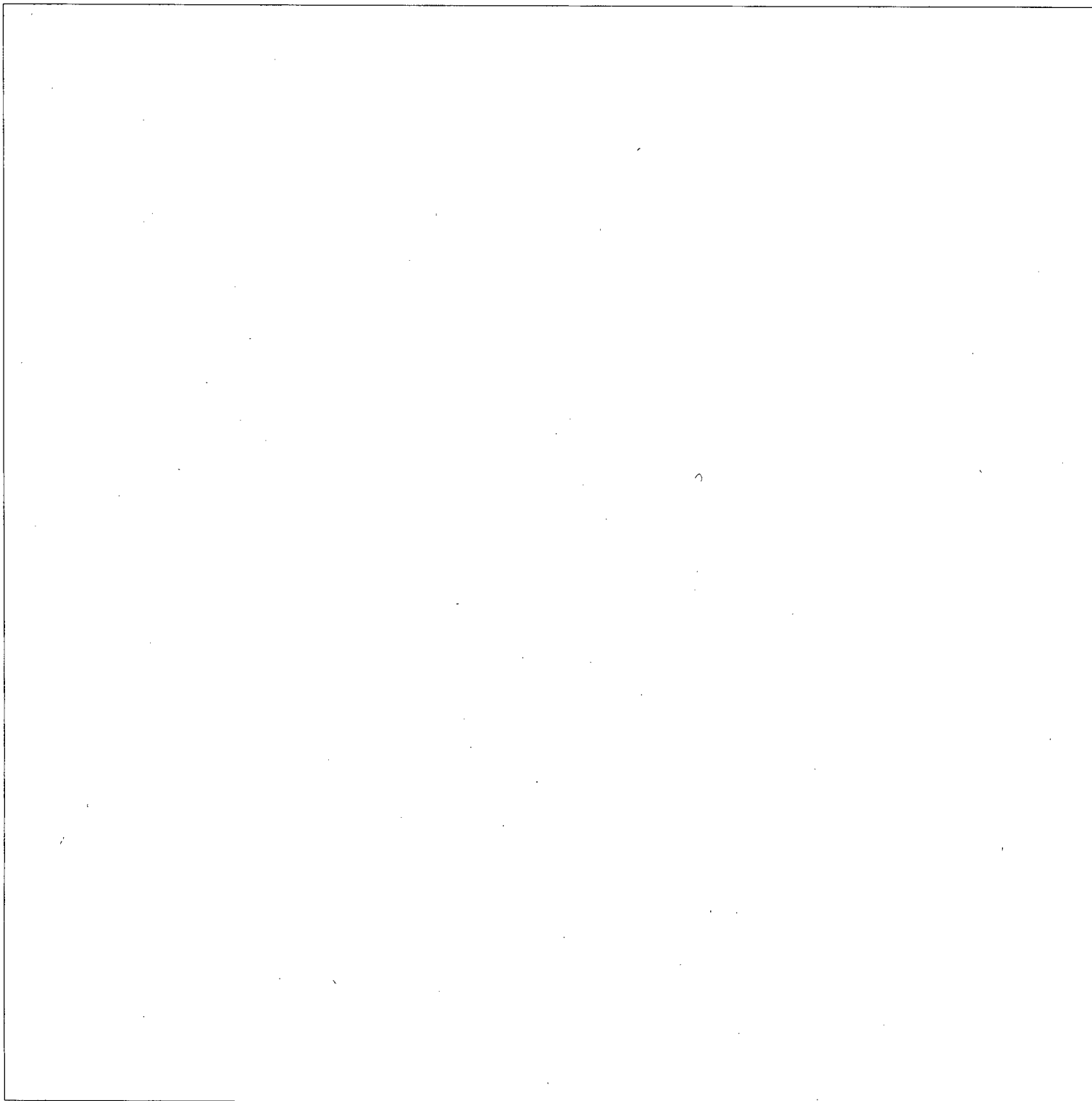
A Research Paper

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A Research Paper

This paper was prepared in support of US policy on Croatia by [redacted] Office of Resources, Trade, and Technology, with contributions from analysts in RTT and the Office of European Analysis. Comments and queries are welcome and should be directed to the Chief [redacted] RTT, on [redacted]

~~Secret~~**Croatia's Ethnic Serb-
Controlled Areas: A
Geographic Perspective****Scope Note**

This report provides a geographic analysis—including demographic, economic, and physical perspectives—of the ethnic Serb-held territory in Croatia. These areas are key because of uncertainty over the future of the UN peacekeeping effort there, the long-term prospect of renewed fighting whether or not the UN leaves, and the risk to US troops if they deploy to assist a UN pullout.

This paper refers to the political entity established in the ethnic Serb-controlled areas of Croatia as the "Republic of Serbian Krajina" or "RSK" and to its governmental seat as "Knin." Although commonly referred to as "the Krajina," the Serb-occupied lands comprise a portion of eastern Slavonia as well as the Krajina geographic region proper. Most of the Serb-held territory lies within three sectors patrolled by UN Confidence Restoration Operation in Croatia (UNCRO) soldiers—UN Sector East in eastern Slavonia and UN Sectors North and South in the Krajina. Croatian forces seized UN Sector West from Krajina Serb troops in early May 1995. Ethnic Serbs occupying Serb-held territory in Croatia are collectively referred to as the "Krajina Serbs"—accepted common usage.

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Croatia's Ethnic Serb- Controlled Areas: A Geographic Perspective

Key Findings

*Information available
as of 5 May 1995
was used in this report.*

In 1991, Croatian ethnic Serbs supported by the Yugoslav Army seized three areas of Croatia—the Krajina and portions of eastern and western Slavonia—and declared this territory to be the “Republic of Serbian Krajina” (“RSK”). Since then, Krajina Serbs have maneuvered to legitimize their state in the face of continued Croatian determination to eventually reassert control over the areas. The presence of UN peacekeepers since 1992 averted significant further fighting until May 1995, when Croatian forces seized Serb-held western Slavonia.

The size and ethnic composition of the population in the Serb-held territory have changed dramatically since it was seized in 1991. *The overall population probably has declined by almost half to an estimated 280,000 to 330,000; Serbs now compose the vast majority, as compared to about half before 1991:*

- About 250,000 ethnic Croats—nearly all the region’s prewar Croat population—have fled Serbian ethnic cleansing and harassment, according to numerous sources.
- While large numbers of native ethnic Serbs have fled to Serbia, Bosnia, and Europe, similar numbers of Serbs from elsewhere in Croatia have moved into the Serb-held territories.

War, isolation, and international sanctions have brought substantial economic hardship to the Serb-held areas, which for the most part constituted an underdeveloped economic hinterland before the conflict. The breakdown of social order, widespread crime, and an influx of refugees also contribute to the region’s depressed living standards:

- Farms suffer shortages of fuel and most other inputs but still produce enough food to feed the local population.
- Industries are largely idled by lack of fuel, raw materials, and access to export markets, as well as the flight of many skilled workers and managers.
- Much of the region’s transportation and utility infrastructure is disrupted or damaged.

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- *The Economic Confidence Building Measures Agreement—signed by both sides in December 1994—probably brought some relief, but the local economies of most Serb-controlled areas almost certainly remain near subsistence/barter levels. Moreover, the May 1995 Croatian attack on western Slavonia jeopardized future cooperation.*

Regardless of whether or how the standoff is resolved, the region faces a slow recovery at best:

- *A continuation of the status quo would mean further integration with economically stressed Serb-held territory in Bosnia and Serbia proper.*
- *Any political or military solution almost certainly will involve new large-scale population movements as control of the territory changes hands or is solidified.*
- *Parties dissatisfied with a settlement could use neighboring states as sanctuaries from which to promote instability.*

Under any lasting peace, regional economic conditions, which are far below their poor prewar levels, will be slow to recover from extensive damage and disruption.

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Croatia's Ethnic Serb- Controlled Areas: A Geographic Perspective

Introduction and Background

Ethnic Croats and Serbs have long contested control of the Krajina region, which the international community recognized in 1991 as part of Croatia but is home to a large Serb population.¹ In 1991, Croatian ethnic Serbs supported by the Yugoslav Army seized 25 percent of Croatia—including parts of eastern and western Slavonia as well as the Krajina—and declared this territory the "Republic of Serbian Krajina" ("RSK"). Since then, "RSK" officials have sought to legitimize their self-proclaimed state and have expressed a desire to unite with a greater Serbia, while Zagreb repeatedly has proclaimed its intent to reassert control. Meanwhile, Serbs have dramatically changed the region's ethnic composition through ethnic cleansing, and the already backward economy has further deteriorated.

Since 1991 the two sides have made little progress toward a negotiated solution, although they avoided large-scale fighting until May 1995. In early 1992, Zagreb and Knin—the "RSK" capital—agreed to a cease-fire and deployment of UN Protection Force (UNPROFOR) peacekeepers to four UN sectors, which encompassed most of the Serb-occupied territory. In April 1994 the parties signed a permanent cease-fire that established an UNPROFOR-patrolled and demilitarized "separation zone" between their forces. International negotiators mediated an Economic Confidence Building Measures Agreement in December 1994, but territorial negotiations remained stalemated.

Frustrated by the stalemate and fearing the eventual "cyprusization" of Croatia, Zagreb declined in March 1995 to renew UNPROFOR's mandate. Under intense international pressure, however, it agreed to a smaller UN force—the UN Confidence Restoration Operation in Croatia—under new conditions that Knin has

¹ For more information of the region's geography and history, see appendixes A and B.

rejected, leaving the future of the UN presence in question. Following a series of incidents along the Zagreb-Belgrade highway in UN Sector West, Croatian military forces attacked its Krajina Serb defenders and captured the sector in early May 1995.

The Population and Impact of Ethnic Cleansing

The current population of Serb-controlled areas of Croatia is clearly smaller and more Serbian than before the conflict began, although precise data are not available. Croatian and "RSK" official estimates of the prewar population of the areas the Serbs held before Zagreb's May 1995 offensive range from 550,000 to more than 600,000—about 12 percent of Croatia's prewar population of 4,784,000, according to 1991 census data.² Croatian Foreign Minister Granic has stated that Serbs and non-Serbs each composed about half the total population. The ethnic Serb proportion of local populations varied widely—from 13 percent in Vinkovci *opstina* to 97 percent in Donji Lapac *opstina*, according to the census.

Since 1991 the UN estimates that roughly 250,000 Croats have fled Serbian ethnic cleansing and harassment, as well as poor economic conditions, in the Serb-held areas. Most came from eastern Slavonia, according to Zagreb press reports. Nearly 200,000 of these Croats have resettled elsewhere in Croatia, according to a Croatian refugee census; the UN reports that most of the remainder reside in Germany. Meanwhile, the ethnic Serb population of the region also has changed. At least 100,000 Serbs have fled the Krajina and eastern and western Slavonia to Bosnia, Serbia, or Europe, according to Croatian Government

² Because neither the Serb-occupied areas nor the UN sectors consistently correspond with boundaries of *opstinas*—the political sub-districts for which the 1991 census data are recorded—we cannot ascertain a more accurate figure for the prewar population or its ethnic composition.

Figure 1
Prewar Population Density in Croatia

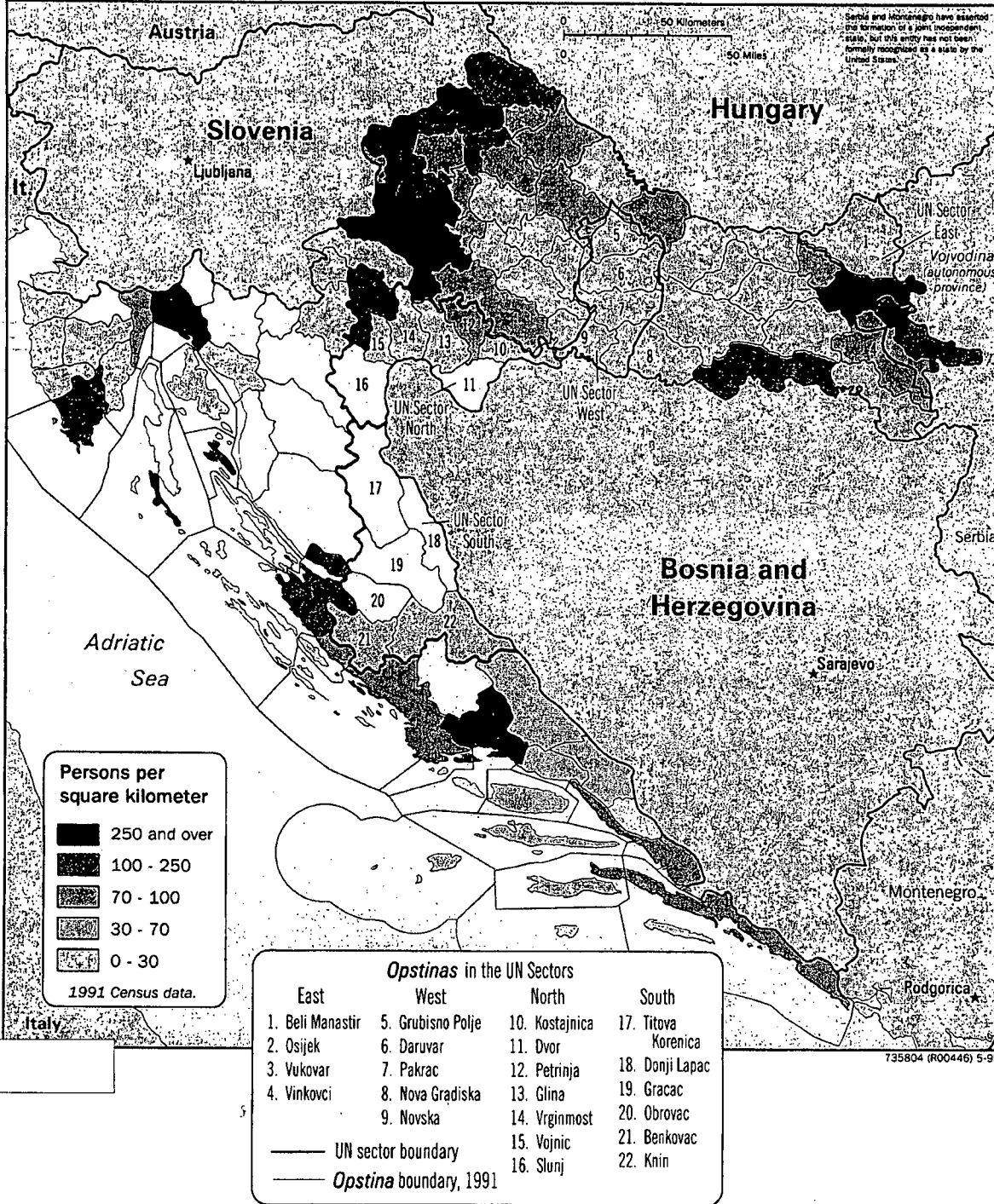
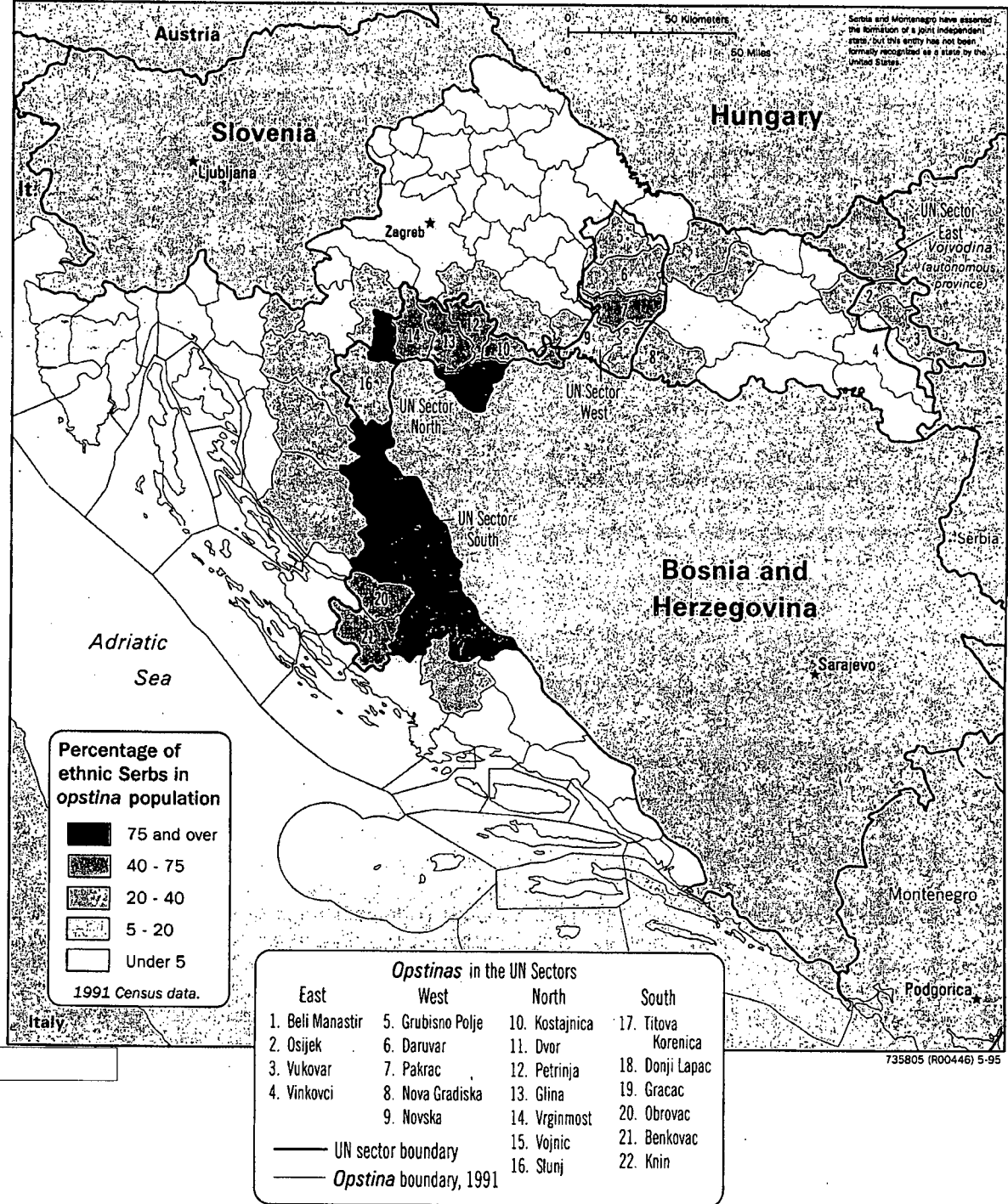


Figure 2
Prewar Ethnic Serb Concentrations in Croatia



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and "RSK" officials. Although this emigration continues, some native ethnic Serb emigres reportedly have returned. At the same time, nearly 90,000 ethnic Serbs moved into the Serb-occupied areas from elsewhere in Croatia, according to the UN. [redacted]

Pre-May 1995 estimates of the population of the ethnic Serb-controlled regions ranged from Croatian Government figures of about 200,000 to "RSK" claims of 400,000 to 500,000; UN estimates ranged from 250,000 to 450,000. On the basis of reported population flows, we believe the current population of the remaining Serb-held areas is probably between 280,000 and 330,000. Croatian Government, "RSK," and UN sources estimate that ethnic Serbs compose 80 to 95 percent of the current population. [redacted]

Post-1991 population changes vary regionally:

- *UN Sector East*—the most densely populated area now under Serb control—went from a 70-percent Croatian majority to a 70- to 85-percent Serbian majority. [redacted] Bosnian Serb refugees and Croatian Serbs displaced from western Slavonia compose one-quarter of the sector's 130,000 to 160,000 people, according to UN estimates. Local Serb authorities have allowed these Serbs to terrorize the remaining Croats to force them off their land, according to diplomatic reporting.
- Serbs almost certainly have strengthened their prewar majority in the sparsely populated *UN Sector North*; at least 15,000 Serbs have moved into the area, according to UN figures. Petrinja *opstina's* prewar population of 35,000—the largest in what is now UN Sector North—has declined to about 20,000, according to the Belgrade press; the difference of 15,000 matches the *opstina's* prewar Croat population, which probably fled. A United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) official recently estimated that 100,000 people now live in the region.
- In thinly populated *UN Sector South*, the overwhelming Serb prewar majority also has increased. About one-fourth of the sector's 100,000 to 120,000 people are ethnic Serb refugees or displaced

Population Changes in UN Sector West

Before the early May Croatian offensive that reclaimed most of the region, both local Serb and Croatian authorities tolerated, if not supported, the division of UN Sector West into Croat- and Serb-majority areas, according to UN officials. Some 15,000 Croats reportedly fled, and about 6,000 Serbs entered, the Serb-held southern area. Few Croats remained in the south, according to the UN officials. Estimates of the southern area's population before the Croatian attack range from press reports of 13,000 to 15,000 to Croatian military estimates of 31,000 to 36,000. [redacted] UN officials estimate that 5,000 to 6,000 of these ethnic Serbs fled from the area into neighboring Bosnian Serb-held territory during the Croatian assault. UN officials announced that the organization plans to facilitate the departure of up to 6,000 more who want to leave. [redacted]

persons, according to UN estimates. UNHCR officials estimate only 600 to 800 Croats remain in the sector. Podlapaca, Bruska, and Rodaljice, each with 100 to 150 inhabitants, are the largest remaining Croat villages. [redacted]

In some of the Serb-controlled areas, the conflict apparently has accelerated existing population loss and "graying" trends. Since 1960 the Krajina's population has declined as local economic hardship prompted heavy outmigration. The less mobile elderly, particularly rural folk tied to their homesteads, almost certainly are underrepresented among these emigrants. Since 1991 incoming Serbian refugees have failed to make up for continuing Serbian emigration—primarily of the young seeking to escape war, crime, and the poor economy, according to Belgrade press—much less the huge outflow of Croats. These trends are perhaps most apparent in UN Sector South; a recent traveler there noted that many towns now seem abandoned, while a US diplomat commented that the population that remains appears to be mainly elderly. [redacted]

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Croatia wants to return displaced Croats to the Krajina and eastern and western Slavonia. In the summer of 1994, Croatian protesters, with at least tacit government support, blocked UN access to the UN sectors and demanded repatriation. Although the Vance Plan calls for the return of displaced persons, the UN has not actively pursued this issue, almost certainly because the underlying conflict remains unsettled. To date, very few Croats have returned to the Serb-controlled areas [redacted]

The Economy and Impact of the Conflict

Within the former Yugoslavia, the currently Serb-occupied areas of Croatia served primarily to supply the economic core area around Zagreb with agricultural, forestry, and industrial products. The Krajina region, in particular, remained largely underdeveloped and rural; per capita incomes were among Croatia's lowest. Eastern Slavonia—more productive and industrialized—also relied on connections to larger urban markets. [redacted]

War, isolation, and sanctions have brought substantial economic hardship to the Serb-controlled areas, particularly the cities. Fighting heavily damaged some areas, and the standoff with Croatia has disrupted access to traditional fuel and raw materials suppliers, as well as markets for Krajina products. The effects of international trade sanctions covering the Serb-occupied UN sectors under UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 820, as well as the breakdown of social order, widespread crime, and influx of refugees, have helped drive down the region's living standards:

- [redacted] "RSK" official believed the Krajina's overall production and trade has plummeted 80 percent from prewar levels. The official estimated war damage losses in the billions of dollars.
- As a result of the plunge in economic activity, estimates of overall unemployment in the "RSK" range from 60 to 75 percent [redacted]
[redacted] unemployment in UN Sector East is 80 to 90 percent.

- Although there is no evidence of widespread hunger, consumer goods and medicines are scarce [redacted]
[redacted] crime-ridden UN Sector East is "bereft of economic hope." Conditions in Vojnic, Vrginmost, and Topusko in UN Sector North are "disastrous" because of heavy war damage, little electricity, and few goods in stores. [redacted]
[redacted]

Limited implementation of the Economic Confidence Building Measures Agreement since December 1994 probably has brought some relief, but the local economy of most Serb-controlled areas almost certainly remains near subsistence/barter levels. [redacted]

Krajina Serbs are surviving through a variety of means. They rely heavily on their own agricultural production, some trade with Serbia, remittances from abroad, and local savings. In addition, at least through 1993, Belgrade provided the "RSK" with large-scale financial and commodity assistance, according to diplomatic and press reporting. Moreover, the UN delivered 38,640 metric tons of food aid to the UN sectors during 1993 and 1994, as well as fuel to Krajina Serb farmers during the 1993 and 1994 planting seasons. Some trading across the lines continues, and the area also receives income as a way station for smugglers moving goods into Serbia and Bosnia; the town of Petrinja is a good example. [redacted] Finally, some armed Serb gangs and Serb refugees plunder homes, land, and belongings from local minorities, according to diplomatic and other sources. [redacted]

Agriculture and Forestry

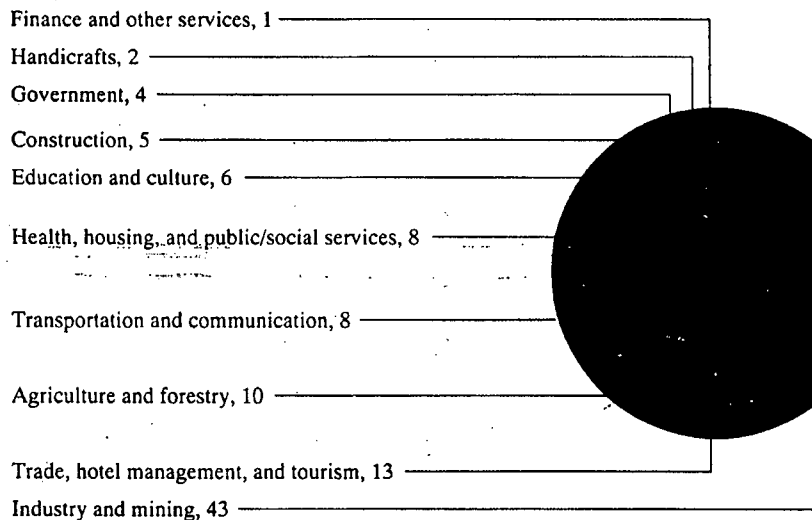
Overall, "RSK"-controlled areas include roughly 20 percent each of Croatia's prewar agricultural and timber acreage; agriculture, forestry, and fishing employed at least 10 percent of these areas' prewar labor force, according to Croatian Government statistics:

- UN Sector East occupies Croatia's most important agricultural region, the Eastern Slavonian Plains. The region has some of the Balkans' most fertile soils, which support a variety of crops dominated by

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Figure 3
Prewar Labor Force by Sector

Percent



Note: Derived from 1991 labor force statistics for 16 Croatian *opstinas* that are now totally or predominantly Serb controlled. Labor force figures are for public-sector employees

only; breakout for the small number of private and self-employed individuals is unavailable.

Source: 1992 Statistical Yearbook by Croatian Bureau of Statistics.

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wheat, corn, sugar beets, and fodder crops. The region also grows vegetables and fruit—including wine grapes—and raises sheep and swine.

- Agriculture in *UN Sector North* focuses on cattle and pig raising, fodder crops, and fruit; forestry is also important.
- The mountainous and largely forested *UN Sector South* primarily engages in lumbering, sheep breeding, and fodder crops; vegetables are grown in the river valleys, and grape growing is important in the south.

Though hindered by shortages of fuel and other inputs, farms in the "RSK" reportedly still produce enough food to feed the local population, according to diplomatic and press reports:

- The agricultural sector has been hit hard by war and isolation. The lack of fuel, seeds, fertilizer, pesticides, agricultural equipment and spare parts, and veterinary products hampers production, according to military and other reporting. Moreover, marketing difficulties stifle trade in agricultural goods.

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- Nonetheless, on the basis of imagery and other sources, we estimate that 1994 grain production in the "RSK" reached 550,000 metric tons, up from an estimated 450,000 metric tons in 1993, mainly because better weather boosted the corn crop. According to UN officials, eastern Slavonia's agriculture did well in 1994, but the farm labor shortage required office workers to assist with the harvest.

Industry and Mining

The industry and mining sectors in what is now the "RSK" were locally important before the war, but—except for eastern Slavonia—they probably were not significant to Croatia as a whole. Together, these sectors employed roughly 40 percent of the area's prewar work force, according to Croatian Government statistics. Industry was centered primarily on processing regional agricultural and forestry products. Outdated, labor-intensive factories largely produced semifinished goods for Croatia's more developed regions, according to the "RSK" Chamber of Commerce:

- *UN Sector East* had the most important prewar industrial base. Vukovar, Borovo, Beli Manastir, and other towns had industries in food and beverage processing, textiles, leather goods and footwear, construction materials, and rubber. Oil drilling at Deletovci is the main extractive endeavor.
- Lumbering, woodworking, and building material production are the most widespread industries in *UN Sector North*; others include food and beverage processing, textiles, and processing the barite mined near Vrginmost. Petrinja and Kostajnica are the most important industrial towns.
- Knin is the main industrial town in what is now *UN Sector South*; it contains metalworking, machine-building, building material, and textile industries. In other towns in the region, lumbering and wood products, construction materials, textiles, and leather goods and footwear are the most widespread industries. Bauxite was mined at Drnis and Obrovac, barite at Ricice.

Industries in the "RSK" have been largely idled by the lack of fuel, raw materials, and access to export markets, as well as the flight of many skilled workers and

managers

Operating factories reportedly produce at only 5 to 10 percent of prewar capacity overall. Even in UN Sector East, which benefits by its proximity to Serbia, industry functions at only 20 percent of capacity. Fighting damaged factories in Vukovar, one of UN Sector East's largest industrial centers, according to military and other reporting. "RSK" consumer purchasing power is greatly reduced, and shifting exports from Croatia to the Serbian market has proved to be ineffective because of Serbia's own weak economy, according to military reporting.

Transportation and Energy Infrastructure

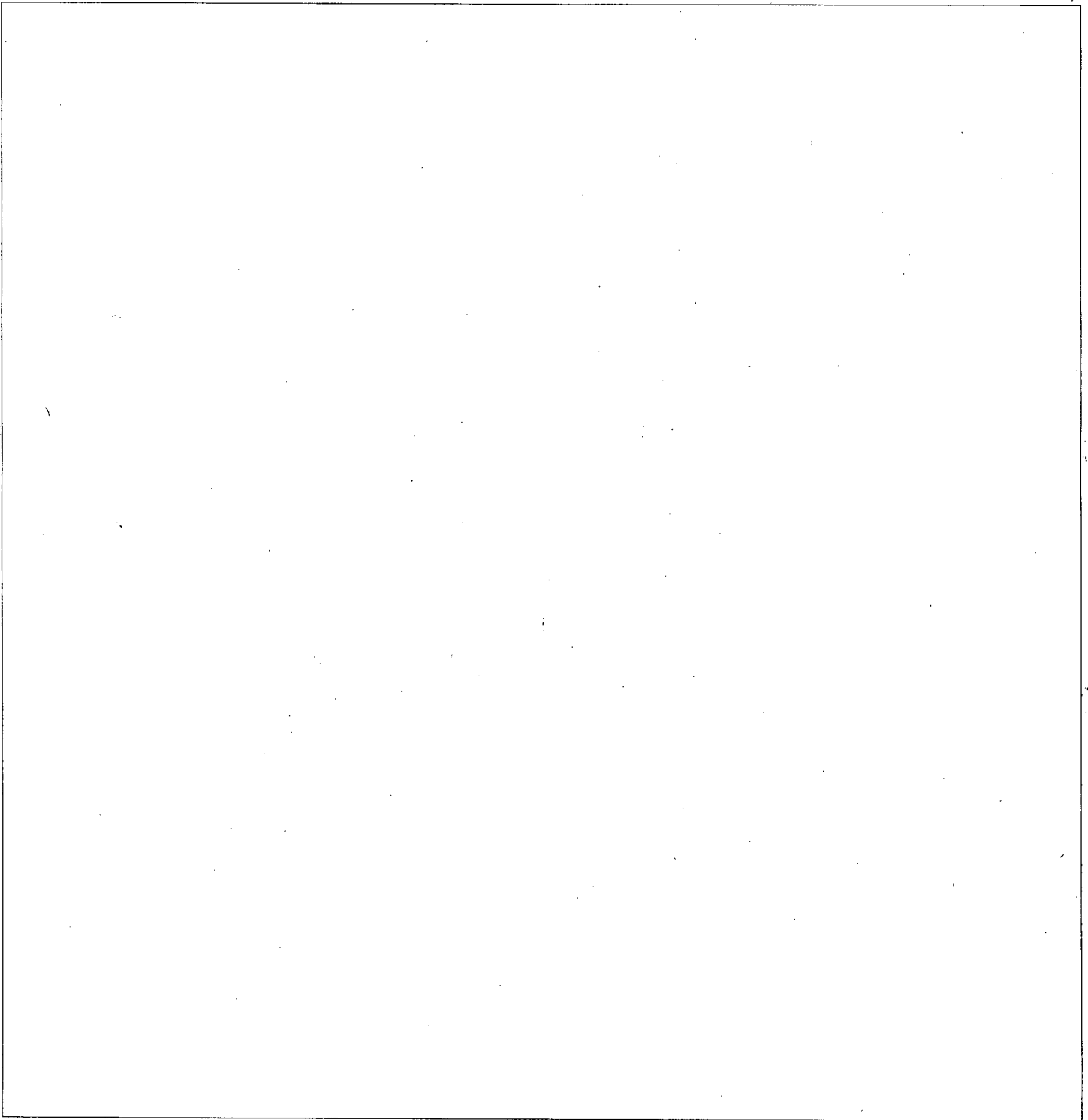
Several significant parts of Croatia's prewar transportation and energy networks pass through the "RSK." The main Zagreb-to-Belgrade highway and rail line, as well as the Adria oil pipeline and major power transmission lines, cross UN Sector East; the war has disrupted these links. Knin had been a major railroad hub through which heavy freight and passenger train traffic passed daily before the war, including that connecting central Croatia to Dalmatia. "RSK" artillery also threatens the Adriatic coastal highway around Maslenica. The "RSK" has no oil refinery and only one significant electrical generating facility—the 310-megawatt Obrovac hydroelectric plant on the Zrmanja river northwest of Knin.

Infrastructure in the "RSK" also has been badly damaged. A senior "RSK" official stated in 1994 that numerous electricity transmission lines are down; power substations have been demolished; more than 60 bridges have been wrecked or damaged; and many water supply, sewage treatment, and telecommunications facilities are also destroyed. The Knin railyards, cut off from the wider Croatian rail network, handle only four trains each day, according to press, and these go only to Benkovac, Gracac, and Ripac, according to military reporting.

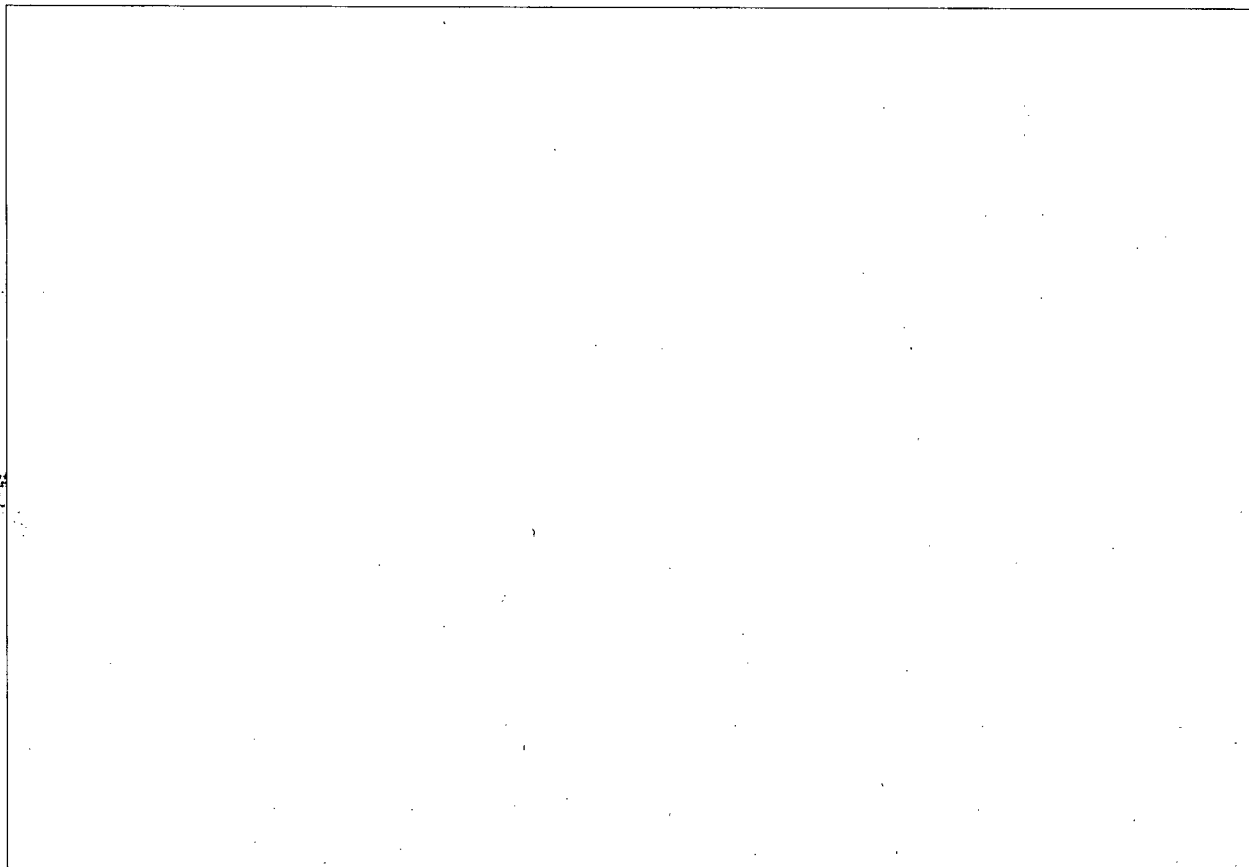
³ Three bridges across the Danube River reportedly carry goods between UN Sector East and Serbia in violation of UN sanctions; trade from other UN sectors must transit the Serb-held Posavina Corridor in Bosnia.

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The "RSK" official cited the scarcity of energy as the most important factor behind the region's plunging productivity. Shortages of oil and diesel fuel are commonplace in the Krajina. Oil from the Deletovci, Privlaka, and Ilaca fields in eastern Slavonia—which produce an estimated 3,000 barrels a day—reportedly is exported to Serbia for processing at the Pancevo refinery in violation of UNSCR 820 and sanctions against Serbia [redacted]

[redacted] Only about 25 percent is reexported to the Serb-held areas in Croatia; fuel trucks transit Bosnian Serb-held territory to reach the Krajina proper. Meanwhile, the "RSK" can meet only half its electric power needs, according to Belgrade press. The western Serb-controlled areas rely on electricity generated at Obrovac and two smaller hydroelectric plants, according to the "RSK" Energy Minister; UN Sector East is supplied by the Serbian electrical system. [redacted]

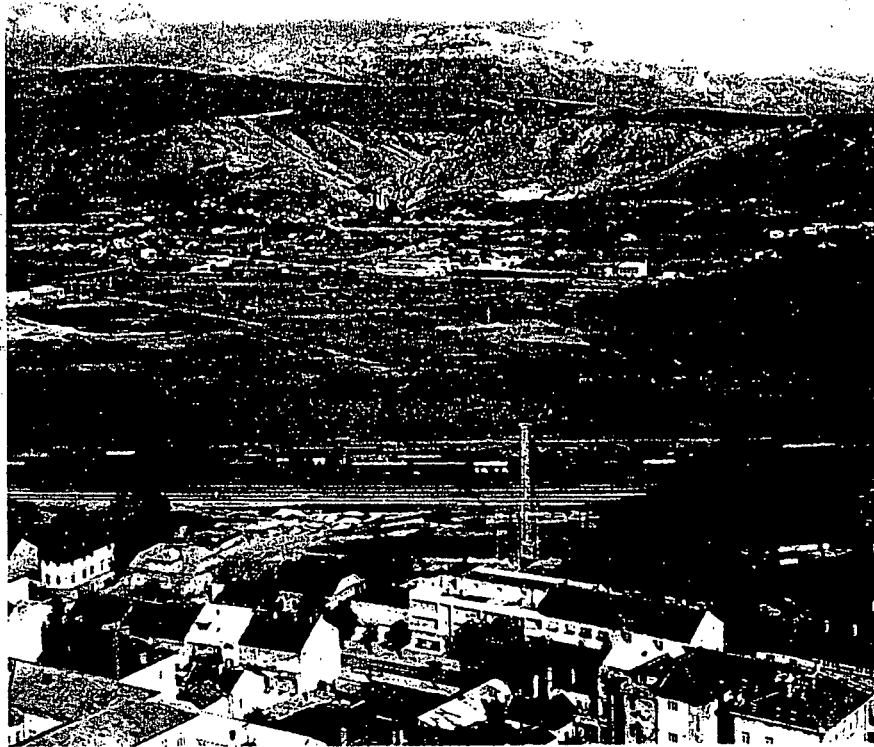
The Economic Confidence Building Measures Agreement partially restored some of the disrupted infrastructure links. The Zagreb-to-Belgrade highway reopened for traffic through UN Sectors West and East in December 1994; the Adria oil pipeline resumed operations through UN Sector North in January. Krajina Serbs took advantage of the reopened roads to purchase fuel in nearby Croatian Government-held towns, according to press accounts. Also as part of the agreement, Zagreb returned equipment required by the Obrovac power plant. Knin apparently resumed work on further steps—including reopening the Zagreb-to-Split and Zagreb-to-Belgrade railroads as well as several water and electricity projects—after Zagreb announced in mid-March that it would accept a new mandate for UN forces. The Croatian attack on UN Sector West in early May almost certainly has jeopardized future cooperation, however. [redacted]

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Military Geography of the Serb-Held Areas

Looking east from Knin, the Dinaric Alps rise in the background. Such mountainous terrain would favor Krajina Serb defenders during a Croatian attack.



Regional geography would play a significant role in combat operations if Zagreb were to launch a military offensive to retake the remaining Serb-held areas. Key objectives of an attack would include the following,

- In UN Sector South, Croatian forces plan a multi-pronged assault toward Knin from the west and south in Croatia and from the Livanjsko Polje (Livno Valley) in Bosnia to the east.
- In UN Sector North, Croatian forces probably would attempt to push Krajina Serb forces out of artillery range of Karlovac and Sisak, and they might try to bisect the Krajina by driving to the Bosnian border.
- An attack against UN Sector East is less likely, given the strength of Krajina Serb defenses there and the proximity of the Serbian Army.

Terrain favors the defenders in the Krajina much more than it did in western Slavonia. In Zagreb's early May assault on UN Sector West, Croatian troops attacked Krajina Serb forces in a two-front pincer movement in a flat river valley and quickly cut off potential Bosnian Serb reinforcement routes across two Sava river bridges. In contrast, heavily armed Krajina Serb troops are entrenched in mountainous terrain in high-ground positions in UN Sectors South and North, Bosnian Serb leaders have said their army would immediately come to Knin's aid if Croatia attacked, but, among other limitations, mountainous terrain along the Krajina-Bosnia frontier would channel reinforcements through the few good roads.

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Regardless of whether or how the current Croatian-Krajina Serb standoff is resolved, the region faces at best a slow recovery:

- A continuation of the status quo would mean further de facto integration of the Serb-controlled areas of Croatia with Serb-held territory in Bosnia and Serbia proper—economically stressed regions that are poor substitutes for the areas' traditional economic partner.
- Any final resolution of the status of the territory almost certainly would produce large-scale population movements. If some of the territory were returned to Croatian control, some of the 250,000 displaced Croats would probably return. In turn, thousands of native, displaced, and refugee Serbs probably would flee those areas, as many did when

Croatian forces seized UN Sector West. A settlement that solidified Serb control of any areas probably would induce some Krajina Serb refugees to return from Serbia and Bosnia. Serb authorities probably would expel remaining non-Serbs from the areas.

- Because of the regions' proximity to Croatia, Bosnia, and Serbia, any party dissatisfied with a settlement would have convenient sanctuaries from which to promote instability.

Under any lasting peace, significant improvement in economic conditions will be slow. Agriculture and forestry could probably rebound fairly quickly, but damage to transport and energy infrastructure will inhibit industrial recovery. Moreover, the area almost certainly will be reliant on outside sources for reconstruction funds.

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Appendix A

Terrain and Climate

The Krajina

The Krajina's terrain is generally mountainous to hilly. In the west—the Lika region—and the south, the Mala Kapela and Pljesevica ranges of the Dinaric Alps trend northwest to southeast. Peaks average more than 1,500 meters above sea level, with local relief often exceeding 1,000 meters. The highest terrain is in the south, where the Krajina's loftiest peak—Dinara—straddles the Bosnian border at 1,831 meters. West of Knin the landscape slopes more gently toward the Dalmatian coast, interrupted periodically by low ridges. The terrain of northern and eastern Krajina—the Kordun and Banija regions—is marked by rolling hills and dissected plateaus typically 150 to 500 meters high, with occasional east-west running ridges as high as 1,000 meters.

Throughout the Krajina, a few short rivers cut into the predominantly limestone formations, forming steep gorges. The northern watershed of the Kordun and Banija regions feeds the Kupa and Sava rivers. The Lika region has an internal drainage basin in which streams disappear into the limestone bedrock through subterranean channels. In the far south, only a handful of rivers flows from the mountains; the most notable is the Krka, which passes through Knin before dropping over a series of waterfalls on its way to the Adriatic Sea.

According to academic sources, the Krajina has three climatic zones:

- The temperate continental climate in the north and northeast has four well-defined seasons, moderate temperatures, and annual precipitation of 800 to 1,500 millimeters (32 to 60 inches).
- The mountainous climate of the Dinaric Alps is typified by short summers, long winters, cool temperatures, and considerable precipitation—1,500 to 3,000 millimeters (60 to 120 inches) annually—much of it in the form of snow.
- The Mediterranean climate, characteristic of the area west of Knin, has mild and wet winters with temperatures generally above freezing and dry summers with temperatures often exceeding 24 degrees Celsius (75 degrees Fahrenheit).

Vegetation varies considerably throughout the Krajina. The north is primarily covered by grassland interlaced with trees and shrubs in the valleys. Much of the mountainous landscape is barren of trees and is used primarily for grazing; higher elevations support stands of conifers, and deciduous trees line the valley floors. The south is intermittently covered by deciduous trees and scrub.

Eastern Slavonia

The Serb-controlled area of eastern Slavonia is part of the relatively flat Pannonian Basin and averages less than 100 meters in elevation. The exceptions are in the Baranja region north of Osijek, where low hills rise to 250 meters, and to the southeast of Vukovar, where a 300-meter-high ridge parallels the Danube river. Eastern Slavonia is bisected by the Drava and Vuka rivers. The region has a temperate continental climate and annually receives less than 800 millimeters (32 inches) of precipitation. Natural vegetation includes grasslands, stands of deciduous trees, and dense trees and scrub along river banks; grain farming dominates much of the area.

Appendix B

Historical Perspective

The Krajina's complex history laid the foundation for today's seemingly intractable territorial dispute between ethnic Croats and Serbs. Both had periods of regional dominance—often gained through the assistance of foreign powers—to support their territorial claims.

Croats are generally recognized as the first Slavic settlers of the Krajina and eastern and western Slavonia, arriving in the 7th and 8th centuries while the Serbs were settling to the east and south. A short-lived Croatian kingdom in the 10th and 11th centuries included these areas, which, along with the rest of Croatia, were under a dual Hungarian-Croatian monarchy for the next several centuries, becoming part of the Hapsburg Empire in 1526.

Hapsburg King Ferdinand established the "Vojna Krajina" or "Military Frontier" region in 1538 to defend his empire's southern frontier against the Ottoman Turks, whose border raids had depopulated the region. Ferdinand offered land and other incentives to anyone willing to settle and defend the Krajina, and Serbs—fleeing Turkish oppression in Serbia—flocked to the region. These immigrants became the dominant population along many sections of what is now the Croatian border with Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. By 1699, Austria considered the soldier-peasants of the Krajina as a standing military force and refused the Croatian nobility's requests to return the zone to its control. From the 16th century to the 19th century, the Krajina Serbs played a major role in maintaining Serb identity while Serbia itself was occupied by the Turks.

Hungary regained control of Croatia in 1867 and in 1881 reintegrated the predominantly Serb Krajina within a semiautonomous Croatia. Serbs now made up 25 percent of Croatia's population, according to academic sources; this provided the impetus for the development of a Croatian nationalist political party that opposed the Serb presence. Krajina Serbs

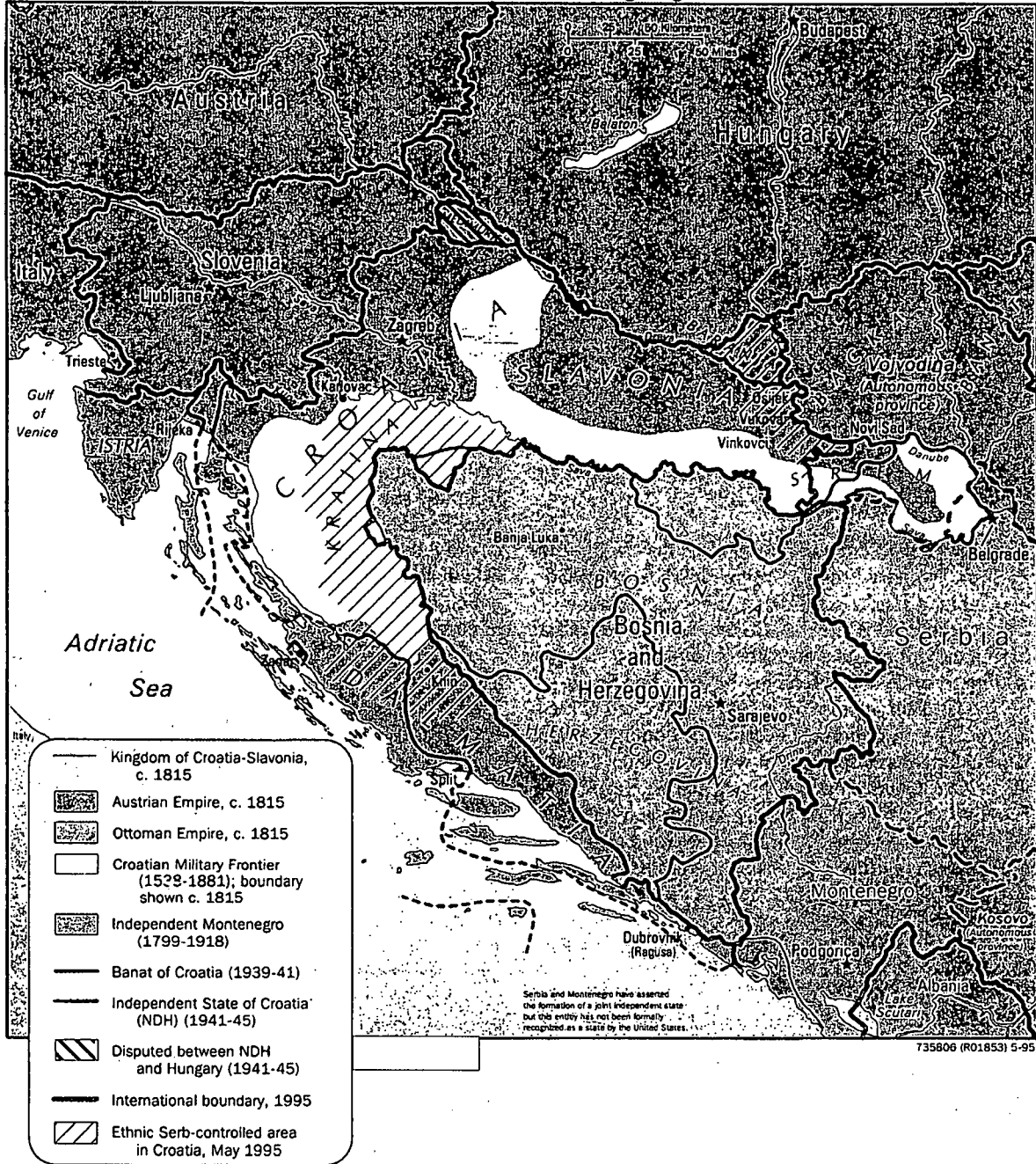
responded with their own parties, most of which supported south Slav unity, although some promoted a nationalist "Greater Serbia" movement.

Hungary actively supported animosity between Croats and Krajina Serbs, hoping to weaken the then-growing movement to unify all South Slavs. Meanwhile, Serbia—independent as of 1878—was training nationalistic revolutionaries, "Chetniks," to spread the idea of a greater Serbia among Serbs who were still under Austrian-Hungarian and Turkish control. Krajina Serbs provided pivotal support for the creation of Yugoslavia, the Kingdom of South Slavs, in 1918. Although both Serbs and Croats initially supported the union, progressively harsher pro-Serbian measures by Belgrade stirred animosity among the Croatian populace. By 1939, Serb-Croat conflict had all but destroyed the union, and both sides agreed to the establishment of a separate Croatian autonomous unit, which included the Krajina, western Slavonia, and all of eastern Slavonia except Baranja.

The Axis invasion of 1941 eliminated the vestiges of Yugoslavia and established the Independent State of Croatia (NDH), which included the Krajina, western Slavonia, and most of eastern Slavonia, as well as Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Croat ultranationalist "Ustasha" puppet government immediately began "purifying" the NDH of aliens, particularly Serbs, through extermination, deportation, or forced conversion to Catholicism. Some 400,000 Serbs were killed and 300,000 deported.

At the war's end, Tito's Partisans massacred thousands of Croat Ustasha supporters in retaliation, moved thousands of Serbs back into the Krajina, and gave them seized or abandoned property. Ethnic discontent simmered, and Tito's death in 1980 precipitated open rebellion and calls for regional autonomy.

Figure 6
Selected Historical Boundaries of Croatia and Surrounding Regions



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In April 1990 the nationalistic Croatian Democratic Union, with Franjo Tudjman at its head, won multi-party elections in Croatia. Beginning in December 1990, Serb nationalists declared autonomous regions in Krajina, western Slavonia, and eastern Slavonia. In June 1991, when Croatia declared its independence, Serb irregulars supported by the Yugoslav Army fought Croatian Government forces in several battles—in which 10,000 were killed and 30,000 wounded—to wrest the Krajina and portions of western and eastern Slavonia from Croatian control. The Serbs declared the “Republic of Serbian Krajina”

(“RSK”) in December 1991, uniting the three Serb autonomous regions. In January 1992, Croatian and Serbian leaders agreed to the Vance Plan and the deployment of UN peacekeeping forces, which was authorized by UN Security Council Resolution 743. In June 1993, Krajina Serbs voted overwhelmingly in favor of unification with Serbia and other Serb-inhabited territory. Meanwhile, the international community continues to recognize Croatia’s international borders to include the Krajina and eastern Slavonia

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