

Intelligence Report

DCI Interagency Balkan Task Force

19 December 1995

Sector East: The Clock is Ticking [Redacted]

Croatian leaders apparently have not yet decided that they will use force to reintegrate Sector East on a date certain, but they remain fully prepared to do so. Lagging implementation of the 12 November Erdut agreement or an international force incapable of carrying out its mission would be reasons to use force. Failure to cobble together a credible, quickly deployable international force by 15 January—the expiration date for the UNCRO mandate—could prompt a Croatian attack. If no additional troop contributions are found, the Belgians—which comprise half of the approximately 1,500 troops now on the ground—almost certainly will follow through on their threat to withdraw. The Croatian Army is poised to move on 72-hours notice. Under the most likely scenario, the Croatians probably would recapture Sector East within three days, which could disrupt IFOR land supply lines for 3-4 days. [Redacted]

Croatian Patience Wearing Thin

[Redacted] Croatian leaders are increasingly irritated by the delays in establishing a transitional authority to implement the Erdut agreement on reintegrating Sector East. President Tudjman publicly rejected UN Secretary General Boutros-Ghali's report on the Sector East mission on 15 December, warning that a resolution for Sector East cannot be delayed. Tudjman's relatively mild statement acknowledged US assurances of quick implementation, indicating that the international community has some weeks to cobble together a force and issue the UN mandate. [Redacted]

While Tudjman also suggested on 15 December that the failure to sign a recognition agreement with Serbia in Paris would not prompt a Croatian attack on Sector East, not reaching an agreement with Belgrade in the near term would encourage pursuit of the military option.

- Foreign Minister Granic threatened to walk out of an OSCE meeting on 18 December because of Serbia's refusal to recognize Croatia, and he linked recognition to a peaceful resolution for Sector East, according to the press.

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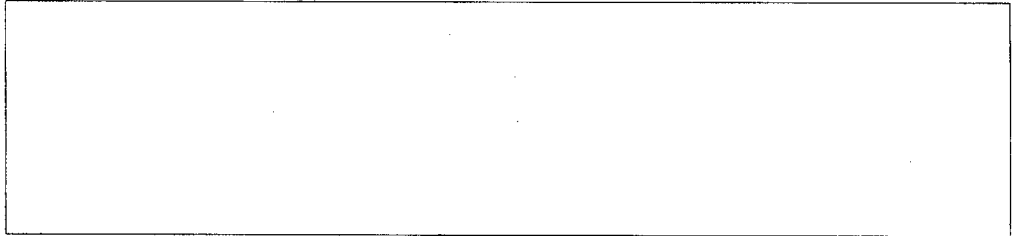


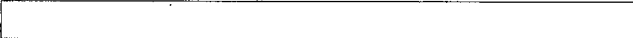

- A variety of reporting suggests that Tudjman feels under considerable domestic pressure because of concessions he made on Sector East and Bosnia at Dayton and he will want to show strong resolve in reintegrating the sector, particularly given presidential elections set for fall 1996.

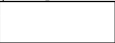


Making Military Contingency Plans


Croatian planning is based on the assumption that a credible international force capable of implementing the agreement will not be deployed.



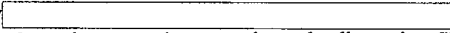

- Croatian military planning to forcefully reintegrate Sector East continued in December.  Because the Croatian Army (HV) reportedly is convinced that a force without the US will not be able to implement the Erdut agreement, the HV was ordered to prepare its forces for offensive operations with an operational date of 15 February. 

The Croatian military could quickly shift to a war footing. Tudjman probably will authorize military action if a credible process of establishing and deploying a force is not under way by 15 January, the expiration date of the mandate for the UN Confidence Restoration Force (UNCRO) now in the sector. The first 30 days following deployment--the deadline for demilitarization--will be crucial to keeping Croatia in line. Substantial stalling on other aspects of reintegration by the local Serbs or by Belgrade also could spark Croatian military action. 



Croatian Army could still remobilize and attack on 72 hours notice. Zagreb's plans are to remobilize local troops and send at least an additional three elite brigades into the area 

UN Views on the Force

This memorandum was prepared by  Office of European Analysis. Comments and queries are welcome and may be directed to Chief, DCI Interagency Balkan Task Force 



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Boutros-Ghali's report to the Security Council last week, echoing earlier recommendations from other UN officials, recommended an international force for Eastern Slavonia of about 9,300 troops--a mechanized division backed by air support and a mobile armored reserve--with a Chapter VII mandate, according to various sources. If the force is given a more limited Chapter VI mandate for peace monitoring and enforcement, however, the UN believes only about 4,000 troops would be needed.

- The troop proposal is based on the belief that demilitarization of the region will require a substantial military presence with a combat capability that will bolster confidence on both sides and deter military intervention.

Boutros-Ghali and other senior UN officials remain concerned about the UN taking on an operation they see as destined to fail [redacted] They have told US diplomats that the Sector East mission is the weak link in Balkans peacekeeping efforts, the mission with the greatest risk of failure, and the one with the least potential to recruit a competent force.

Additional Troops Not Forthcoming

The Croats want the Belgian and Russian troops in Sector East to remain but eventually be replaced by US or NATO troops, according to US diplomats. The Belgians have warned publicly that they will withdraw without a new mandate that satisfies several conditions. According to various sources, these include rules of engagement that allow "vigorous" self-defense; mandate language that excludes forcible demilitarization or disarmament as a mission; clear signals that the Serbs and Croats will implement the agreement; credible new troop contingents to bring the total troop strength to 4,000 to 5,000; and physical extraction of troops if needed.

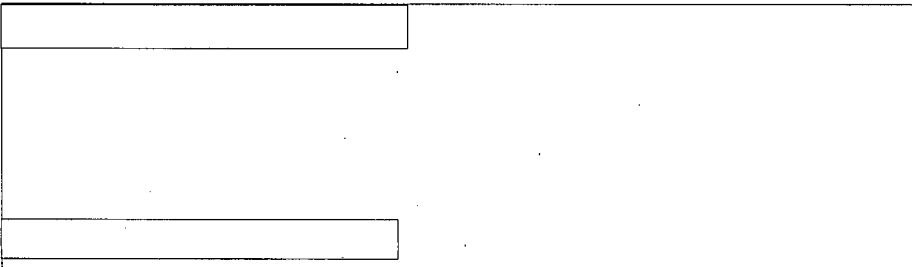
- Russia has indicated a willingness to remain in the sector, according to press and diplomatic reports. [redacted]

The UN is having trouble finding additional troop contributors and some UN officials as well as the Belgians are concerned that without a US presence the force for Eastern Slavonia would be inadequate, causing a collapse in the peace process.

- So far, only Slovakia has indicated a willingness to have its troops--an engineering unit--serve in Eastern Slavonia rather than Bosnia.




- A possible Irish troop contribution may be constrained by legal concerns and resource limits. Irish officials have told US diplomats that they can contribute troops to a force "established" by the Security Council but not to a multinational force "authorized" by the Security Council, that their peacekeeping resources are already stretched very thin, and that they might not be able to deploy a suitable unit in a timely manner.

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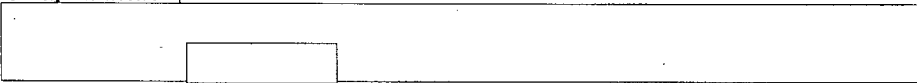
Money Also a Problem

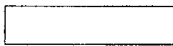
The UN Undersecretary General for Administration and Management recently advised US diplomats that it cannot proceed to deploy a peacekeeping mission to Eastern Slavonia until a separate peacekeeping assessment is levied on the UN membership, and cash rolls in two or three months later. Startup costs for peacekeeping operations in the past have been borrowed from other UN accounts, but the magnitude of the UN's current budget crisis makes this unlikely for Eastern Slavonia.

- According to the Undersecretary, preliminary costs for an operation in Eastern Slavonia are an estimated \$500 million. 

International Leverage Limited, But Positive Reinforcement Possible

Croatian leaders do not believe Zagreb will incur substantial or enduring international sanctions for military action in eastern Slavonia if it finishes the operation quickly. Tudjman held this belief before taking action against the Krajina in August and the lack of sanctions following the offensive probably has reinforced his views. Only a credible threat of international sanctions--such as ineligibility for international assistance associated with Bosnian reconstruction and the withdrawal of IFOR support activities that support Croatia's economy--would deter Croatia from attacking once that decision has been made.

- The Europeans had more tangible leverage over Croatia prior to the Krajina attack 




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Positive inducements that Tudjman can show to the public, however, may help encourage him to stay the path of peace.

- Obtaining agreement from Serbian President Milosevic to finalize the Serbian-Croatian recognition agreement could demonstrate the international community's resolve to keep the Serbs on board and give Tudjman a needed domestic boost.
- Pledges to assist reconstruction efforts in the sector--essential for the return of displaced persons--may be helpful. Perhaps EU PHARE assistance could resumed and redirected to reconstruction.
- Early confidence-building measures by the Serbs also would make it more difficult for Croatia to take military action. The withdrawal of some Serb (VJ) forces from the border, the withdrawal of Arkan's paramilitary forces from the sector, and continuing local Serb voluntary demobilization would be helpful.

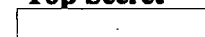
The Worst Case: Regional Implications of a Croatian Attack

The direct impact of a Croatian attack on Sector East on IFOR operations would be relatively limited. There is little chance of a spillover of the violence to Bosnia under the most likely scenario--a relatively quick Croatian campaign and no substantial Serbian military involvement. The impact of a flood of more than 100,000 refugees into Serbia could, however, strain the Serbian economy and on Milosevic's ability to maintain credibility with both the Bosnian Serbs and the Serbian public.

- Milosevic took substantial criticism, particularly from the Bosnian Serbs, when he did not intervene to save the Krajina against Croatian attack in August. These cries are likely to be repeated, and Milosevic may have more difficulty influencing Bosnian Serb decisionmaking in the near term following an attack.

The Croatian Army probably will warn UN or international forces in Sector East--and probably IFOR Bosnia--at least one hour before they attack as Zagreb did prior to launching operations in Sectors West, North, and South. In fact, Zagreb is likely to warn IFOR to stop sending supplies through Sector East well before an attack to avoid risking IFOR casualties.

The Croatian Army probably will retake Sector East within 48-72 hours, unless the "Yugoslav" Army becomes directly involved, which we believe is unlikely. The rapid Croatian victory should only disrupt IFOR land supply lines for 3-4 days. If some





Serb refugees flee to Bosnia, it could clog roads and increase needs to deliver humanitarian supplies. 