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*Directorate
of Intelligence*

Intelligence Memorandum
Office of European Analysis
2 April 1993

Rape as an Instrument of Ethnic Cleansing¹ [redacted]

Summary

We have identified 34 facilities in Bosnia where women have, at one time or another, probably been held and raped. [redacted] also reveal similar patterns of assault, an organized movement of women between specially-operated camps, and prolonged periods of abuse that is carried out deliberately days or even weeks after fighting has subsided. The patterns emerging from the stories of alleged rape victims point in the direction of at least tacit official approval of the attacks. The available evidence suggests that officials in Belgrade are at least aware that rapes are occurring, and Serbian leaders, to date, have failed to forcefully condemn the practice. The brutal nature of the rapes and other atrocities have abetted ethnic cleansing by convincing large numbers of Muslims to flee and eventually emigrate elsewhere rather than wait for a peace settlement that would allow them to return to their homes. [redacted]

¹ This paper provides a preliminary assessment based on [redacted]
[redacted] Evidence suggesting that mass rape is part of an
official Serb policy of ethnic cleansing is extremely limited and circumstantial. [redacted]

This memorandum was prepared by [redacted] Office of
European Analysis. Comments and queries are welcome and may be
directed to [redacted]

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Number of Rapes Uncertain

At this time there is no way to confidently estimate the number of rape victims. The EC estimate of 20,000 rapes has been characterized as subjective and superficial by UNHCR representatives, who believe the number is probably lower. Likewise, Bosnian government estimates of as many as 60,000 rapes have probably been exaggerated for propaganda purposes. UNHCR has been denied access to centers in Bosnia where it is believed that the majority of rape victims who remain alive are being detained. [redacted]

Rape Sites Tend to be Small

We have identified 34 facilities in Bosnia where women allegedly have, at one time or another, been held and raped (see map). All but two of these sites--one operated by Croats at Odzak and the other by Muslims at Tuzla, according to press reports--have been operated by Serb forces. Rapes have been reported at most of the large Serb-run camps in which both men and women have been held. The majority of reports alleging systematic sexual abuse, however, have been linked to smaller sites, usually near larger Serb-run camps, which typically hold less than 100 women. For example, there are at least three areas around the detention facility in Brcko that have been identified as prisons or "rape centers" for women. Women also were held and repeatedly raped at the "Luka" camp at Brcko, [redacted]. These smaller sites are less obvious to outside observers and can be moved quickly in the event inspections are requested by the UN or ICRC.

We have also obtained fragmentary information that in early December, a women's camp was being operated in Kalinovik to provide sexual services to Serbian fighters.

At Washington's urging ICRC is attempting to gain access to a school complex in Doboij, which [redacted] allege was a rape center as recently as February. [redacted]

Patterns of Assault Point to Systematic Abuse by Serbs

In Bosnia, the evidence suggests that rapes of Muslim women are carried out deliberately days or even weeks after fighting has subsided. The rapes usually are committed by groups of men and take place over a period of weeks and sometimes months.

Most reports indicate that Muslim women of prime child-bearing age--mid-teens to mid-30s--are being singled out, although older and younger women are also victims.

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A number of reports support allegations in the press that women have been confined for prolonged periods following repeated rapes in order to ensure that abortions cannot be carried out.

[redacted] recounted that the group of women with which she was being held were subjected to periodic examinations to ensure that they were not using contraceptive devices. She reported being told by guards at the facility that the women were being kept to "make chetnik babies." [redacted]

[redacted] reported regular and organized movement of women between camps. [redacted]

[redacted] that teenage girls were brought to the camp in groups of 8 to 10, on Wednesdays and Saturdays between 2pm and 6pm. [redacted] stated that at least some of the girls were being brought from the "Galeb" hotel, a site which other ex-detainees have characterized as one of several "rape centers" in and around Brcko. [redacted]

The attacks have been carried out in a manner calculated to maximize humiliation for the victim, the victim's family, and the community.

The women typically are abused in groups, frequently in front of family, friends, and neighbors.

As a result, [redacted] report an increase of "secondary victims," usually family members forced to witness rapes. [redacted]

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Views of Rape in Bosnian Muslim Society

Even in Bosnia's secularized Muslim society, rape victims traditionally tend to be ostracized by the community. If a woman has been raped, families frequently conceal the fact in order to spare a woman from marrying beneath her station, or to keep the knowledge from her husband. In fact, Croatian doctors have reported that many women have denied being raped in spite of contradictory medical evidence. Prevailing social attitudes, however, may in these circumstances be suppressed due to the war and the widespread abuse that much of the refugee population has experienced. Additionally, widespread instances of rape are probably viewed more seriously as an attack on the community--in part because Islam holds the virtue of women in such high regard--rather than as an issue which will serve to alienate women within their immediate social setting. In fact, few of the rape victims [redacted] so far have indicated that they have been rejected by their families; most family members appear grateful that their relatives are alive. [redacted]

Women Not the Only Victims of Sexual Abuse

Male prisoners have been targets of sexual abuse as well. For example, [redacted] at the Luka camp in Brcko, reports that younger Muslim and Croat men (aged 20 to 30) were regularly paired-off and forced to sodomize each other. [redacted] have noted that male ex-detainees of the camps who suffered sexual abuse often show signs of psychological trauma. They have cautioned countries accepting ex-detainees for resettlement and their sponsors that many victims will require intensive counseling and medical support. [redacted]

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Official Complicity Likely, but No "Smoking Gun"

The patterns emerging from the stories of alleged rape victims point in the direction of at least tacit official approval of the attacks. Local Bosnian Serb military officials probably control most of the rape centers located near the larger detention facilities, although these officials are not necessarily the commanders of the larger camps. For example, last spring, [redacted] stated that the commander of the infamous Luka camp at Brcko was in charge only of the Luka camp, not the surrounding area. An ethnic-Serb on trial for war crimes in Sarajevo stated that his unit regularly visited a motel in Vogosca to rape Muslim women held there and was told to kill them afterwards because, among other reasons, there was not enough food to sustain the additional women arriving from "ethnically cleansed" villages in the area. In most instances, however, the evidence of official complicity is inferred rather than direct.

Several Muslim women, for example, reported that after several weeks of repeated rapes, guards had informed them that they had been "recategorized" and would no longer be bothered.

A few Serb soldiers captured by Muslim and Croat forces have confessed to committing rape, murder, and other atrocities under orders or threats from their commanders. In each of these instances, however, the soldiers were awaiting trial for war crimes and clearly had an incentive to claim to have been carrying out instructions from superiors. Nevertheless, [redacted] reported witnessing the murder of a Serb soldier for refusing to participate in the torture and killing of a prominent Muslim lawyer and the rape of his wife.

None of the soldiers, to date, have implicated officials of higher rank than their immediate commanders. [redacted]

Evidence of direct orders from Bosnian Serb government officials to carry out the rapes is tenuous. One victim reported that prior to being raped, she overheard guards saying they received their orders from Trebinje, headquarters for local military forces, and Pale, headquarters of Bosnian Serb leader Karadzic. Another woman who was smuggled to safety by an ethnic Serb reportedly was told that the commander of Serb forces in Foca had issued orders to "do the worst" to the women. [redacted]

The available evidence suggests that officials in Belgrade are at least aware that rapes are occurring, and Serbian leaders, to date, have failed to forcefully condemn the practice. [redacted] reported that she was contacted by reporters from a state-owned Serbian newspaper who knew the details of her rape and her repeated requests to the Serbian Red Cross to leave Brcko. They then requested she provide them with an interview favorable to Bosnian Serb forces in return for her release and safe passage to Croatia. [redacted]

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Ethnic Cleansing the Objective

Information available to us also suggests that where rape appears to have been applied as an instrument of policy, it has been employed as one of a series of steps aimed at convincing people to leave. The Bosnian Serbs appear to have concluded that rape and enforced pregnancy, given traditional Bosnian Muslim social norms threaten the victims' ties both to family and community, are effective tools for "ethnic cleansing." [redacted] at least some victims of the war, those who have been forced out of their homes, beaten, and tortured continue to express interest in returning to Bosnia once hostilities cease. Anecdotal evidence suggests, however, that rape victims and their families appear more determined to emigrate permanently, usually to Western countries where many have relatives. Indeed, over time, we believe that stories of systematic rape and torture will convince many refugees to make their way to third countries rather than wait for a chance to return home. [redacted]

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Serb leaders Comment on Rape in Bosnia

Bosnian Serb leaders have consistently denied that rape is being used as an instrument of ethnic cleansing. Serb leaders in Bosnia and Belgrade have suggested that all sides are responsible for abuses, but that they are a regrettable consequence of war.

Karadzic: "Not a single woman has been in a Serbian prison."

"... there is no evidence to prove women were raped. Rape occurs not only in wars, but also when things are normal. Our generals are extremely sensitive about moral behavior. All our generals are from the old communist school."

"Ethnic cleansing has never been part of our policy. The fact that people have fled the war in terror is a different matter. As far as the rapes are concerned--that our well disciplined troops should have carried out systematic rapes--no, that is completely preposterous. There have been individual outrages perpetrated on women. But that happens throughout the world."

Milosevic: "Individuals on both sides have done similar things. According to our evidence, very few Serbs are responsible for that...cases of rape have been seen on both sides."

Cosic: "Certainly there have been more than 600 [rapes], which is bad enough. However, at least 600 Serbian and Croatian women have also been raped. It is obvious that all of us who are dealing with this problem understand that these peoples cannot live together on this territory."

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One Rape Victim's Experiences in Foca

One ex-detainee has recounted how the Muslim population of Mijesaja were rounded up on 3 July. At the time of her arrest, none of the villagers were mistreated, but the men were separated from the women and children and reportedly taken to the pre-war men's prison in Foca. Meanwhile, the women and children were taken to a worker's barracks near a construction site on the Drina river. The women were kept for one day and interrogated for possession of weapons. They were then taken to the local high school where their treatment rapidly deteriorated.

Every night two or three women were taken to a separate room of the school and raped, usually by local Serbs, but also by some soldiers with Montenegrin accents. [redacted]

After 10 days the women were moved to a detention facility at the Partizan Sports Hall.

Serb soldiers, including *White Eagles*--belonging to the paramilitary formation of Mirko Jovic's Serbian National Renewal Party--came to rape women "day and night." The local chief of police reportedly was a frequent participant.

Three teenage girls who told reporters from Radio Foca that they had been raped were beaten and disappeared the next day.

The night before closure of the Partizan Women's Camp around mid-August, the source was taken to an outdoor sports stadium in Foca and raped by at least 28 soldiers until she lost consciousness. The rapes continued while she was unconscious. In addition to being raped, she was burned repeatedly with cigarettes and cigarette lighters. [redacted]

At one point during her captivity, the source claims to have been taken to the front by Serb soldiers to negotiate with Muslim forces. She reportedly was driven to the outskirts of Gorazde where she was provided a white flag and made to carry a message suggesting a prisoner exchange. The source noted that she could have stayed with the Muslims, but returned to the Serb side because her children were still being held at the Partizan complex. [redacted]

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