



Special Intelligence Report

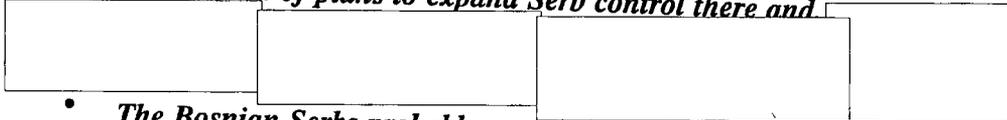
DCI Interagency Balkan Task Force
28 April 1994

Approved for Release CIA Historical
Collections Division AR 70-14 1OCT2013



Bosnia: Preparations for a Serb Offensive

A variety of evidence indicates the Bosnian Serbs have shifted forces to the Brcko area of northern Bosnia and plan to launch an offensive there to expand their critical supply corridor in northern Bosnia. Bosnian Serb leaders have boasted of plans to expand Serb control there and

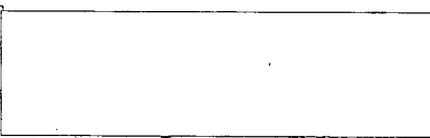


- *The Bosnian Serbs probably can muster sufficient forces to widen the corridor by a few kilometers, but well-entrenched Government defenders--probably aided by Bosnian Croat forces--probably would make it difficult for the Serbs to achieve major gains.*
- *A Bosnian Serb attack near Brcko probably would lead to an increase in fighting throughout the northern corridor area.*

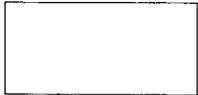
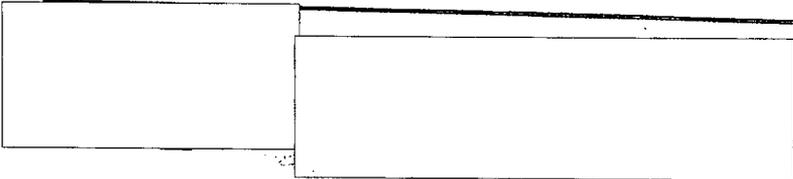
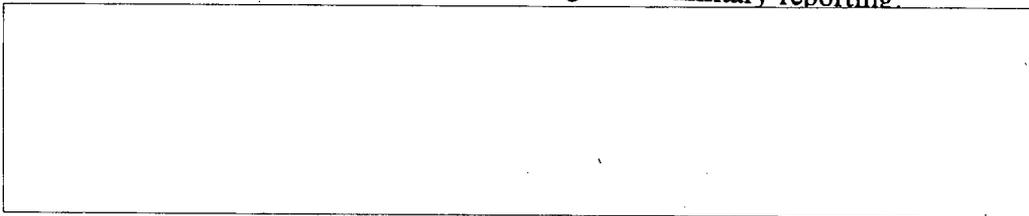
Maintaining a secure corridor of contiguous territory from Serbia to the Bosnian and Croatian Krajinas has been an overriding Serb military and political goal throughout the Bosnian conflict. The so-called "northern corridor" comprises a network of roads roughly paralleling the Sava River through Serb-held northern Bosnia. It constitutes the only secure ground link for military and economic traffic from the Serbian border and Serb-held eastern Bosnia to Banja Luka, western Bosnia, and the Krajina. At its narrowest point--near Brcko--the corridor is only some 5 kilometers wide.

Evidence of Preparations for a Serb Offensive

The Bosnian Serb Army (BSA) is concentrating forces near Brcko, where fighting recently has intensified.

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The BSA also recently brought up tank reinforcements from their "Panther" unit from Bijeljina, according to US military reporting.



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[REDACTED]

There have also been some non-military indicators of Serb intent to conduct offensive operations in the Brcko corridor area:

- Bosnian Serb military leaders recently have warned of renewed Muslim and Croat efforts to close the corridor and have boasted of plans to expand Serb control there.
- [REDACTED] senior "Yugoslav" officials expected that the Bosnian Serbs would try to widen the corridor by ten to fifteen kilometers. [REDACTED]

Bosnian Serb Calculations

The Bosnian Serbs have largely regained the battlefield and political initiative with their success at Gorazde and self-perceived defiance of the UN and NATO. In our view, however, they are unlikely to immediately challenge the UN and NATO by directly attacking the other UN-declared safe areas, which all have a more substantial UN presence than Gorazde had. Rather, the Bosnian Serbs almost certainly intend to maintain military pressure on Bosnian government forces elsewhere in Bosnia, particularly in areas such as the northern corridor where the Serbs need to improve their lines of communications. [REDACTED]

Croatians Also Claim Bosnian Serbs Planning Major Offensive

A Croatian General Staff assessment [REDACTED] concurs with our conclusion that the BSA plans to conduct a major offensive in northern Bosnia. According to the assessment, the Serbs reportedly intend to widen the northern supply corridor near Brcko by about 15 kilometers and cut-off the Sapna salient northeast of Tuzla. A second phase reportedly is planned to eliminate the Bosnian Croat-held Orasje enclave northwest of Brcko. The Croatians believe the offensive will involve about 10,000 to 12,000 Bosnian Serb troops, 60 to 70 tanks, and 50 to 60 armored personnel carriers. [REDACTED]

According to the Croatians, the Bosnian Serb General Staff on 8 April increased the readiness levels of the two BSA corps responsible for operations in the corridor. The BSA also reportedly is establishing a temporary command in Bijeljina, under chief of the General Staff Milovanovic, in order to coordinate the two corps' operations. [REDACTED]

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Prospects For Success

The Serbs probably have sufficient forces in the region to widen the corridor near Brcko a few kilometers. Previous Serb attacks to increase the corridor's size have met with limited success. The BSA traditionally has deployed a substantial portion of its armor and artillery assets and some of its best units in the northern corridor area to ensure continued Serb control.

- Even before the recent activity, the Serbs had some 25,000 troops in the most heavily-contested part of the corridor area which runs from Derventa, Doboj, and Maglaj east to Bijeljina. Bosnian Serb forces in this area probably include some 330 tanks and armored vehicles, and as many as 500 artillery pieces, heavy mortars, and multiple rocket launchers. [redacted]

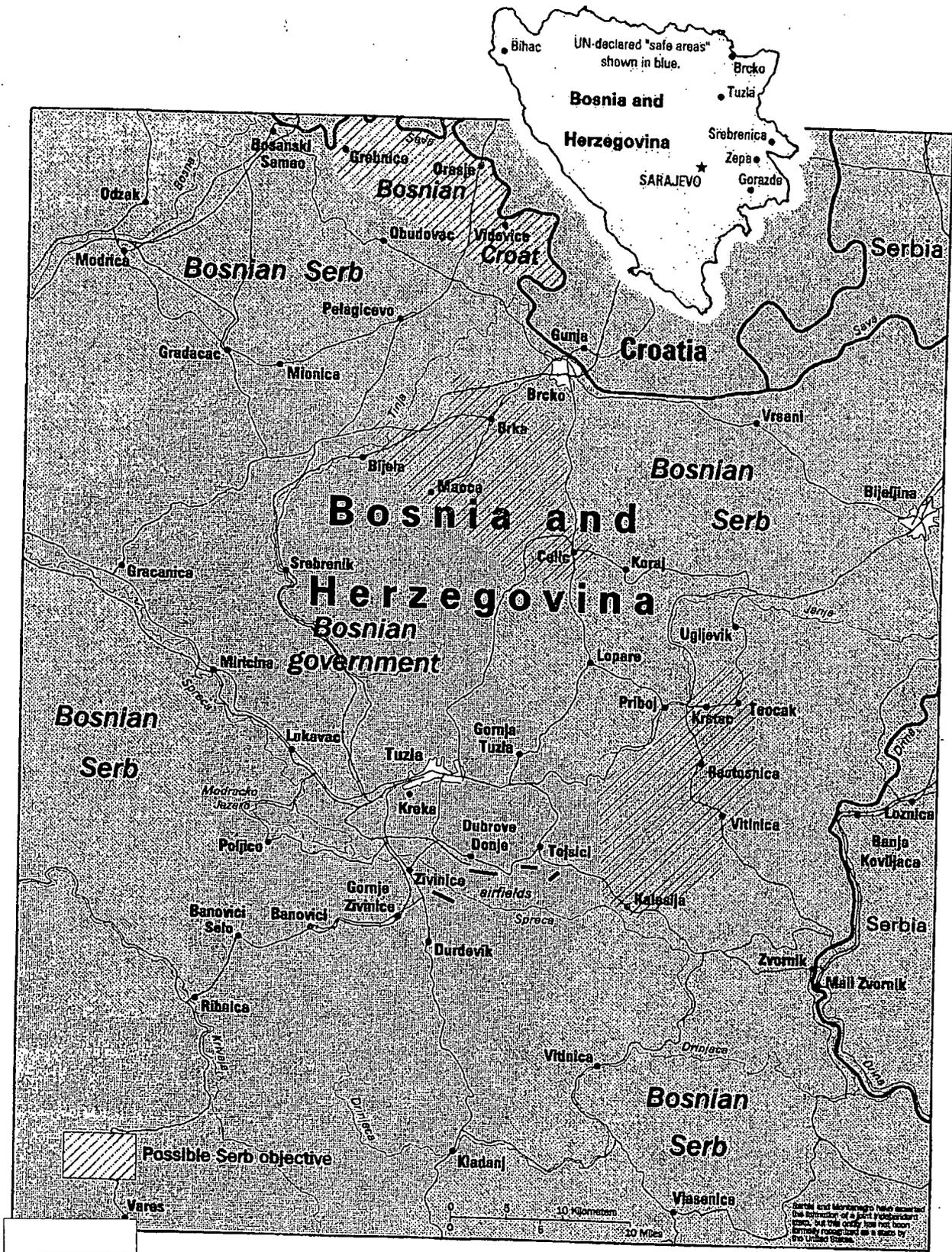
Although the Muslims and Croats have fewer heavy weapons than the Bosnian Serbs, they could, by reinforcing from central Bosnia, probably stem a significant Serb advance. The Bosnian Army has some 20,000 to 25,000 troops in northern Bosnia, augmented by about 3,000 Bosnian Croats. In the Orasje region, just north of the corridor, there are some 7,000 more Bosnian Croat troops, who could become involved if the fighting expands.

- In part because of their common interest in hindering Serb use of the corridor, Muslim and Croat forces in northern Bosnia have fought well together throughout the conflict, even at the peak of Muslim-Croat fighting in central and southern Bosnia late last year.
- Bosnian Government forces also probably would launch attacks on other Serb positions near the northern corridor in the event of a Serb offensive at Brcko. The Bosnian Army already plans to step up attacks on the town of Doboj, about 55 kilometers west of Brcko, in order to cut off the Serb-held Ozren Mountains, [redacted]

This memorandum was prepared by [redacted] analysts with the DCI Interagency Balkan Task Force. Comments and queries are welcome and may be directed to Chief, Balkan Task Force [redacted]

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