

Intelligence Report

DCI Interagency Balkan Task Force

21 July 1995

**Croatia: Major Conflict Likely This Autumn**

Zagreb's growing military confidence and the belief among its leaders that military force will be necessary to reintegrate Serb-held territory probably will lead Croatia to try to seize major portions of UN Sectors North and South this autumn.



- Zagreb would prefer to wait until autumn to launch a major attack, [redacted] but heavy fighting in Bosnia--particularly in the Bihac or Posavina areas--or Krajina Serb provocations could spur a Croatian offensive by mid-summer.
- Croatian military plans include taking the Krajina Serb "capital" of Knin and pushing back Serb artillery from major Croatian cities--especially eliminating the rocket threat against Zagreb. The Croatian Army will have substantial success in achieving these goals, but could not completely defeat the Krajina Serbs if the Bosnian Serb and "Yugoslav" Army lend substantial support.
[redacted]

Fighting in the Krajina will be the heaviest since 1992 and will prompt Belgrade to lend support.

- The "Yugoslav" Army will at least send increased logistics support, along with some special forces and "volunteer" units to help the Krajina Serbs. Prolonged fighting in Croatia probably would result in large-scale "Yugoslav" Army attacks against Croatia's Northern Corridor and Prevlaka peninsula regions.
- Croatia would not attack Krajina Serb positions in Sector East for now, in hopes of keeping Belgrade out of the fray. If partially mobilized, the "Yugoslav" Army could send some 22,000 troops with 700 tanks and heavy artillery pieces into Sector East.

- *International pressure on Croatia to refrain from using military force in reintegrating the Krajina probably will fail, although Zagreb's concern about an adverse international reaction will affect its timing and tactics.* [redacted]

When fighting resumes, the Krajina Serbs plan to use rockets against Croatian cities--especially Zagreb--where a US MASH unit currently is based.

- *Krajina Serb forces almost certainly will take hostages among the 14,000 UN troops stationed primarily in Serb-controlled areas.* [redacted] **HOSTAGES**
- *UN withdrawal from Bosnia through Croatia also would be hampered by renewed fighting.* [redacted]

Irreconcilable Differences

While Zagreb would prefer the peaceful reintegration of Krajina Serb-held territory, the gulf between Zagreb and Knin is growing. Both sides have set unrealistic preconditions for resuming talks, making the prospect of a negotiated settlement increasingly unlikely.

- Croatia's recapture of Sector West in early May and its recent military activity in Bosnia's Livno Valley aimed at isolating Knin have hardened Krajina Serb intransigence. Croatian President Tudjman believes there is almost no chance of restarting serious economic and political negotiations with Knin--particularly since the ouster in May of Zagreb's main interlocutor among the Krajina leadership, former "Prime Minister" Mikelic [redacted]
- Tudjman has publicly warned that Zagreb cannot wait indefinitely to reunite Croatian lands. He set the end of the UN Confidence Restoration Operation (UNCRO) mandate--30 November--as the deadline for evaluating whether to pursue integration through peaceful means or military force. *Differences between the two sides make it unlikely that UNCRO will fulfill its mandate by 30 November, significantly raising the likelihood Tudjman will claim that military force is his only option.* [redacted]

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[redacted]

Zagreb Hoping for a Political Solution...

Without progress soon on the political front, Zagreb--supported by strong public opinion--is increasingly likely to resort to force this autumn to retake Krajina Serb-held territory. In the meantime, Zagreb holds out some hope--though dwindling--that the Krajina leadership struggle and pressure on Knin by Serbian President Milosevic will lead to new opportunities for negotiation.

- Zagreb believes the Krajina Serb leadership crisis--underway at least since Mikelic's ouster--will accelerate the Krajina's disintegration, [redacted] The political contest between "Prime Minister-designate" Babic and "President" Martic is still smoldering behind the scenes; Babic appears to have the stronger political base in the Krajina. Mikelic also is angling to return to power and is stirring up secessionist sentiments in eastern Slavonia.
- Tudjman also appears hopeful that if he continues to show determination to regain the Krajina by force, both Knin and--more importantly--Belgrade will become more inclined to discuss a deal. [redacted] Milosevic and Tudjman planned a meeting [redacted] to discuss a possible settlement on the Krajina and other disputed territory. *Tudjman is likely to continue to pursue a dialogue with Milosevic--even if fighting resumes--in order to press for a settlement and discourage intervention by the "Yugoslav" Army.* [redacted]

...But Leaning Hard Toward the Military Option

On separate occasions, high-level Croatian officials have told US diplomats that Zagreb would be forced to take military action against the Krajina Serbs if the Contact Group makes a sanctions-for-recognition deal with Milosevic that does not include recognition of Croatia, if Bihac were about to fall, or the Krajina and Bosnian Serbs take concrete steps toward fulfilling their plans to create a unified Serb "state."

- Croatia, attempting to portray itself as the victim, probably would look to use a localized event as a pretext to launch a broader attack. [redacted]

Zagreb currently is tightening military pressure on the Krajina Serbs and creating conditions for strategic surprise along all confrontation lines, according to various sources. Defense Minister Susak recently told a US official that Zagreb hopes to force Knin to negotiate or to fight on Croatia's terms. *Increased skirmishing is likely and could quickly escalate.*

- Partial mobilization has allowed the Croatian Army to bolster its presence along the entire confrontation line, according to a Croatian defense official. Croatian exercises also increasingly are held near front-line areas.
- Large convoys of Croatian Army troops and Interior Ministry special forces moved into the Sector South region in late June [redacted]. *The forces could be part of an exercise or a troop rotation, but they also could be repositioning to launch an attack.*
- We estimate there are up to 5,500 Croatian Army and 4,500 Bosnian Croat forces currently in Bosnia's Livno Valley maintaining pressure on Knin's key supply line at Bosansko Grahovo. The Croats already can interdict the road with artillery fire. [redacted]

Senior Croatian military leaders assert that Zagreb can retake most of the Krajina if [redacted]

[redacted] the Croatian Army remains at the highest state of alert and is capable of attacking within three hours of receiving the order. [redacted] the army plans to attack UN Sectors North and South with up to 90,000 troops once the decision is made.

[redacted] future military operations are dependent on military developments in Bosnia [redacted]

Croat forces would take advantage of widespread, heavy fighting in Bosnia--especially in the Bihac or Northern Corridor areas--to launch a major offensive.

[redacted] Government forces, while unlikely to have much success, will tie down Krajina Serb troops from reinforcing against a Croatian attack. [redacted]

[redacted] Zagreb currently plans to order a major offensive against Sectors North and South this autumn. *The Croatians hope to make key gains and dig in before any major snowfall--which also would hamper Serb counterattacks.*

- ***The Croatians may plan to attack during the September-October Krajina Serb harvest.*** In the past, Krajina Serb units have been removed from front-line positions to help harvest key crops.
[redacted]

Warning of Attack Likely but Limited

Zagreb almost certainly will give its key Western allies--the US and Germany-- limited warning before launching a major offensive. Zagreb also will--as it has in the past--give UN forces at least one hour's warning of an impending attack to minimize UN casualties.

- [redacted]
- Croatian Army units can quickly mobilize, limiting our ability to predict the exact timing of an attack. [redacted]

Croatian Military Objectives

Croatia's key military goals are to take the Krajina Serb "capital" of Knin and eliminate the Serb rocket threat against Zagreb, [redacted] High-level Croatian officials indicate that they plan to achieve these objectives simultaneously. ***The Croatian Army probably would have substantial success, but could not retake and hold all the Serb-held areas if Bosnian Serb and "Yugoslav" Army reinforcements arrived and launched counterattacks.*** [redacted]

Zagreb may opt for a less risky strategy in which the Croatian Army would first attack Sector North to eliminate the Serb artillery threat against Zagreb and Karlovac. This option would allow the Croatians to better concentrate their elite forces for an attack which could be supported by Bosnian Government troops in the Bihac enclave. After achieving success in Sector North, the Croatians soon could shift their focus to Knin.

- Croatian forces probably will push back Serb artillery in Sector North, but would have to reach the Bosnian border to protect Zagreb from rocket attacks.
- The Croatians probably will also break through some Serb defenses in Sector South, and at least cut off Knin from the Bosnian Serbs. [redacted]

Zagreb Hopes to Keep Belgrade From Intervening...

- Croatian military plans call for a rapid attack that would seize major objectives within 72 hours. Zagreb hopes to achieve its goals before Bosnian Serb or "Yugoslav" Army reinforcements could arrive.
- Croatia would not attack Krajina Serb positions in Sector East for now, in hopes of keeping Belgrade out of the fray. If partially mobilized, the "Yugoslav" Army could send some 22,000 troops with 700 tanks and heavy artillery pieces into Sector East.
- Most senior government officials believe that Zagreb can deter large-scale "Yugoslav" Army support for the Krajina Serbs by threatening to rocket Belgrade. One of Zagreb's top defense priorities is to acquire surface-to-surface missiles that can reach Belgrade.

...But Belgrade and Pale Would Help Fellow Serbs

Krajina and Bosnian Serb leaders established a joint military command in February, according to the Serb press. The level of Bosnian Serb military assistance, however, will depend on the extent of fighting in Bosnia and the success of a Croatian attack.

- Bosnian Serb forces--who face manpower and materiel shortages like the Krajina Serbs--probably could not help Knin quickly enough to prevent the Croatians from making significant gains. As of early June, the Krajina and Bosnian Serb General Staffs estimated that because Pale does not have the resources to help Knin, Krajina Serb resistance to expected Croatian offensives in UN Sector South would collapse by autumn, and possibly in Sector North by winter.

A "Yugoslav" Government official has told US diplomats that "no government in Belgrade could allow Croatia to take over the Krajina," according to State Department reporting. *Although Serbian President Milosevic would likely measure his*

assistance, Belgrade immediately would increase its logistics and arms support.

Following Croatia's recapture of Sector West in early May, Belgrade sent some special forces units and tanks into Sector East and bolstered nearby positions in Serbia, according to various sources. As recently as late June, elements of two "Yugoslav" Army mechanized brigades deployed into Sector East [redacted]
[redacted]

- Prolonged fighting in Croatia probably would result in large-scale Serbian involvement, but a quick, decisive Croatian victory would present Belgrade with a fait accompli, making "Yugoslav" Army support to save Sectors North and South highly unlikely.
- Covertly, Belgrade would focus on relieving pressure on Knin or in places where Croatian troops make substantial gains by sending more logistics support, special forces, and "volunteer" units. When Belgrade expected a Croatian attack on the Krajina Serbs in spring 1993, the "Yugoslav" Army planned to occupy Bosnian Serb positions in the Northern Corridor region to allow Pale to send reinforcements to the Knin area [redacted]
- Overt "Yugoslav" Army support could include an attack through Croatia to widen Bosnia's Northern Corridor, or an assault against Croatia's Prevlaka peninsula, which controls access to key "Yugoslav" Navy facilities. [redacted]

Implications of Renewed Fighting

Fighting in the Krajina will be the heaviest since 1992, and is likely to prompt tens of thousands of Serb refugees to flee into Bosnia. Bosnian Government forces will take advantage of a Croatian offensive--and could mount coordinated, concurrent attacks against the Bosnian Serbs. Presidents Tudjman and Izetbegovic met on 21 July, according to State Department reporting, to discuss military cooperation, particularly around Bihac.

- The Krajina Serbs will again use rockets--this time to include the FROG-7--against Croatian cities, such as Zagreb. According to the US Embassy in Belgrade, the Serbs plan to target missile attacks against Croatian infrastructure--probably to include Zagreb Pleso airfield--where a US MASH unit currently is based.
- Although UN troops will be in harm's way during a Croatian attack, Croatian troops will not purposely target UN forces, but some are likely to get caught in the crossfire.

- Krajina Serb forces almost certainly will take hostages among the 14,000 UN troops stationed primarily in Serb-controlled areas.
- UN withdrawal from Bosnia through Croatia would be hampered. Zagreb probably would keep the UN off of roads used by the Croatian Army to supply its troops, and Krajina Serb forces would target these roads with artillery fire. [redacted]

Zagreb Unlikely To Heed Western Objections

International pressure on Zagreb to forego military force in reintegrating the Krajina probably will alter Croatia's timing and tactics, but not its strategy. Growing frustration with the international community has reinforced Zagreb's view that it will have to act alone to solve the Krajina problem and has reduced Western influence over Zagreb's actions, at least temporarily.

- Croatian officials cite as examples of declining Western support the current Contact Group sanctions-for-recognition proposal to Milosevic and their fear that the UN Rapid Reaction Force may be used against the Croatian forces. [redacted]
[redacted] Zagreb also resents UN scrutiny of Croatia's human rights record and criticism of its recent military actions, claiming the Serbs' record is worse in both respects.
- Tudjman believes a relatively quick campaign in Sectors North and South would not have any lasting damage on Croatia's standing with the international community and the EU [redacted]
[redacted] *To help ensure this, Croatia will try to minimize perceptions of "ethnic cleansing," but will have a more difficult time than in Sector West because Sectors North and South have much larger Serb populations.*
- *Zagreb already is laying the groundwork for its public justification for military action against the Krajina Serbs.* Croatian leaders have stepped up complaints about UNCRO's inability to secure Croatia's borders or move the peace process forward. They also have tried to portray the Knin leadership as unreasonable and unwilling to negotiate and underlined its links to Serbia. [redacted]

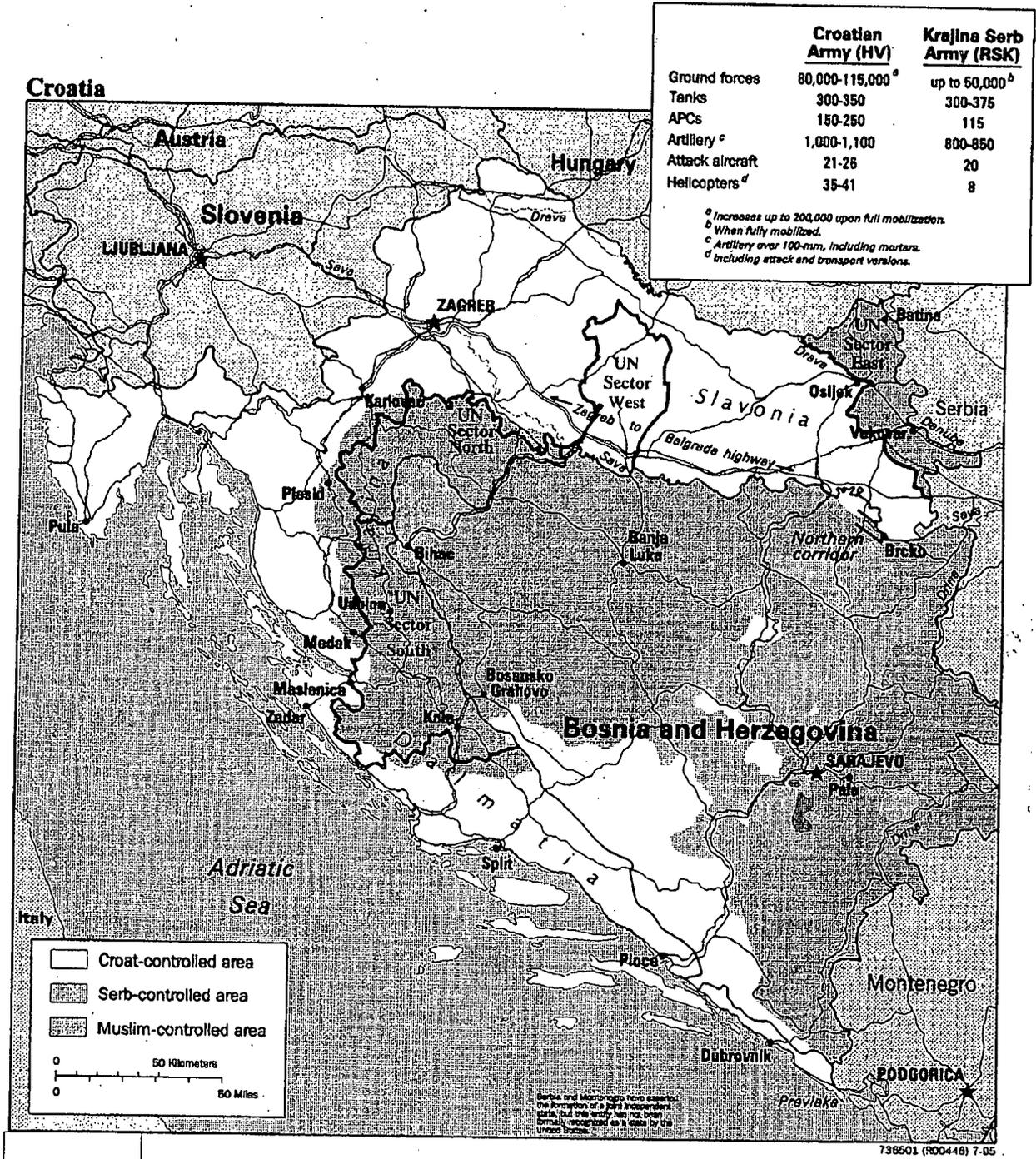
The EU and its member governments continue to have some economic leverage with Zagreb that could affect Zagreb's tactics, according to diplomatic reporting.

• Bonn formally warned Zagreb on 16 June that new military action would jeopardize negotiations on a trade and cooperation agreement with the European Union and participation in its PHARE assistance program, according to US diplomats. [redacted]

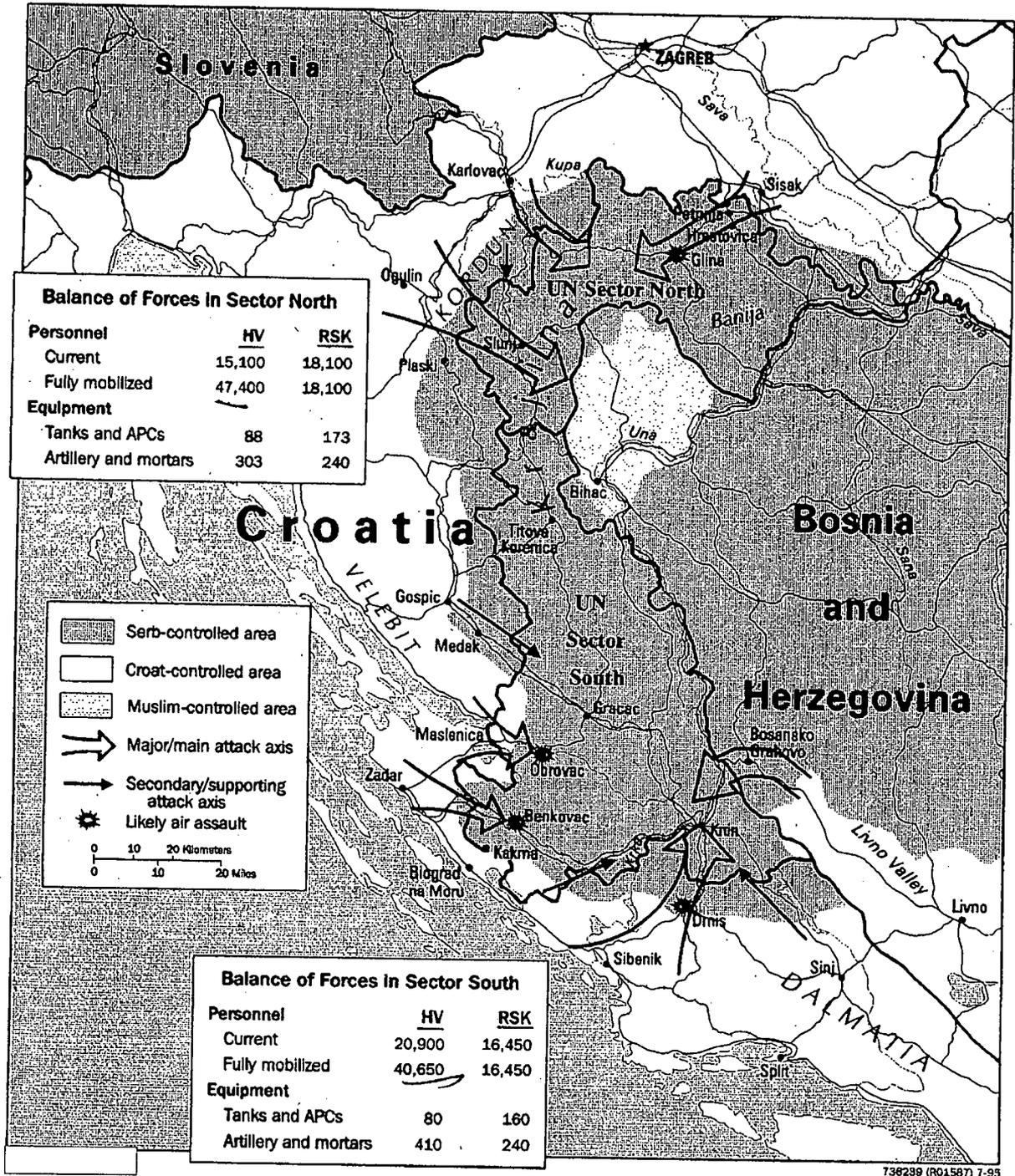
Krajina Serbs Stuck Between a Rock and the Croatian Army

The Krajina Serb Army (KSA) has major personnel shortages and little defensive depth, thus requiring it to hold fighting positions as far forward as possible to stop--or at least delay--a Croatian attack. Most KSA corps lack sufficient reserves to block or turn back successful Croatian thrusts.

- Manpower shortages have forced Krajina Serb units to maintain a high alert status, thus wearing down their troops, lowering individual morale and unit esprit. There is no indication that Serb morale has dangerously eroded; *however, faced with a large-scale Croatian offensive and deteriorating battlefield situation, KSA commanders could encounter widespread collapse of both discipline and force cohesion.*
- *Continued political isolation and economic hardship will further degrade the Krajina Serbs' motivation to fight, making a collapse more likely--either army-wide or in an individual region--if the Croatians launch a major offensive. The danger of collapse will increase if neither the Bosnian Serb Army--which has similar problems--nor the "Yugoslav" Army can quickly provide substantial support.* [redacted]



Sectors North and South



Balance of Forces in Sector North

Personnel	HV	RSK
Current	15,100	18,100
Fully mobilized	47,400	18,100
Equipment		
Tanks and APCs	88	173
Artillery and mortars	303	240

Legend

- Serb-controlled area
- Croat-controlled area
- Muslim-controlled area
- Major/main attack axis
- Secondary/supporting attack axis
- Likely air assault

Scale: 0 10 20 Kilometers / 0 10 20 Miles

Balance of Forces in Sector South

Personnel	HV	RSK
Current	20,900	16,450
Fully mobilized	40,650	16,450
Equipment		
Tanks and APCs	80	160
Artillery and mortars	410	240