

Intelligence Report

*DCI Interagency Balkan Task Force**15 March 1995*

The Krajina Serbs: Considering UNFIC

Krajina Serb leaders are likely to pay close attention to the rhetoric surrounding the discussion of the mandate for the new force, particularly on the issue of UN forces on Croatia's border with Bosnia and Serbia. The influence of Bosnian Serb "President" Karadzic and, more importantly, that of Serbian President Milosevic will also shape their decision. **If the Krajina Serb leaders--and Milosevic--are convinced that the international community will continue to view the Vance Plan as the operative arrangement for reconciling their dispute with Zagreb, and if the proposed border force is small and focused on monitoring rather than controlling the border crossings, they probably will accept the agreement.**

Suspicion and Relief

Despite their internal power struggle, key Krajina Serb leaders--"President" Martic, "Prime Minister" Mikelic, and "Foreign Minister" Babic--appeared to share a favorable initial reaction to Tudjman's decision to permit UN troops to remain in Croatia. They are suspicious, however, of the prospect of having UN forces on Croatia's border with Bosnia and Serbia.

- All three view the UN presence--even at reduced levels--as key to Serb consolidation of control over Serb-occupied areas of Croatia. They fear that a complete UN withdrawal would mean a renewed, all-out war with Croatia in which they probably would take heavy losses.
- Martic--the Krajina Serb leader who is closest to Karadzic--said that "Tudjman acted reasonably" in allowing UN troops to stay, but that the deployment of a "peace force on the border with Bosnia and Serbia is where we, most probably, are not going to agree." Martic later said that UN civilian police--not troops--could be deployed on the border to monitor the work of Serb border authorities.
- Mikelic--Milosevic's man in Knin--credited Tudjman's change of heart to constructive actions on the part of his own government and the international community, but left open the issue of whether the new force would be satisfactory to the Krajina Serbs.

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- Babic--whose recent rapprochement with Milosevic probably will secure his position as the most powerful man in the Krajina--said that he was relieved at Tudjman's decision to allow UN troops to stay, but that "the one-sided blocking of the Krajina Serb border will not meet with understanding in the RSK." [redacted]

The Influence of Karadzic and Milosevic

Martić is likely to confer closely with Karadzic regarding the acceptability of UN troops along the Croatian border.

- Martić has grown increasingly close to Karadzic since Milosevic imposed his blockade of the Bosnian Serbs last August [redacted]
- [redacted]
- [redacted]

Milosevic, whose military forces are vital to the Krajina Serbs' defense, probably will hold the greatest sway with the Krajina Serb leadership.

- The "Yugoslav" Army (VJ) already gives direct support to the Krajina Serbs and most Krajina Serb brigades probably have a cadre of professional VJ personnel. Special operations troops from the VJ and Serbian Interior Ministry probably would be the primary forces involved against a Croatian attack.
- As a result of the recent leadership struggle with Martić, Babic and Milosevic apparently have achieved a rapprochement that supersedes last year's feud between the two. Babic and Mikelic discussed the Croatian agreement with Milosevic in Belgrade shortly after it was announced, according to press reports. [redacted]

Although Milosevic has not reacted directly to the plan, the Serbian state-controlled press reported it in a straight-forward manner--even describing Tudjman as a peacemaker, according to US Embassy reporting. Milosevic may decide to refrain from publicly supporting or opposing the plan, although we believe he has good reason to encourage the Krajina Serbs to accept it. If he does openly support the plan, he is certain to face a wave of criticism from his internal opposition.

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- The plan is Milosevic's only option for keeping UN troops in Croatia. [redacted] Milosevic believes that the UN forces there are essential to deter a Croatian attack. Milosevic knows that the Krajina Serbs depend on the VJ to come to their aid, but he is loathe to involve Serbia in a new war with Croatia. The argument that the Croatian plan will help stave off war while protecting Krajina Serb interests is also likely to appeal to the Serbian public, which is generally unenthusiastic about the prospect of another Serbo-Croatian war. [redacted]
- The plan would give Milosevic more time to foster a negotiated settlement in the Krajina, either by prodding the Krajina Serbs to continue their dialogue with Zagreb or by attempting to cut a secret territorial deal with Tudjman. [redacted]
- Milosevic continues to see Karadzic as his biggest rival for control over "greater Serbia." The placement of UN troops on Croatia's border could serve Milosevic's interests by complicating the growing partnership between the Krajina and Bosnian Serbs.
- By not standing in the way of the plan, Milosevic may believe that he can earn additional credit with the international community, which he would hope could be applied toward sanctions relief. **If approached regarding his views on the Croatian plan, Milosevic might respond that sanctions relief would be an important way for his support to be justified domestically.** [redacted]

Milosevic's critics are already mobilizing against the plan, according to US Embassy reporting.

- Arch-rival Vojislav Seselj said that placing UN troops on Croatia's borders was a very dangerous move, according to press reports. Vojislav Kostunica, President of the Democratic Party of Serbia, charged that Tudjman's decision gave Croatia more time to build up its war machine and made war more likely than peace.

Milosevic's open support for the plan probably would drive his domestic critics even closer to Karadzic if the Bosnian Serb leader decides to oppose the proposal, a development that Milosevic does not want to encourage. For now, however, he is strong enough to weather opposition criticism. [redacted]

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