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The Bosnian Army's Defense of Gorazde: Plans, Capabilities, and Possible Outcomes

Summary



The Bosnian Government almost certainly will make a determined effort to defend Gorazde with the forces available in the enclave. The Bosnian Government, however, has little ability to reinforce or assist its forces in Gorazde, except possibly by mounting offensives elsewhere to relieve pressure on the city. In the long run, the isolated Bosnian Army forces in Gorazde probably would be unable to withstand a strong BSA offensive.

[Redacted]

Bosnian Army Defensive Plans



Despite some Bosnian Government statements that they would not attempt to defend the enclave, it is unlikely that the Bosnian Government will surrender Gorazde without a fight. Although Sarajevo probably believes that Gorazde would eventually fall in the face of an all-out BSA attack, it cannot afford to allow Gorazde--with some 60,000 civilians--to fall without a fight.

- A Bosnian Government official stated on 12 July that Gorazde would be the next Bosnian Serb target after Zepa, and that it would be attacked as soon as the British peacekeepers rotated out this summer. The Bosnian official also claimed that the Bosnian Government had no plan for the "strategic defense" of either Zepa or Gorazde, and that Sarajevo had been relying on NATO and UNPROFOR for the defense of the enclaves. While the official's claim that the government was essentially relying on the West for the defense of the enclaves is credible--especially given Sarajevo's marginal capability to assist Gorazde from central Bosnia--this does not necessarily mean that the Bosnian Army has no tactical plans to defend the city, or that the enclave would surrender without a fight.

[Redacted]

Indeed, the Bosnian Government has long hoped to reestablish an overland corridor from Sarajevo to Gorazde since the connection was lost in the summer of 1993.

- Recent government offensive operations in the Trnovo area south of Sarajevo--part of the government's effort to relieve the siege of the capital--could provide a starting point for eventual offensives toward Gorazde. However, Trnovo is still some 25 kilometers from the western

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edge of the Gorazde enclave, and the odds of a breakthrough this year are small.

- The Bosnian Government could carry out attacks near Sarajevo in an attempt to relieve pressure on Gorazde in the event of a major BSA offensive. It is unclear whether the Bosnian Army intends to do so.

Bosnian Army Forces in Gorazde/Efforts to Strengthen the Enclave

The Gorazde enclave is defended by the Bosnian Army's 81st Division, organized into eight infantry brigades. One of these is believed to be an "assault" brigade, a more mobile force intended to spearhead attacks or respond to Bosnian Serb breakthroughs. The other seven are light infantry units equipped with small arms and probably limited numbers of field guns and mortars of varying calibers. The Bosnian Army's forces in Gorazde have been organized into regular brigades since 1992, but their combat power there has remained limited by a lack of heavy weapons and supply problems.

- The Bosnian Army reorganized its forces in the enclave following the April 1994 Serb offensive, increasing the number of brigades from five to eight and raising the number of Bosnian Army troops from about 6,000 to some 8,000-10,000.

By investing manpower, resources, and effort--within its limited capabilities to do so--in the defense of the enclave, the Bosnian Government has demonstrated an intent to keep Gorazde if at all possible. The Bosnian Army's efforts to improve its capabilities in the region by improving the training, provisioning, and deployments of its troops suggest that the government plans to try to provide adequate defense forces for the enclave.

- The Bosnian Army has recently tried--with limited success--to take the strategic high ground around Gorazde being used by the Bosnian Serb Army (BSA) to launch attacks and to take additional key terrain features in the region. Partially in response, the BSA has shelled the Gorazde enclave almost daily for the past month.
- The Bosnian Army has apparently had marginal success in supplying its forces in Gorazde with munitions and equipment from central Bosnia. As a result, the forces in the enclave probably have not improved as much as the government forces in central Bosnia, which have benefited from the increased availability of arms since the Croat-Muslim Federation was established last year. The Bosnian Army may have a limited military production capability in Gorazde, where a detonator and explosives production facility was located at the start of the war.

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Given the limited sources of weaponry available to the cut-off Gorazde defenders, government forces have recently begun seizing equipment from the Ukrainian peacekeepers deployed in the enclave. After a prolonged confrontation and a brief exchange of gunfire, Bosnian Army soldiers seized armored vehicles, small arms, and ammunition from Ukrainian troops in Gorazde on 15 July, according to UN spokesmen.

Possible Outcomes of a Bosnian Serb Offensive

Although the Bosnian Government almost certainly will make some effort to defend Gorazde, Bosnian Army forces in the enclave probably would be unable to withstand a strong BSA offensive. Bosnian Army forces resisted Serb attacks in April 1994, and are unlikely to give up immediately in the event of a Serb attack. Even if the central government is not committed to the defense of Gorazde, local civilians and central Bosnian refugees in the enclave are unlikely to surrender without resistance unless some outside factor--such as possible Western intervention--alters their thinking.

- A protracted battle with high media attention would give the government an opportunity to argue the case in the international community for an arms embargo lift and/or direct Western intervention. Conversely, an outright surrender of the enclave would damage Bosnian Army and civilian morale.
- A Bosnian Serb capture of Gorazde would increase calls for lifting the arms embargo against the Bosnian Government, since the fall of the enclaves would end one of the primary arguments against the "lift" option.
- The fall of Gorazde--especially if perceived as a failure of the UN to defend another "safe area"--would also strengthen the hand of those within the Bosnian Government who want UNPROFOR to withdraw.

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Forces In and Around Gorazde

	<u>Troops</u>	<u>Tanks/APCs</u>	<u>Artillery/Heavy Mortars</u>
Bosnian Army	8,000-10,000* (8 brigades)	N/A	6-12**
Bosnian Serb Army	5350 (7 brigades)	10	88-92**
UN (British/ Ukrainian)	500	Unknown	Unknown

* Revised CIA/DIA coordinated estimate, based on an average assessed ABiH brigade strength of roughly 1,000-1,250 troops apiece, and consideration of the manpower pool in the enclave.

** Includes field artillery 76mm and above, as well as heavy mortars.

Above table is classified

[Redacted]

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