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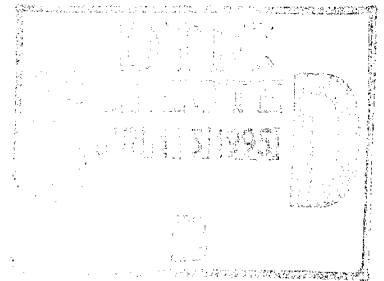
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**UNPROFOR:
A PERSPECTIVE FROM THE FIELD**

BY

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Course 455 - Personal Experience Monograph

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PERSONAL EXPERIENCE MONOGRAPH

UNPROFOR: A PERSPECTIVE FROM THE FIELD

INTRODUCTION

Daily news coverage since early 1993 has invariably included a story on the latest atrocities, the breakdown of peace talks, or new dilemmas facing the beleaguered peacekeepers in Bosnia-Herzegovina (B-H). Very few North Americans even realized that a fight for survival, potentially more threatening to regional stability than B-H, was concurrently unfolding only kilometers to the north in Croatia. Then on 1 May 1995, the Croatian government, frustrated by the United Nations' (UN) lack of progress in reuniting the country under one flag, launched an attack into Sector West to recapture the Zagreb-Belgrade Autoput. This flagrant violation of the UN brokered peace agreement in Croatia once again raised the profile of the "other" Balkan conflict in the eyes of the world. For those of us who had previously served as peacekeepers in Sector West, the attack was even more remarkable as Western Slavonia was reputed to be the most stable of the three UN Protected Areas (UNPA) in Croatia.

The conflict between the Croatian government and the Krajina Serbs is a drama that was born in the wave of nationalism that swept Eastern Europe following the breakup of the Soviet Union. This nationalism sparked a hurried declaration of independence for Croatia from the former Republic of Yugoslavia in June 1991, a bitter ethnic war, the subsequent deployment of the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR), and a virtual stalemate between the parties until the May 1995 Croatian offensive. As a result, Croatia has yet to

enjoy its manifest destiny - a prosperous, peaceful, democratic country and a leader in Balkan politics.

My involvement in Croatia from March to September 1993 was a major highlight in my career. The responsibilities of my position as Deputy Commander (DSC) of Sector West posed an unprecedented challenge to my leadership skills and abilities. The scenarios I encountered taxed my previous military experience, patience, diplomacy, tact and creative thinking ability to the limits. From my experiences came a plethora of lessons learned, which can be applied in numerous other situations where UN peacekeepers are deployed and employed.

AIM

The aim of this Personal Experience Monogram is to detail the lessons learned from my UN tour in the former Republic of Yugoslavia from 28 February to 13 September 1993.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

To appreciate the situation faced by the peacekeepers in UNPROFOR, it is essential to understand the historical background to the conflict. The level of bitterness and hatred which exists between the Serbs and Croats did not manifest itself overnight; on the contrary, it originated hundreds of years ago¹. Although racially and linguistically related, these two ethnic groups are divided by history and religion. However, prior to World War II, they did not meet on the battlefield, and were more often than not allies fighting against common enemies.

This situation changed drastically in April 1941 when the Germans invaded Yugoslavia and ended the brutal oligarchy of King Alex 1. As the Yugoslav army fell apart

and the government fled into exile, an extremist group, the Ustashe, formed an independent Croatia which included B-H. In reality, the new country was merely a puppet state of Germany and enjoyed little popular support. The Croat leadership tried to forcefully convert the large Eastern Orthodox Serb minority in Croatia to Roman Catholicism, thus igniting the first Serbo-Croat war in history. Following the massacre of approximately 400,000 Serbs by the Ustashe, an equally brutal Serb faction, the Chetniks, emerged on the scene. A third element, Tito's Communists, entered the guerrilla type war following Operation Barbarossa. Following three years of bitter fighting, a victorious Tito expelled the Germans from Belgrade in late 1944 and a relative peace prevailed in the war torn Balkans. The cost was extremely high - one million killed out of a total population of nine million, and the creation of a fanatical hatred between Serbs and Croats.

Following the war, Tito created internal borders based on ethnic and historic precedents. Unfortunately, a sizable Serb minority found itself on the wrong side of these borders. Yet Tito, through a combination of his own style of self managed socialism, a rigid centralized government and the most powerful secret police in Eastern Europe, kept nationalism in check and fostered a prosperous economy. In 1980 Tito died and the country slipped into a recession. Croatia and Slovenia, the most economically endowed of the six Yugoslav republics, were attracted to the western style multiparty system and a free market economy.

The catalyst which pushed Croatia and Slovenia into independence was the election of Slobodan Milosevic in 1987. Although strongly favoring continuation of a socialist state in Yugoslavia, he countered the nationalist aspirations of his neighbors by verbally

advocating an independent Serbia which would unite all Serbs into one country. Taking this as a veiled threat of annexation and civil war, both Croatia and Slovenia declared their independence in June 1991. Unfortunately, Croatia's new President, Franjo Tudjman, did not pander to the sensitivities of the 900,000 Serbs within his country's borders. In fact, they were not even mentioned in the new constitution. As a result, Serbs in the Krajinas revolted and vehemently announced their refusal to ever live under a Croatian flag, a flag which symbolized the atrocities inflicted on their ancestors in World War II.

Faced with losing control of one third of its territory, Croatia fought a bitter war with the Yugoslav National Army (JNA), which had aligned itself with the Serbs. Following eight months of fighting, Tudjman realized his army could not regain sovereignty over the Krajinas by force. He therefore agreed to a cease-fire, the deployment of UN peacekeepers, and the achievement of his aim through future negotiations.

UNPROFOR

UNPROFOR was originally established as a traditional peacekeeping operation. The mission of the Force was to act as "an interim measure to create the conditions of peace and security required for the settlement of the Yugoslavian crisis."² The foundation for this mandate was the Vance Plan, named after its author, Cyrus Vance, Special Envoy to the Secretary General. Vance engineered the plan by visiting all warring parties in November 1991 and subsequently convincing them to sign a cease fire agreement in Sarajevo on 3 January 1992. In accordance with the terms of the cease fire, three UN Protected Areas (UNPA) were created (Annex A)³. These UNPAs contained a majority or significant

minority of Serbs. The borders of each UNPA corresponded to the forward positions of the belligerents in November 1990.

Within each UNPA, peacekeepers had the following responsibilities (USAWC equivalent tasks are in parenthesis):

- demilitarize the area (verify troop withdrawal, arms control);
- protect the personnel in the UNPA (maintain the cease-fire);
- monitor the local police forces to ensure fair and equal treatment of all citizens (report on human rights violations, verify the maintenance of law and order); and
- facilitate the return of displaced persons.

Following the deployment of UNPROFOR between March and June 1991, preparations were made for the demilitarization of the UNPAs. Under the articles of the Vance plan, the JNA and Croat army had to withdraw entirely from the UNPAs, while all militia units were to be disbanded and their equipment stored in equipment depots supervised by UNPROFOR. To control the areas adjacent to the UNPAs, three lines of withdrawal (LOW) were created to limit the deployment of regular army forces (Annex B). Through a series of check points, UNPROFOR would maintain the integrity of each UNPA by preventing the transport of war materials over the borders.

In summary, UNPROFOR was established as a traditional peacekeeping mission⁴. UN troops deployed with the consent of the two major belligerent parties who, in addition, signed a ceasefire agreement which was designed to lead to a long term resolution of the conflict.

SECTOR WEST

I arrived in Sector West on 28 February 1993 to assume my duties as DSC. Sector West is in fact UNPA Western Slavonia. It is located in the central portion of Croatia and measures approximately 90 kilometers X 45 kilometers. Its southern boundary is the Sava River which forms the international border between Bosnia and Croatia. Sector West had three key features which made it unique from the two other UNPAs in Croatia (Annex C):

- the cease fire line (CFL) divided the Sector into two parts. The north was controlled by Croatian authorities while the south, approximately one-third of the sector, was occupied and dominated by Krajina Serbs. Although there was theoretical freedom of movement throughout Sector West for all personnel, only UN traffic crossed the CFL due to the fear of reprisals between the belligerents;
- the Zagreb-Belgrade Autoput, a major economic asset in Croatia, crosses Sector West in the Serb controlled area. The Serbs had prohibited Croatian access to the Autoput from Novska to Nova Gradiska thereby necessitating an expensive and lengthy detour for commercial and private vehicles traversing the country. Except for UN traffic, this modern expressway was deserted. A major economic strategic objective of the Croatian federal government was to reopen the autoput, which was the aim of their attack on 1 May 95; and
- the Stara Gradiska bridge over the Sava River was the only link remaining from Bosnia to Croatia in Sector West. Since the Serbs in Sector West were totally

isolated from any external support elements except for their confreres in Bosnia, the bridge was vital for their survival. All supplies and military reinforcements had to be transported across this bridge or enter Sector West via an expedient crossing means. Hence it was termed "the Bridge of Life" by the Krajina Serbs.

Following the deployment of UNPROFOR from March to June 1992, the articles of the Vance Plan were almost totally implemented in Sector West. By September, the Serb militia was disbanded, the JNA had withdrawn to B-H, the Croatian Army was respecting the LOWs, and weapons and weapon systems had been turned over to UNPROFOR and stored under a "double lock" arrangement in equipment depots. There were virtually no violations of the Vance Plan in the Sector. The success of UNPROFOR in Sector West led UN Civil Affairs personnel and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) to initiate "peace building" projects between the two sides. Sector West became the model for the other three Sectors.

The relative peace and tranquillity of Sector West was shattered on 22 January 1993 when the Croatian Army launched an attack in Sector South to retake strategic areas in the Pink Zones. The unprecedented magnitude of this violation of the Vance Plan forced the Krajina Serbs to mobilize their militia throughout the four military Sectors. They feared, for example, a Croatian attack to recapture the autoput in Sector West.

While the Serb militia mobilized completely in the three other Sectors to include the deployment of tanks and artillery, the Commander in Sector West, a very dynamic, competent and forceful leader, convinced the Serb military authorities to disobey their orders from Knin (capital of the Republic of Serbian Krajina (RSK)). As a result, the soldiers did not carry rifles and no heavy weapons systems were withdrawn from the UN controlled

equipment depots. However, militia units were mobilized, soldiers wore uniforms in public, and officers carried pistols.

These concessions to the Serbs, although necessary, flamed the latent desire of the Croats to pursue a more aggressive policy to recapture the occupied territory. As a result, the Croatian Army moved men and equipment in close proximity to the borders of the UNPA, thereby violating the Vance Plan by infringing on the LOWs. In addition, the number of Croatian "police officers" in the Sector was continually rising. According to our sources of information, these new law enforcement officers were in fact Croatian Army personnel in police uniforms. The police stations were more like armories as they contained a wide arsenal of weapons including grenades, mines, automatic rifles, and machine guns. The same situation soon developed with the police forces on the Serb side. There were nightly exchanges of small arms fire across the CFL, new mines were laid in various locations, all peace building initiatives were placed "on hold", and ethnic cleansing continued at an accelerated pace. This was the operational situation in Sector West on my arrival on 28 February 1993. At this juncture I will state without reservation that the situation progressively deteriorated during my seven months as DSC.

PREPARATION

I received five weeks notice of my assignment to Croatia. In addition to terminating my duties as Deputy Commander of the Canadian Army Combat Training Center, I prepared myself professionally, physically, mentally and materially for the 12 month peacekeeping tour. Part of the professional preparations was a four day indoctrination course at National Defense Headquarters in Ottawa. It was designed to prepare individual officers and non-

commissioned officers for UN duty as either a staff officer or military observer. Without elaborating on the details, I concluded that the course was woefully lacking in both content and quality. The Canadian Forces have subsequently learned from attendee comments and modified the course to better meet operational requirements.

In addition to common military skills such as weapon handling, first aid, and NBCW training, there are three essential elements of knowledge which all personnel assigned to a UN field headquarters must possess prior to departing their home country. First, the officer must be thoroughly cognizant of the operational scenario to include not only the current situation, but also the roots of the conflict. Second is an awareness of the cultural background of the belligerents. As much as possible, peacekeepers must avoid committing either legal or cultural indiscretions which could alienate them from the belligerents and reduce their effectiveness on the ground. Last, all UN personnel require knowledge of basic negotiating skills. Whether confronting soldiers and civilians in the streets, or conducting shuttle diplomacy between government officials, the ability to resolve disputes tactfully and in the best interests of peace is essential. The justification for my assigning a high priority to these three elements will emerge throughout my monograph.

THE MANDATE

It became readily apparent that both sides interpreted the UNPROFOR Mandate to suit their own nationalistic aims. The Croats, who control an impressive strategic propaganda machine, assert that peacekeepers should expel the Krajina Serbs from the occupied territory and restore the sovereignty of the Croatian government over the entire

country. The Serbs, on the other hand, steadfastly claim the mission of UNPROFOR is to protect their rights until they can establish the independent Republic of Serbian Krajina.

Due to the pervasive Croatian propaganda campaign, the common people firmly believed UNPROFOR was ignoring their sovereign rights in order to protect the Serbs. As a result, there was considerable antagonism towards peacekeepers from the Croats. To combat these misconceptions, UNPROFOR required a comprehensive Public Affairs (PA) and Psychological Operations (PSYOP) strategy targeted at the entire spectrum of Croatian society. Although a PA section existed in UNPROFOR HQ and to a lesser extent in the Sectors, the capacity for executing a PSYOP campaign was not part of the UNPROFOR order for battle. This was a serious weakness which the UN must address to permit the conduct of a "hearts and minds" strategy so essential in gaining the support of the people.

COMMAND RELATIONSHIPS

Loyalty

Sector West HQ was a loosely knit group of individual officers from seven different countries. The key command and staff positions were drawn from the troop contributing countries on a pro-rata and rotating basis. Both the Sector Commander and I arrived within two weeks of each other, while all the key military staff changed over a two month period. Such a system has inherent weaknesses: lack of continuity, instability, linguistic and cultural barriers, experience gaps, and differences in motivation. In addition, certain countries participate in UN missions for a specific reason, either political, cultural, economic or ideological. As a result, their representatives are often governed by hidden agendas which taint their decisions and actions.

This description of a UN HQ organization and staff leads me to an analysis of the command relationship which developed between myself and the Sector Commander. We arrived in Sector West with two completely different aims: mine was to assist in executing the mandate of UNPROFOR in the Sector; his aim was to terminate his UN tour with an unblemished record as a Commander. I am not condemning the Sector Commander as his aim was motivated by national culture and tradition. However, this situation led to irreconcilable differences in strategy between us for achieving the UN objectives in Sector West, and an extreme test of loyalty for myself. An example will illustrate this dilemma.

Sector West was in an excellent operational posture on our arrival in February due to the leadership provided by the previous Sector Commander. His forceful, competent, unrelenting approach in dealing with the two sides left no doubt about who commanded, and was responsible for, Sector West. The new Commander lacked the firm decisive manner of this predecessor as evidenced by his actions on 25 April 1993. Reacting to advice from the staff including myself, he issued orders to search for and confiscate weapons from a Krajina Serb political delegation from Knin entering the Sector from Bosnia. This action supported the Sector's strict policy on the carrying of firearms in the UNPA, and would have demonstrated to the senior Serb leaders that the UN was "in charge" in Sector West. Yet when the Commanding Officer of the battalion at the Stara Gradiska Bridge balked at obeying the order, the Sector Commander rescinded it. This decision saved him from a short term confrontation with the Serbs, but produced long term disastrous results for Sector West: we lost face with the Krajina Serbs whose morale skyrocketed from our lack of resolve; our credibility with the Croats diminished as reports reached them about Serbs

importing weapons into the UNPA; and the HQ staff, many with 10 months of experience dealing with the belligerents, was demoralized by the failure of the Sector Commander to heed their advice. Similar situations occurred frequently during my tour.

As a result of the Commander's tendency to yield on difficult issues, and his lack of resolve, the situation deteriorated in Sector West daily. Although UNPROFOR HQ perceived the new developments, the Force Commander for political reasons would not take action to either ascertain the cause or rectify the problem. However, the Deputy Force Commander, a Canadian major-general, was not diplomatic or tactful with his Canadian officers. His forthright questions about the situation in Sector West presented me with an ethical conundrum. Where is an officer's loyalty in a UN peacekeeping mission - to his immediate commander or his country? Why do I say "country"? If I silently condoned the Sector Commander's action, I was in fact permitting the operational situation to deteriorate and therefore increasing the potential risk to the 1300 Canadian peacekeepers in location.

Unity of Effort

Sector West was composed of four infantry battalions, one each from Argentina, Canada, Jordan and Nepal. Each battalion is a microcosm of its country's culture and characteristics; unfortunately, these characteristics were not necessarily the ones required by the UN for the particular mission at hand. This reality was reflected directly in mission execution, with some battalions aggressively imposing the articles of the Vance Plan, while others merely went through the motions. The belligerents used our diversity in execution to drive wedges between the UN participants. By continually criticizing a certain segment of the Force, they were attempting to destroy harmony and unity of effort.

Several lessons emerge from this scenario. First, it is essential that a UN commander create unity of effort within his battalions so all forces are striving towards a commonly recognized objective⁵. Second, realizing unity of effort will not translate into a common means of execution, UN commanders must judiciously evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the assigned forces, then assign their tasks accordingly. Last, commanders must have the political courage to adjust taskings to suit the personalities of the battalions as the situation develops. This was not done during my tour which resulted in two battalions being misemployed and the mission being jeopardized.

National Links

Complicating the command and control structure for all UN missions is the national link of battalions to their Ministries of Defense. Under normal circumstances, battalions are attached to the mission under "operational control". In addition, certain countries specify restrictions regarding the employment of their troops. Given these parameters, interference from national contingents in daily operations should be minimal. Such is not the case. Countries attempt to micromanage the activities of their contingents by issuing further restrictions on UN orders, requesting extensive reports, and establishing separate information networks. This is an anomaly of UN peacekeeping which must be tolerated since it will never disappear; however, I would recommend that Commanders minimize its effects by establishing close and personal contact with their subordinate commanding officers. Hopefully a command relationship built on trust and mutual respect would open these external channels of communication to discussion and thereby negate their often divisive effects.

NEGOTIATING

On arriving at Sector West, I realized the DSC did not have terms of reference, nor did anyone else for that matter. In addition, my predecessor was shunted aside by the former Commander as incompetent and unreliable. His office was not even in the Sector HQ!! As a result, my first two weeks were spent gaining credibility for the DSC position and writing terms of reference for myself and the Chief of Staff (COS), also a colonel.

What a nightmare having two full colonels in the HQ and a Sector Commander who would not take charge. In addition, our chief negotiator, the Civil Affairs Coordinator, departed the Sector a week after my arrival and was not replaced for two months. To complicate matters, he had not trained his staff to replace him. Not realizing the hornets' nest I was disturbing, I assumed the role of chief negotiator for the Sector by default...no one else would touch the position with a ten foot pole!

The ultimate aims of the two belligerents were established during my first encounters with their respective leaders. The Croats would not cede one inch of terrain to the Krajina Serbs, while the Serbs would never live under the flag they learned to hate from WWII. Given the intransigence of these positions, negotiation was difficult if not impossible. Yet we met individually with both sides on a weekly basis, and conducted a shuttle type diplomacy in trying to achieve our objectives. Though extremely frustrating, progress was made in certain areas. We also learned from our mistakes, as I will now detail.

An agenda, approved by Serb and Croat leadership, was essential. We initially permitted a free flow of communication to encourage open discussion and create an atmosphere of respect between the belligerents and UNPROFOR. However, as the security

situation deteriorated in the Sector, hostility around the negotiating table increased proportionately. We were often blindsided with issues we considered resolved or which were totally unknown. Verbal attacks against UNPROFOR became the norm, especially when we were unable to satisfy their requests from previous meetings. As a result, the sessions dragged on without substantial progress until we introduced, and enforced adherence to, an agenda. This initiative did not halt the verbal attacks on UNPROFOR, but at least they were restricted to "New Business" at the end of the meeting!

Patience is definitely a virtue in negotiating in this theater. Both the Serbs and Croats began each session with an "opening statement". This statement was normally an historic perspective of the conflict lasting anywhere from 20 to 40 minutes. All statements made were passionate, emotional and, in general, flowery. Progress was extremely slow. During my tour, in fact, we retrograded. Spending hours with these people, at all times of the day and night, listening to their abuse, and then not making any progress was heartbreaking, moral shattering, and pushed us to the limits of our patience and endurance. We often had to fight to maintain our self control to remain diplomatic and neutral.

Success in negotiating under these circumstances must be measured accordingly - in very small bites. We defined success as the successful implementation of joint peace building initiatives as their impact on the people would ultimately lead to long term stability in Western Slavonia. Major indicators of success included respect for the ceasefire by both parties, open channels of communication between UNPROFOR and the belligerents, and joint negotiating sessions, which we succeeded in arranging on two occasions. My advice is not to expect major breakthroughs under these circumstances. Such an expectation will lead

to disappointment and frustration. Most belligerents are not rational players and therefore will not perceive our initiatives for attaining a long term peace according to the UN perspective. However, if an issue appears plausible, force the parties to negotiate towards a clear and achievable objective. Persevere. They understand a position of strength and will respect it.

Use the team method of negotiating. I initially started out with a team of two - myself and a Civil Affairs Officer. We were constantly faced with issues beyond our scope of knowledge and authority. In addition, I always received the full brunt of their verbal attacks. By the third month, I had knitted together a negotiating team representing the major activities in the Sector: military, political, police, administrative/economic, and humanitarian assistance. Lead by the new CAC who arrived in May, the team met prior to each negotiating session to discuss the agenda, provide updates on past issues, raise new developments, and brainstorm the flow of the meeting. In other words, we created unity of effort. We were ready to speak with one voice on any challenge to UN policy, action or authority. We eventually created a camaraderie that fostered self confidence and was disconcerting for the belligerents. It worked!

Foremost in negotiating is the requirement to remain calm, cool, collected and in control. This was not easy given the circumstances, especially when the leaders from both sides would blatantly lie to support their positions. This Slavic propensity was best enunciated by Misha Glenny in his book, The Fall of Yugoslavia: "In Yugoslavia, deceit is the most common currency. For Balkan politics, it is axiomatic that the only truth is the lie."⁶ I will illustrate the veracity of this statement with an example.

In mid July, the Croatian police established additional check points (CP) along the CFL. Realizing the retaliatory effect this action would have on the Serbs, I ordered our troops to remove them. This provoked an unscheduled negotiating session with the Croat authorities who raged over the UN's "Gestapo tactics" and cited UNPROFOR's inability to protect average Croat citizens from Serb aggression as validation for the new CPs. Under severe pressure from several fronts to acquiesce to their demands, we permitted four new CPs to be erected on the CFL. As a quid pro quo, the Croatian Chief of Security for Western Slavonia signed an agreement declaring a moratorium on additional CPs for the remainder of the year. I explained the agreement to both the Sector Commander and the Serbs. They supported the decision, although reluctantly, based on the Croat promise not to further aggravate the situation. Yet within three weeks, in defiance of our agreement, they had erected new CPs beyond the four approved. The result was loss of face and credibility for UNPROFOR and for me in particular.

STAFF PROCEDURES

The frustration I experienced in negotiating with the two belligerents was virtually equaled in attempting to organize and manage an effective Sector HQ. A wide array of factors, primarily related to the culture of the seven different nationalities comprising the HQ staff, presented a plethora of problems which I tackled daily in order to create efficiency and harmony from potential chaos. Although many of these items seem petty, they should not be dismissed as irrelevant. They are reality when creating and managing a combined HQ.

The major factor in creating an effective HQ is the experience and motivation of the assigned officers. The fact that an officer is a lieutenant-colonel does equate to a certain

degree of knowledge, skill and experience, especially in the realm of staff duties and procedures. The other colonel in the HQ could not write a simple memorandum which was clear, concise and understood. Nor was he motivated to do so. He worked the UN stipulated hours of operation - 0730 to 1500 hrs five days a week - then went back to his room, although his operations staff was busy nights and weekends. This placed me in the uncomfortable position of performing his duties surreptitiously since the Sector Commander would not counsel or discipline that Colonel to perform otherwise. This same scenario was replicated in several key positions in the HQ, with the conscientious, competent officers taking up the slack.

On my arrival in Sector West, the staff was discontent, fractured, and working in isolation. The work was delegated to a few individuals whom the former Sector Commander could trust to perform competently. The remainder of the staff, like my predecessor, were ignored. This was an extremely uncomfortable situation which I set about correcting immediately upon assuming my duties following our seven day handover period. My first decision was to institute, in addition to the daily 0730 hrs operational brief, a weekly staff meeting to coordinate the activities of each cell and to forecast future requirements. I demanded that each section head provide a briefing on their area of responsibility. This forced them to recapture control of their sections, made them an integral part of the team, and improved moral perceptively in very short order. Word quickly spread about the "new way of doing business" in the HQ.

A major obstacle in implementing my plan to share the workload in the HQ is the working language of the UN - English. Given the composition of Sector West, the mother

tongue of only one nation was English - Canada. As a result, the burden of producing the majority of the staff work fell on the Canadian personnel. This created an extremely unfair expectation for a small segment of the HQ staff, especially the clerical section which was 100% Canadian. Although a staunch perfectionist for staff duties, I began to understand the reality of the UN system - we cannot and should not expect the same level of staff duties from a UN HQ that we would in our own countries or a situation will arise similar to that which existed in Sector West prior to my arrival. Therefore I began insisting that the responsible staff, regardless of linguistic ability, produce its own work. Initially a painful exercise, the decision began to produce results after a few weeks. In retrospect, it was also a very opportune decision since the Canadians changed Sectors in September 1993 leaving Sector West with no native English capability!

After I was in Sector West about four weeks, a delegation of various officers and NCOs requested an interview with me to raise several complaints concerning HQ routine. One related to the work hours issue, but two others are also noteworthy. The officers from one of the contingents, due to the customs and tradition in their army, expected to be assigned a UN vehicle for their personal use 24 hours a day. Given the limited number of vehicles available to the Sector HQ, this expectation was impossible to realize without jeopardizing operational efficiency. However, this is exactly what was happening. Without support from the Sector Commander, I had great difficulty re-assigning the vehicles.

The second issue concerned leave, a serious matter for personnel on a one year unaccompanied tour of duty. It seems certain contingents were taking leave well in excess of their quota, thereby creating a considerable morale problem for the remainder of the staff. I

could easily have solved the problem by my signing all leave passes. But you must understand the sensitivities involved. To execute this action would have required my explaining its rationale to the Sector Commander. In doing so, it would have been necessary to accuse certain nationalities of cheating the UN leave system, and the lieutenant-colonel Administrative Officer of negligence. Remember the Sector Commander's aim - no waves on his watch! So again, I resolved the problem through back-door measures. I do not like operating in this manner, but it became imperative in order to achieve results.

PEACE BUILDING

During the period from July 1992 to January 1993 when Sector West was achieving great success in implementing the articles of the Vance Plan, the CAC initiated a number of innovative peace building projects. One example which initially succeeded was called the Family CP Meetings whereby families separated by the war could meet at a CP on the CFL to exchange news, gifts, and mail. These meetings were incredible morale boosters for a people ravaged by war and living without the basic necessities of life like heat, electricity and running water. Unfortunately, this initiative, like all the others, were suspended following the Croatian Army attack into Sector South on 22 January 1993.

On my arrival, the operational situation was stabilizing slightly from the chaos produced by the 22 January attack, so great effort was invested attempting to restart the peace building initiatives. As I stated in our definition of success, we considered these projects as the foundation for a long term solution to the conflict. When I accepted the role of chief negotiator following the departure of the CAC, I also accepted responsibility for their implementation. Again I found myself in uncharted waters for which I was totally

unprepared. I inherited the responsibility for the lives, livelihood and survival of an entire sector of Croatia, a reality whose magnitude did not strike me for several months.

My first impression of the task concerned the total lack of coordination between the various agencies conducting operations in Sector West. There were approximately four UN agencies and 12 NGOs all working at odds with each other. I had difficulty even determining the projects currently being undertaken within the area for which we had total responsibility! This was not acceptable performance for a security organization that was supposed to be controlling movement and protecting lives within the Sector. I therefore initiated a Peace Building Coordination Committee which met monthly to update projects, provide reports on new developments and share information. This initiative enhanced cooperation between the various organizations, reduced redundancy and increased efficiency. I was particularly relieved that our UN troops were subsequently able to provide the necessary security to these organizations as required.

There is considerable debate about the role of the military in peace building. There are two extremist viewpoints: one advocates that peace building is solely the purview of NGOs and UN relief organizations, while the other believes the military should lead. My experience on the ground has produced a middle of the road theory - if the civilian authorities are not in control, the military MUST lead. This was the case in Sector West. I was the driving force in peace building for two months until the new CAC arrived. Even after he assumed control, I remained intimately involved in the process as the military must play a key role in security issues, a prerequisite for peace building and humanitarian initiatives to succeed. As a result, I would recommend that a ninth principle of humanitarian

action be added to the list developed by the Thomas J. Watson, Jr. Institute for International Studies at Brown University - Security.⁷

In addition to the security role played by the military, I made key resource personnel from the Sector HQ available to assist humanitarian agencies. For example, the Sector Engineer Officer was an invaluable advisor in the restoration of electrical and water purification facilities, while the Preventive Medicine Technicians provided their expertise in inspecting refugee camps, food preparation areas and water sources.

The team spirit created by coordinating the efforts of all agencies towards common goals produced excellent results. We received visitors from other Sectors and UNPROFOR HQ to learn from our experiences and provide further assistance. The Deputy Force Commander stated categorically that he believed the military must play a greater role in peace building/humanitarian activities and was happy that Sector West had taken the lead. It is only through stabilizing relations between the belligerents and improving the economic situation for both sides that an atmosphere conducive to reaching a long term peace agreement will occur. It is essential, therefore, that once the security situation has been stabilized, peace building become the priority for all participants in any given mission.

OPERATIONS

Security

Security is one of the principles of peace operations⁸. All contingency plans must emphasize security particularly as it pertains to extracting the force in an emergency. This is an essential requirement which could possibly be excluded in our enthusiasm for the accomplishment of the mission. I will illustrate my point with an example from Sector West.

The rules of engagement for UNPROFOR give authority for UN personnel to use their weapons "to resist deliberate military or para-military incursions into the United Nations Protected Areas or Safe Areas."⁹ As a result of this direction, the Sector West operations staff prepared a number of contingency plans to defend the UNPA from aggressive action by either of the two sides. One particular contingency plan was assigned the highest priority for action since it was deemed the most feasible option for the belligerents by the former Sector Commander. Code named "Operation BACKSTOP", the plan called for the deliberate defense of the UNPA against a Croatian Army attack to recapture control of the Zagreb-Belgrade Autoput (Annex D).

In accordance with Operation BACKSTOP, the Canadian Battalion would deploy two of its mechanized companies to the Nepalese and Jordanian areas and occupy prepared dug-in defensive positions. The aim was to defend the east and west high speed approaches into the UNPA along the Autoput. The intent was as follows:

- attempt to deter aggressive action by the Croatian Army by openly preparing to defend the approaches into the Serb held area
- clearly demonstrate the resolve of the UN to defend the UNPA prior to the outbreak of hostilities
- engage the attackers at long range using anti-tank weapons and mortars
- protect the withdrawal of the Nepalese and Jordanian Battalions
- withdraw supported by the remainder of Canadian Battalion

This plan was conceived and practiced prior to my arrival. For all intents and purposes its deterrent goal was successful as the Croatian authorities were convinced of our

intention to defend the UNPA with UN forces. My concern on reviewing the plan and observing the rehearsals was the security of the force. Should Operation BACKSTOP be executed and the force be compelled to withdraw, the withdrawal would be conducted through Croatia, the country whose armed forces we have just engaged. Given the hostile attitude of the Croats towards UNPROFOR under normal conditions due to Zagreb's anti-UN propaganda campaign, UN personnel would be in grave danger once we had opened fire on and killed Croatian citizens. The reality of the situation created a definite dilemma between the accomplishment of the mission and the security of the force, a dilemma which was never considered in the original planning. As a result, I recommended to the Sector Commander that Operation BACKSTOP be reconfigured as primarily a means of deterrence.

External Influences

It is essential that UN commanders and G3 staffs be cognizant of the activities in adjacent Sectors and countries. During my tour in the former Yugoslavia, the main effort for UNPROFOR was B-H; Croatia was a merely a side show. As the situation deteriorated in B-H, the UN Security Council (SC) progressively micromanaged deterrence measures and the application of force without serious consideration of the resulting affects in Croatia. For example, SC resolution (SCR) 781 passed in November 1992 banned all military flights in the airspace of B-H except those authorized by UNPROFOR¹⁰. Between November 1992 and March 1993, observers reported 465 violations of SCR 781. As a result, the SC adopted resolution 816 on 31 March 1993 extending the no fly zone and authorizing its enforcement by Member States¹¹. In other words, the SC decided to put some teeth into its threat to use force to halt Serb aggression in B-H.

This UN action against the Bosnian Serbs had immediate repercussions in Sector West. The Krajina Serb authorities requested an urgent meeting with our negotiating committee. At this meeting they stated quite categorically that a hostile act against the Bosnian Serbs would be tantamount to a declaration of war by the UN against the entire Serb community. As a result, they would react accordingly by withdrawing their weapons from the equipment depots and engaging UN troops as ordered by their higher HQ. These threats were accompanied by a more hostile attitude around the negotiating table and an unwillingness to participate in any peace building ventures. Based on these threats, Sector West HQ developed contingency plans for dealing with possible Serb actions including a complete withdrawal from UNPA south of the CFL.

This example illustrates only one of many critical situations we faced in Sector West caused by external actions beyond our control. Although contingency planning was conducted, we could not foresee all possible factors impacting upon our operations. We therefore required an Operations Section that could react quickly to crisis situations and disseminate information rapidly to the ground forces.

Intelligence

"The intelligence needs of the commander involved in peace operations are in some ways more complex than those of the commander conducting combat operations in war"¹². I agree wholeheartedly with this declaration in FM 100-23. Unfortunately, the whole concept of intelligence (intel) carries a negative connotation in most peacekeeping operations. This was certainly the case in Croatia. In fact, it was forbidden to use the term "intelligence". Any details on the belligerents was referred to as "information". It was presumed that hard

core intel was not required since both parties had consented to the deployment of UNPROFOR. As a result, there was also no requirement to covertly observe and obtain information on their activities. When we attempted an intel operation, the belligerents became extremely emotional, almost irrational, and accused us of "spying". They firmly believed we would subsequently pass on any information to the other side.

Given this scenario, we were virtually devoid of information on belligerent activities inside the UNPA beyond those seen by the human eye. We did have patrol reports from the battalions and an Information Officer who gathered data via human intel (HUMINT) sources. Since UNPROFOR personnel were not permitted to patrol outside the borders of the UNPA, we relied entirely on UN Military Observers for intel on Croatian Army activities within the LOWs. But outside the LOWs, there was no source of intel at all. This was an extremely serious concern since Operation BACKSTOP required eight hours notice of an attack on the UNPA to permit the deployment of the Canadian companies. We had no means to obtain that degree of warning.

CONCLUSION

UNPROFOR did not succeed in its mission, as I defined it, during my tour as DSC in Sector West. In reality, we retrograded considerably for a number of reasons. Although the increased aggressiveness of the Serbs and the mounting frustration of the Croats over UNPROFOR's failure to fulfill its mandate were key factors, I attribute the majority of the blame to our lack of aggressiveness and resolve in reacting to the violations of the belligerents. The personality of the Sector Commander combined with the fear of incurring friendly casualties caused us to cede to the desires of the belligerents when our backs were

up against the wall. Each time we abandoned our hard line position, we lost credibility and face with the Serb and Croat leaders. These leaders respected mental and physical toughness and expected us to rigidly enforce the articles of the Vance Plan. Once we displayed weakness in our resolve, it was a "slippery slope" until we virtually lost control of the Sector.

Failure can become absolute unless some benefit is derived from the experience in the form of lessons learned. A summary of those lessons from my UNPROFOR experience follows:

- preparatory training should include a historical perspective of the conflict, information on the culture of the belligerents, and basic negotiating skills in addition to the common military skills required for any combat operation;
- peace operations require a PSYOP capability to negate anti-UN propaganda spread by one or all of the belligerents;
- officers assigned to key positions in multinational UN HQ may experience a conflict of conscience between their loyalty to the UN chain of command and loyalty to their countries;
- commanders must stress unity of effort in peace operations due to the varied characteristics of the countries comprising the mission;
- national communication links can be divisive in a mission unless formation commanders establish relationships founded on mutual trust and respect with their subordinate commanders;

- negotiating sessions should follow an agenda to keep discussions within agreed parameters;
- patience and perseverance are essential for successful negotiators, as well as remaining cool, calm and collected;
- creating a negotiating team to represent all facets of the UN mission is a winner;
- team spirit in a multinational HQ is essential, yet difficult to create.

Understanding, utilizing, and optimizing the capabilities of the assigned personnel is a good start point;

- petty personal problems arising among the staff in a multinational HQ are serious distracters to harmony and efficiency; therefore, they must be resolved;
- the military has an fundamental role to play in peace building, and often must lead in the initial stages;
- coordination of all agencies involved in peace building is essential to reduce redundancy and improve efficiency;
- peace building must receive the highest priority once the conflict has been stabilized. It will be provide the roots of a long lasting peace;
- withdrawal routes to exit the mission area must form part of any contingency planning scenario;
- external factors which impact on local operations are often unexpected. This necessitates the requirement for flexibility in crisis management from the operations staff, and

- the lack of an intel capability in the UN is a serious weakness and should be redressed.

The UN is becoming increasingly efficient in conducting peace operations.

Individual countries and certain regions are dedicating considerable effort in improving their training methodology to prepare their personnel for a UN assignment. However, the emphasis on training appears focused primarily at the troop level rather than planners and HQ staffs. There is a definite requirement to train individuals assigned to multinational HQ staff in HQ procedures in order to attain a common level of knowledge and skills. Whether this training is conducted by the UN, a designated country like Canada, or nationally is irrelevant provided a standard curriculum is developed and promulgated for employment by troop contributors. Such an initiative would contribute immeasurably to eliminating many of the problems and frustrations I encountered in creating an efficient multinational HQ and performing my duties as DSC in Sector West, Croatia.

¹ John Zametica, Adelphi Paper 270: The Yugoslav Conflict (London: Brassey's (UK) Ltd., 1992), 6-46. The facts and ideas for the Historical Background were obtained from this publication.

² This is the official UNPROFOR mandate which I obtained while in Croatia from March to September 1993.

³ Department of the Army, Field Manual 100-23: Peace Operations (Washington: U.S. Department of the Army, 30 December 1994), 9. The UNPAs correlate to the term Protected Zones used in FM 100-23.

⁴ Ibid, 4.

⁵ Department of the Army, Field Manual 100-5: Operations (Washington: U.S. Department of the Army, 14 June 1993), 2-5.

⁶ Misha Glenny, The Fall of Yugoslavia: The Third Balkan War, (New York: Penguin Books, 1992).

⁷ Peace Operations, 28.

⁸ *Ibid*, 16-17.

⁹ Bruce D. Berkowitz, "Rules of Engagement for U.N. Peacekeeping Forces in Bosnia," Orbis, Fall 1994, 637-638.

¹⁰ United Nations, "Reference Paper: The United Nations and the Situation in the Former Yugoslavia", (New York: United Nations Department of Public Information, 7 May 1993), 9.

¹¹ United Nations, "Reference Paper: The United Nations and the Situation in the Former Yugoslavia", (New York: United Nations Department of Public Information, 15 March 1994), 9.

¹² Peace Operations, 45.

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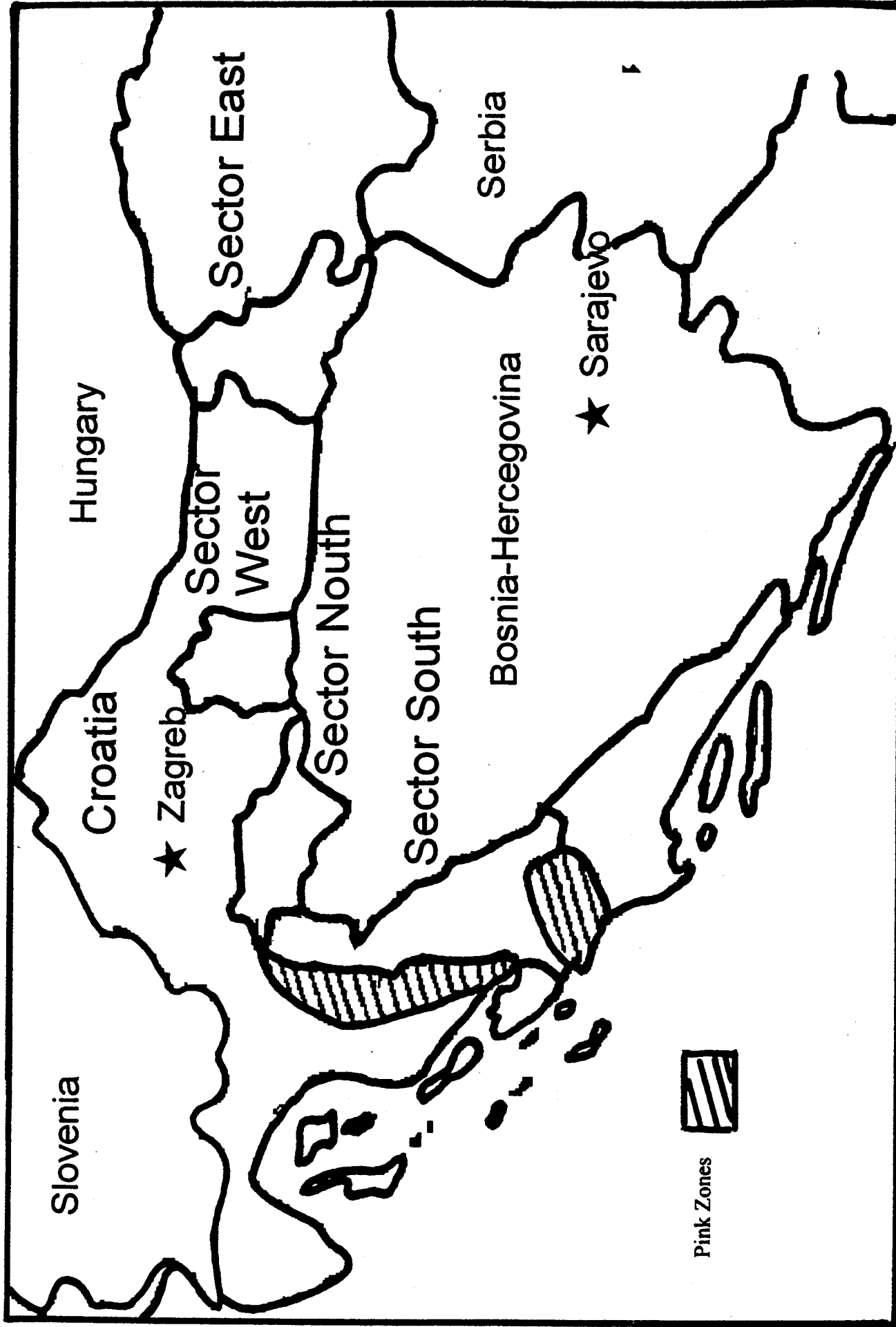
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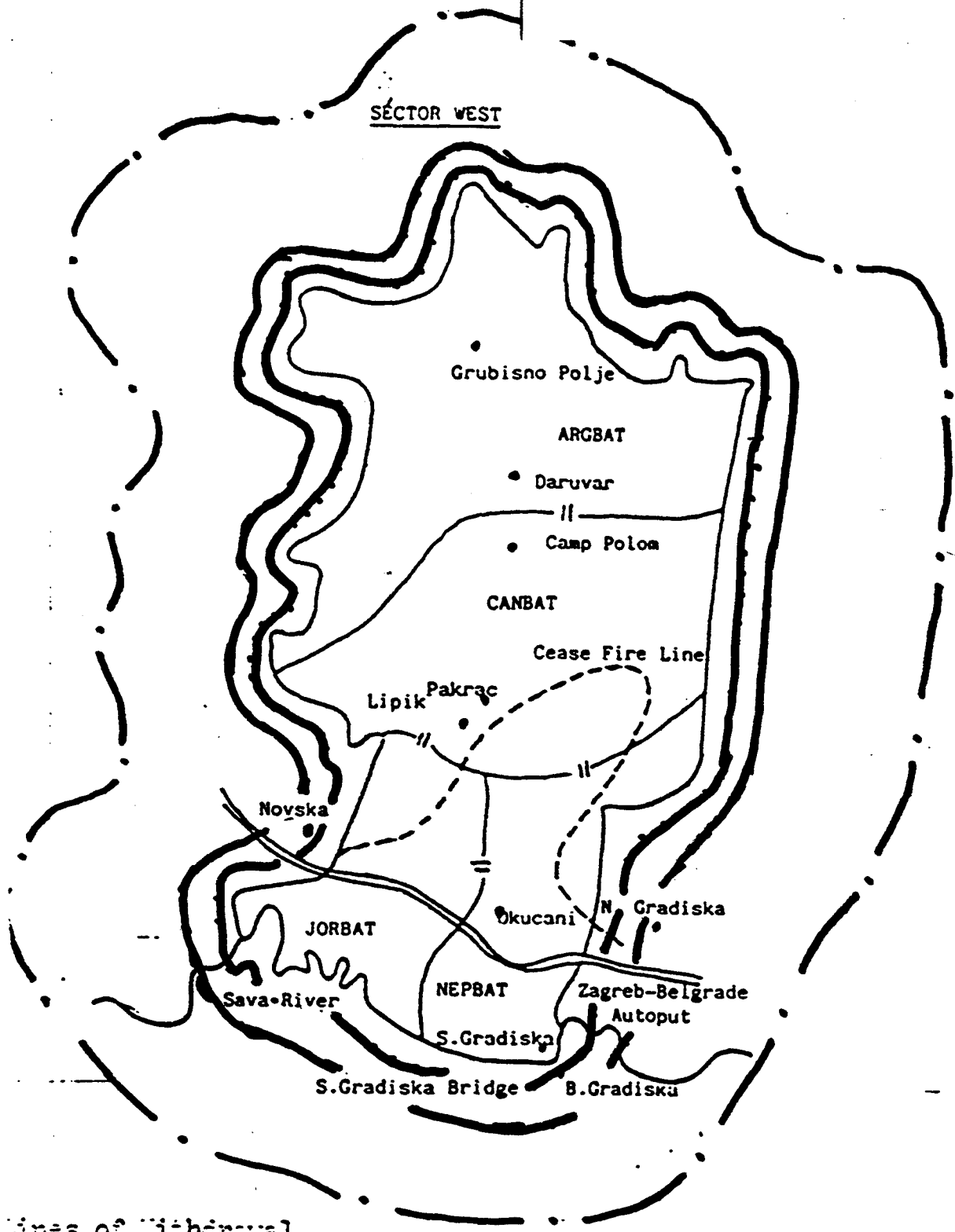
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Croatia - UN Protected Areas

Annex A
To UNPROFOR: A Perspective from the Field





Lines of Withdrawal

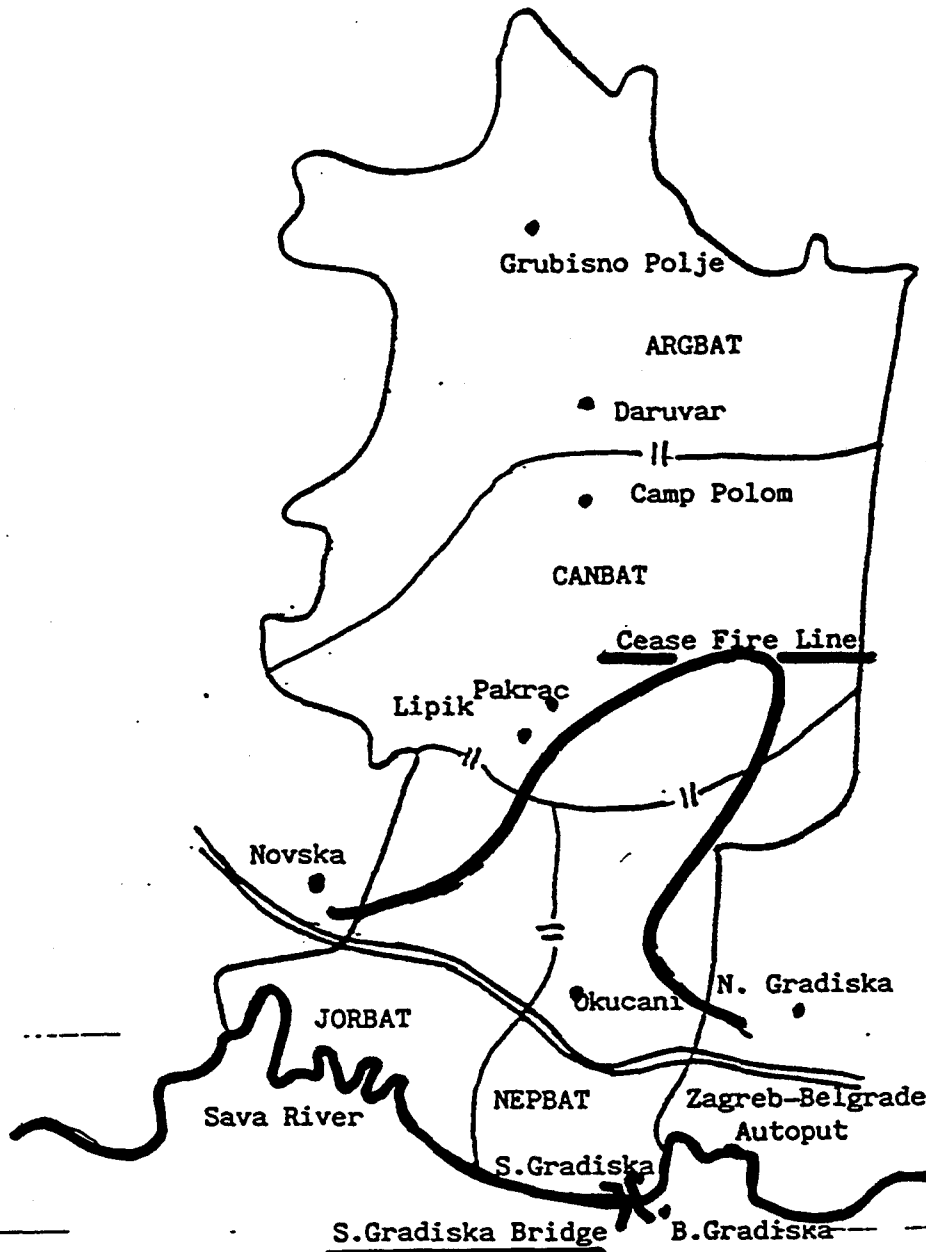
- 5km
- 10km
- - - 30km

The Vance Plan

Lines of Withdrawal

Annex C
To UNPROFOR: A Perspective from the Field

SECTOR WEST



SECTOR WEST
OPERATION BACKSTOP

