# Srebrenica: a ‘safe’ area

## Part II - Dutchbat in the enclave

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# Contents

Chapter 1 The organizational structure of UNPROFOR ..... 5
1. Introduction ..... 5
2. UNPROFOR Headquarters in Zagreb ..... 6
3. Bosnia-Hercegovina Command ..... 9
4. Standing Operating Procedures and Rules of Engagement ..... 14

Chapter 2 The history preceding the conflict in Eastern Bosnia up until the establishment of the Safe Area ..... 21
1. The economic and political crisis of the eighties ..... 21
2. The 1990 elections in Bosnia ..... 23
3. The beginning of the war, April 1992 ..... 26
4. The Muslims fight back ..... 28
5. Consequences of the Serb counteroffensive for Srebrenica in the beginning of 1993 ..... 30

Chapter 3 Srebrenica under UN protection: demilitarized and Safe Area (March - June 1993) ..... 37
1. Introduction ..... 37
2. Ceasefire and demilitarization under UN presence (10 March - 17 April 1993) ..... 39
3. Implementation of the demilitarization agreement of 18 April 1993 ..... 46
4. The second demilitarization agreement of 8 May 1993 ..... 53
5. Failure of the second demilitarization of Srebrenica ..... 55
6. Conclusion ..... 58

Chapter 4 Srebrenica in the time of CanBat - the humanitarian situation and the arrival of the NGOs 59
1. The humanitarian situation ..... 59
2. The activities of the UN aid organizations and the NGOs ..... 65
3. NGOs and their relationship with the Opstina ..... 75
4. Conclusion: mood ..... 78

Chapter 5 The preparation and dispatch of Dutchbat ..... 81
1. Introduction ..... 81
2. The planning for the dispatch of the Airmobile Brigade ..... 81
3. The planning order for the dispatch of Dutchbat ..... 86
4. The Dutchbat Equipment ..... 89
5. The Dutchbat personnel ..... 93
6. The Dutchbat training ..... 94
7. The formation and training of Dutchbat III ..... 100
8. How Dutchbat came to be in Srebrenica ..... 104
9. The Canadians move out, the Dutch move in ..... 111
10. The third reconnaissance mission: Srebrenica and Zepa (21 January – 10 February 1994) ..... 117
11. Departure and deployment: February – July 1994 ..... 120
12. The operational zone of Srebrenica and Zepa changes to Srebrenica and Sapna-finger ..... 122
13. The Canadians are out of it – Dutchbat gets started ..... 123
14. Conclusion ..... 128

Chapter 6 Operational performance of Dutchbat I, II and III in the Safe Area Srebrenica ..... 131
1. Introduction ..... 131
2. Struggling with the UNPROFOR mandate in Bosnia ..... 132
3. Dutchbat's order ..... 136
4. The organization of Dutchbat ..... 138

5. Rules and instructions for Dutchbat: Standing Orders ..... 139
6. The ABiH in Srebrenica ..... 148
7. The VRS around Srebrenica ..... 152
8. The Dutchbat information picture ..... 153
9. Demilitarization and the Ceasefire Line ..... 156
10. Dutchbat I and the Ceasefire Line ..... 160
11. Dutchbat II and the Ceasefire Line ..... 165
12. Operational action ..... 168
13. Patrols ..... 169
14. The Dutchbat I period ..... 171
15. Limited possibilities in times of tension ..... 175
16. Organizational changes at Dutchbat II ..... 176
17. Dutchbat II: a logistical squeeze and operations on foot ..... 176
18. Observation posts, patrols and mine incidents ..... 179
19. Dutchbat III: confrontation instead of ceasefire - the Bandera triangle ..... 183
20. More emphasis on observation from permanent points: new OPs ..... 190
21. Dutchbat III and the warring factions ..... 193
22. Conclusion ..... 196

Chapter 7 Dutchbat in the enclave – the local perspective ..... 199
1. The Canadians relieved by the Dutch ..... 199
2. Living conditions in and around the enclave ..... 200
3. The internal political relations in the enclave ..... 205
4. Conflicts between the NGOs and the authorities threaten the continuation of the humanitarian aid programmes ..... 212

Chapter 8 Peacekeeping and humanitarian action ..... 216
1. Peacekeeping in theory and practice ..... 216
2. Training and preparation of the three Dutchbat battalions ..... 220
3. Stereotypes and 'Balkan Man' ..... 223
4. Conclusion: was the training deficient? ..... 229
5. The arrival of Dutchbat I, II and III in the enclave: an impression of the atmosphere ..... 230
6. Contacts with the population of the enclave: an impression of the atmosphere ..... 232
7. Contacts with the Bosnian Serbs ..... 240
8. Contacts with UN organizations and NGOs ..... 242
9. Dutchbat's problems: what should be done and how should it be done? ..... 242
10. Problems between Dutchbat and the warring factions ..... 244
11. Logistics problems ..... 251
12. Socio-cultural and psychological problems ..... 255
13. Peacekeeper stress ..... 263
14. Problems with the behaviour of Dutchbat personnel: the attitude towards Muslims ..... 268
15. The extent of anti-Muslim behaviour ..... 272
16. The attitude towards the Bosnian Serbs ..... 276
17. Humanitarian assistance in Srebrenica ..... 277
18. The field of tension between the military and the humanitarian duties ..... 280
19. Medical assistance ..... 283
20. Collaboration of Dutchbat with the NGOs ..... 287
21. The military-civil liaisons: Civil Affairs ..... 289
22. Liaison in Dutchbat I and II ..... 292
23. Liaison in Dutchbat III ..... 295
24. The psychology of the peacekeeper ..... 296

25. Tension between the objective of the mission and the motivation of the participants ..... 300
26. Evaluation of the deployment of 'airmobile' as peacekeepers ..... 302
27. Evaluation: the training relative to the population of the enclave ..... 306
28. Evaluation: the perspective of the commanders ..... 308

Chapter 9 How Dutchbat functioned internally until the VRS attack ..... 312
1. Introduction ..... 312
2. The problem of the morale ..... 313
3. The role of the Battalion Commander ..... 317
4. Sources of frustration and discouragement ..... 319
5. Differences in the morale per battalion ..... 323
6. Recapitulation concerning the morale ..... 324
7. Misconduct ..... 325
8. Back to square one: misconduct after all? ..... 334
9. Conclusions concerning misconduct ..... 337
10. The B-Company attitude ..... 340
11. Right-wing extremist behaviour in B-Company ..... 342
12. Summary concerning the internal functioning of Dutchbat I, II and III ..... 346
13. The functioning of the Dutchbat III leaders ..... 349

Chapter 10 Srebrenica from the national and international point of view ..... 352
1. Introduction ..... 352
2. The Contact Group ..... 355
3. Lifting of the arms embargo against Bosnia-Hercegovina ..... 368
4. More robust use of air power? ..... 373
5. The new Dutch 'purple' Government and Bosnia ..... 375
6. Crisis in the Safe Area Bihac and possible transfer of a Dutchbat company ..... 380
7. Concessions of the Contact Group ..... 387
8. The meeting of the Chiefs of Defence Staff in The Hague: improvement of the effectiveness of UNPROFOR ..... 391
9. Test criteria and the Van Middelkoop motion ..... 394
10. Withdrawal of UNPROFOR? ..... 395
11. Replacement of Dutchbat? ..... 398
12. A balance in Bosnia policy? ..... 401

# Chapter 1
# The organizational structure of UNPROFOR

## 1. Introduction

When Dutchbat was sent to the former Yugoslavia, it became part of an organization which had a different structure than the familiar NATO one to which the units of the Royal Netherlands Army were accustomed. In this chapter, we describe in general the specific structure and mission of the UN peacekeeping operation, under which Dutchbat operated in the years 1994 and 1995. This chapter concentrates on the military structure and the chain of command. Three headquarters acted as nodes in this chain: UNPROFOR headquarters in Zagreb, followed by the Bosnia-Hercegovina Command and third, the Sector North East headquarters in Tuzla. In this chapter, we also describe the arrangements and tasks of two other organizations with which Dutchbat had contact with during its mission in Srebrenica. These were the United Nations Military Observers (UNMOs) and the United Nations Civilian Police (UnCivPol). After describing the organizational structure we will discuss the operational rules to which the UN peacekeeping operation was bound, in particular the Rules of Engagement.

Normally, when Dutch troops are deployed as part of a NATO effort, there is a clear division of responsibility between the NATO authorities and the Dutch government. In these cases, there are clear agreements about command and control, the influence of national governments, the operational authority of the NATO Commander in Chief and about all the other aspects involved in the execution of a NATO operation. The execution of these operations is planned according to strict procedures and there are unambiguous rules about collaboration between national military authorities and the military arms of the NATO. The closely coordinated parties can thus proceed according to a fixed scenario. Dutch troops have prepared and trained to operate in such a context since the 1950s.

By contrast, a UN peacekeeping operation lacks this type of systematic planning and training. A completely different scenario applies. Once the Security Council has decided to begin a peacekeeping operation and has laid down the mandate of the peacekeeping force in a resolution, it is up to the UN Secretary-General to organize the operation from scratch. Below, we describe how this takes place.

The UN Secretariat's Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) draws up a provisional plan for the peace operation. The Secretary-General requests the member states to contribute troops and personnel for the operation and its staff. At the same time, the Secretariat builds up a civilian staff team, usually composed of people from the UN organization. Together, the military and civilian components form the peacekeeping mission. Important steps in this preparatory process are the appointment of the military Commander in Chief and other key officials. The most striking characteristic of this planning phase is its ad hoc nature. In general, three to four months pass from the moment that the Security Council accepts the resolution to the deployment of the first peacekeeping units in the operation area. The legal status of the peacekeeping corps is laid down in a Status of the Forces Agreement between the recipient state or states and the United Nations. In Bosnia, this agreement was not binding, because the Bosnian Croats and the Bosnian Serbs did not recognize the UN's agreement with President Izetbegovic of Bosnia.[1]

Of course the UN Secretariat in New York can tap into past experiences with previous peacekeeping operations, but each mission is nevertheless unique due to specific characteristics and difficulties concerning the nature of the conflict, the parties to the conflict and the region where it is taking place. Sometimes, the best option may be to deploy the troops of the permanent members of the Security Council, in other cases the UN will prefer to utilize troops from the same continent; in yet other cases troops from a certain country might not be welcome because one of the parties to the conflict has accused that country of being partial.

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[1] J.W. Koet, 'Legal Advisor UNPROFOR Bosnia-Hercegovina' in: Militair Rechtelijk Tijdschrift 88 (1995), p. 33-35.

The foundations for a peacekeeping operation must therefore be laid with the utmost care. This preparatory operation has three main elements. First, it is necessary to establish a headquarters. Second, units must be recruited which are both adequately trained and equipped. Third, rules must be drawn up governing the implementation of the mission's mandate. With respect to this third point, two categories of rules can be distinguished. In addition to general rules about routine matters such as uniforms, modes of dispatch, transportation and behaviour, there is the operational brief addressing the execution of the peacekeeping task, and the internal and external security of the peacekeeping operation. The most important rules in this second category are the so-called Rules of Engagement (RoE) on the use of force. All rules are laid down in the Standing Operating Procedures (SOP). Each subordinate commander then translates these instructions into a standing brief for his operation area.

All these actions by the UN Secretariat culminate in a multinational peacekeeping force. The military component of this force cannot be compared with regular armed forces. On paper, a peacekeeping force might appear to have overlaps with a regular army, even though the former are typically equipped with only light weapons for self-defence purposes and do not have heavy weapons. But unlike regular armed forces, a UN peacekeeping force is made up of national contingents. Each has its own level of training, its own bearing and attitude, and often specific instructions from its national government with respect to its functioning in the operation area.

For all these reasons, headquarters cannot suffice with drawing up plans, giving orders and monitoring their execution. In practice, it is often impossible to use every component of the peacekeeping force for every task. Troop-contributing nations often lay down limiting conditions: sometimes, troops may only and explicitly be used in a certain region, or they may only be used to carry out a certain part of the peacekeeping mandate. The commanders of the national contingents of the peacekeeping force often maintain a direct line of communication with their national military authorities regarding orders given by the peacekeeping force command centre. These complicating factors clearly played a role in the construction of the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR).

## 2. UNPROFOR Headquarters in Zagreb

UNPROFOR was established on 21 February 1992 by resolution 743 of the Security Council to implement a plan, developed by the Special Envoy of the UN Secretary-General Cyrus Vance, for the demilitarization and withdrawal of the Yugoslav Army from the United Nations Protected Areas (UNPAs) in Croatia.[2] The international decision-making process which led to this was described extensively in Part I, Chapter 4. In early March 1992, the proposed leaders of UNPROFOR travelled to New York to consult with Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, the Undersecretaries-General Sir Marrack Goulding and Kofi Annan and the latter's righthand man Sashi Tharoor. This group of senior UN officials briefed the Force Commander, General S. Nambiar of India, his deputy, General Ph. Morillon of France and the Chief of Staff, General L. Mackenzie of Canada on the situation in the future operation area, Croatia. On the basis of the information provided, they proceeded to develop an operation plan.

The UN Secretariat's Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) decided to situate the UNPROFOR Headquarters in Sarajevo rather than Croatia, the area of operation , in order to stress the impartiality of the peacekeeping mission. The UN Secretariat also hoped that the choice for the Bosnian capital would bring some stability to Bosnia, where tensions were mounting fast.[3] In practice, however, the establishment of the UNPROFOR headquarters in Sarajevo was not a feasible solution, being too far removed from the areas where the peacekeeping force was in operation. There was not enough contact with those in the field and much time was lost in travelling and working visits. In April 1992, the political tension in Bosnia-Hercegovina culminated in all-out war between the three ethnic

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[2] United Nations Yearbook 1992.

[3] Srebrenica Report, 5 (para.14).

groups there. The international community put considerable pressure on UNPROFOR to intervene in this conflict, too. On 16 and 17 May of that year, in the heat of the Bosnian conflict, two-thirds of the Sarajevo headquarters staff under Force Commander Nambiar moved to Belgrado. This is discussed in detail in Part I, Chapter 5. The remaining one hundred military and civilian staff members in Sarajevo carried out admirable work in bringing about ceasefires and organizing humanitarian aid, without in fact having been mandated to do so.

In the summer of 1992, the UNPROFOR headquarters was established in the Croatian capital of Zagreb.[4] Ultimately, UNPROFOR headquarters would become responsible for peacekeeping operations in much of the former Yugoslavia: with a resolution in June 1992 the Security Council extended its mandate to Bosnia-Hercegovina, and in November 1992 to Macedonia. Due to this accumulation of resolutions by the Security Council, UNPROFOR eventually found itself with a different mandate per area of operation.

General Nambiar led the UNPROFOR operation until he stepped down in March 1993. He was responsible for all aspects of the implementation of the peacekeeping operation. A different construct was introduced under his successor, General L-E Wahlgren of Sweden (see figure 1). This came about as follows: in May 1993, the UN's co-chair at the International Conference on the former Yugoslavia, Th. Stoltenberg was appointed Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG). As such, he acted as head of the UN mission in the former Yugoslavia and served as the first point of contact for the Department of Peacekeeping Operations in New York. All contacts between UNPROFOR in Zagreb and the UN in New York had to run via his office. This also applied to the Force Commander's communications which did not mean, however, that the Force Commander had no direct contact with New York. The aim of having one person fill both positions of head of the UN peacekeeping operation and of co-chair at the peace negotiations in Geneva was to achieve a better synchronization of the UN's input at the peace talks and UNPROFOR's work in the field. As SRSG, Mr Stoltenberg was responsible for the coordination of all UNPROFOR operations, which also entailed assessments of the political implications of operational decisions as well as the actions of the conflicting parties.

In practice, this combination of tasks was impossible to juggle. A serious conflict is said to have occurred between Thorvald Stoltenberg and General Wahlgren's successor, General J. Cot of France. Cot was appointed in July 1993 in return for President Mitterrand's additional contribution of two French battalions.[5] General Cot disagreed with Mr Stoltenberg about the latter's role as SRSG, and at the end of 1993 the two tasks were again split up. Mr Stoltenberg stayed on as co-chair of the peace negotiations in Geneva on behalf of the UN, and on 1 January 1994 the Japanese diplomat Y. Akashi was appointed SRSG responsible for all UNPROFOR operations in the former Yugoslavia. It was he who negotiated with the authorities of the conflicting parties. The Force Commander, usually a Lieutenant-General, continued to be responsible for all military matters and all military personnel of the national contingents came under his command. The Force Commander appointed areas of operation to the various contingents (taking into account any existing preconditions) and issued orders (in accordance with the Security Council's mandate).

In addition to the Force Commander, the Head of Civilian Affairs was also situated in Zagreb. The latter official was responsible for all negotiations and contacts with civilian authorities. He had a broad set of tasks, for example following and evaluating political developments, collecting information for the SRSG, giving legal advice, bearing responsibility for the return of refugees to their place of residence, and monitoring humanitarian affairs and respect for the rights of minorities and for human rights.

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[4] CRST. UNPROFOR aide memoire to Troop Contributing Nations. Chapter 1, Appendix F, pp. 2 and 5. Boutros-Ghali, Unvanquished, pp. 38-40; Mackenzie, Peacekeeper.

[5] Interview B. Boutros-Ghali, 30/01/01.

The third authority under the SRSG at the UNPROFOR headquarters was the Chief Administrative Officer, with responsibility for the administrative, logistic and technical aspects of the operation as well as all financial affairs. Coming from the UN Department of Management and Administration in New York, this official had a lot of power and influence in the bureaucracy of the UN.[6]

The most important members of the Force Commander's staff were the Deputy Force Commander and the two Chiefs of Staff, one for operational affairs and one for logistics and administration. The Chiefs of Staff were responsible for the day-to-day concerns. The Chief of Staff for operational affairs was at the head of four sections which in accordance with common military practice were called: G2 (military information and cartography), G3 (operations, both on the ground and from the air, planning and policy), the engineering corps, and G6 (connections). The second Chief of Staff (Deputy Chief of Staff from March 1995 on) was responsible for the sections G1 (personnel and administration), G4 (logistics), for the coordination of activities undertaken by the Force Provost Marshall (military police) and by the Force Medical Officer. The Deputy Force Commander, which in UNPROFOR was always a general from a NATO country, was in charge of the day-to-day coordination between the military and civilian sections at headquarters, and coordination with NATO and other organizations such as UNHCR. The Deputy Force Commander monitored the activities of the United Nations Military Observers assigned to UNPROFOR and maintained direct contact with the military staff in New York.[7] (see figure 2)

The primary tasks of the military branch of UNPROFOR headquarters were the coordination and support of activities conducted by the various regional headquarters, such as Bosnia-Hercegovina Command in Bosnia-Hercegovina. The Joint Operations Centre, a centre for general logistics, and a Monitoring and Close Air Support Coordination Centre were set up to enable the military branch at HQ to follow and coordinate actions at lower levels of command. Support activities mainly comprised distributing geographical information, organizing airlifts, making daily reports to the UN Secretariat in New York and other organizations, carrying out military police tasks and so-called specific logistic and medical tasks within UNPROFOR. Each of the troop-contributing nations were allowed to appoint a number of staff officials at the UNPROFOR headquarters and the three subordinate headquarters. These officials had to have a good command of the English language, completed training for staff positions and have the required experience and military rank.[8]

UNPROFOR's organization changed somewhat on 1 April 1995 when the peacekeeping force in Croatia was placed under the UN peacekeeping force for all of the former Yugoslavia. From the start of the peacekeeping operation, UNPROFOR headquarters had concentrated on the operation in Croatia. Yet a separate command centre for Croatia -- the oldest area of operation of the mission -- was not established at the headquarters until December 1994. This was the Headquarters United Nations Confidence Restoration Operation, or HQ UNCRO. In early 1995, the Croatian government announced that they did not intend to renew the mandate for the UN peacekeeping operation. Intensive negotiations between the Croatian government and UNPROFOR followed. These resulted in a formal name change of the peacekeeping operation for the former Yugoslavia. UNPROFOR became the United Nations Peace Forces (UNPF), with three subordinate regional commands: HQ UNCRO for Croatia, HQ UNPROFOR (previously the Bosnia-Hercegovina Command) for Bosnia, and thirdly HQ UNPREDEP (United Nations Preventive Deployment Force) for Macedonia (previously the FYROM Command established in December 1992). The new names caused some confusion, primarily because the term UNPROFOR continued to exist but now applied to the UN headquarters in Sarajevo rather than Zagreb. The old names continued to be popularly used for some time. This might become

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[6] CRST. UNPROFOR aide memoire to Troop Contributing Nations. Chapter 5, Command and Control, pp. 5-1. Gow, Triumph of Lack of Will, p. 101, Stoltenberg, De tusene dagenen, p. 143.
[7] CRST. UNPROFOR aide memoire to Troop Contributing Nations. Chapter 5, Command and Control, pp. 5-1 - 5-2. UNPROFOR, Force Commander's End of Mission Report, pp. 60-61.
[8] CRST. UNPROFOR aide memoire to Troop Contributing Nations. Chapter 5, Command and Control, pp. 5-2 – 5-3.

confusing in Part III of this report, therefore in that part we will refer to the various headquarters by the names of the towns where they were located. Finally, the term UNPROFOR was also used in the former Yugoslavia to refer to the troops of the peacekeeping operation rather than the operation command. Where this occurs in the report, we clearly show the context in which the term is used.

In response to one of the Croatian government's main demands, the renamed regional headquarters were given more independence than before. On 12 June 1995 a new command was created under UNPF, the Rapid Reaction Force (RRF). This was a 'green' combat unit made up of 12,500 British, French and Dutch troops equipped with tanks and high calibre artillery in order to increase the effectiveness and the credibility of the peacekeeping operation.[9] The problems that arose when this unit was actually deployed is described in detail in Part III, Chapter 1.

## 3. Bosnia-Hercegovina Command

Since the beginning of March 1994, Dutchbat was under the operational command of the Bosnia-Hercegovina Command, UNPROFOR's headquarters for Bosnia-Hercegovina at two locations, Sarajevo and Kiseljak. The Sarajevo location was referred to as Bosnia-Hercegovina Command Forward and the Kiseljak division as Bosnia-Hercegovina Command Main.

The office of the Bosnia-Hercegovina Commander was located in Sarajevo in what had once been the club for high officials of the Bosnian Communist Party. It was situated near the presidential palace in the centre of Sarajevo. The rest of the Sarajevo section was housed in part of the building next door, which housed the intelligence unit of the ABiH Bosnia-Hercegovina Command Forward. Lieutenant-General Sir Michael Rose, who had been appointed Bosnia-Hercegovina Commander on 23 January 1994 was convinced that both buildings were so heavily bugged that they were only suitable for discussing matters which he wanted the Bosnian government to know about. When greater confidentiality was required, he preferred to meet outside the walls of the Bosnia-Hercegovina Command Forward.

UNPROFOR operations in Bosnia were directed by the Chief of Staff at the Bosnia-Hercegovina Command Main in Kiseljak, while the Bosnia-Hercegovina Commander in Sarajevo conducted negotiations with the conflicting parties at the strategic level. Communication between the two divisions was so poor that, 'for much of the time Rose and his Chief of Staff were out of touch with each other.'[10]

In addition to the military staff, the Bosnia-Hercegovina Command also consisted of a Civil Affairs section, headed by the Russian UN diplomat Viktor Andreev, and an administrative section. During negotiations with the conflicting parties, Andreev always acted in the same capacity as the Bosnia-Hercegovina Commander. After he stopped in March 1995, his successors the Spaniard Enrique Aguilar and the American Phillip Corwin were unable to hold on to this position of equality. From then on, it was Bosnia-Hercegovina Commander General Smith and his military staff who more or less independently determined the course of the peacekeeping operation in Bosnia.[11]

The Bosnia-Hercegovina Command had been formally established by resolution 776 of the Security Council on 14 September 1992. The actual organization came into being at the end of October 1992 under the direction of the French *général de division* Morillon, who had arrived in Sarajevo in March 1992 as the UNPROFOR Deputy Force Commander in Zagreb. After the start of the Bosnian civil war and the extension of UNPROFOR's mandate to Bosnia-Hercegovina, however, he chose to relinquish his position as deputy to General Nambiar in order to take on the command of this new operation area.[12]

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[9] UNPF, Force Commander's End of Mission Report, [Zagreb 1996] pp. 10-20.
[10] Briquemont, Do something, p. 27. Rose, Fighting for Peace, pp. 18-19.
[11] Interview V. Andreev, 07/07/00. Corwin, Dubious Mandate, pp. 6-7.
[12] Morillon, Croire et oser, pp.100-101.

The core of the Bosnia-Hercegovina Command was formed by British, Belgian, Dutch and American members of the NATO Northern Army Group headquarters (Northag, an organization which would later be disbanded in an internal NATO rationalization process). NATO also supplied office equipment and means of transportation, but as Chief of Staff Cordy-Simpson put it, 'the ridiculous charade of de-baptizing any mention of NATO' was doggedly maintained in public. The Bosnia-Hercegovina Command was operational within three weeks of the passing of the resolution. Because of the underlying NATO structure, the Bosnia-Hercegovina Command had more than the usual number of staff officers for a typical UN operation headquarters.[13] The advantage of this was that one-third of the staff officers were familiar with each other's ways of working and could get started right away. They could also help new personnel get settled in their positions. In accordance with UN practice, these newcomers were from troop-contributing nations.

Under the direction of the Chief of Staff, Brigadier General Cordy-Simpson of the UK, the staff commenced its duties in the old UNPROFOR Headquarters building in Belgrade on 6 October.[14] General Morillon was initially opposed to establishing the headquarters in Sarajevo, because of his negative experiences with the UNPROFOR headquarters there at the beginning of the civil war some months earlier. The establishment of the Bosnia-Hercegovina Command in Sarajevo, in Ilidza on the western through-road to Tuzla and Mostar, was also opposed by the Bosnian Serb army, the VRS. For military and political reasons, Morillon therefore decided to split up his headquarters, so that the operational headquarters of Bosnia-Hercegovina Command would be located well away from the conflict. Morillon decided on Kiseljak, 20 kilometres west of Sarajevo in the Croatian part of Bosnia. Having done that, he and his direct staff then established themselves in the Bosnian capital after all, under the name of Bosnia-Hercegovina Command Forward, in order to demonstrate their confidence that the city would not fall in the near future.[15]

Under Morillon and his successor, the Belgian Lieutenant-General Briquemont, Bosnia-Hercegovina Command was a clearly structured organization. The usually staff sections for personnel and administration (G1), intelligence and cartography (G2), operations (G3), logistics (G4) and contacts with civilian authorities (G5) fell under the Bosnia-Hercegovina Commander and his Chief of Staff. There were also sections for the engineering corps, medical corps, a special Air Operations Coordination Centre for all operations in the Bosnian air space, and a UNMO section for the UN military observers. The Chief of Staff also headed the officers who maintained contact with external organizations and other Commands such as Civil Affairs, UNHCR, the European monitoring operation ECMM, the UNPROFOR headquarters in Zagreb, the fifth allied air force of the NATO in Vicenza and Comcen, the communications centre.

Acting on the instructions of the Bosnia-Hercegovina Commander, the Chief of Staff of Bosnia-Hercegovina Command Main in Kiseljak gave direct orders to all units in Bosnia and organized escorts for humanitarian convoys. Bosnia-Hercegovina Command was a fairly horizontal organization; within the headquarters many sections operated side by side under the direct supervision of the Chief of Staff. A number of battalions in the field also came under the direct responsibility of Command Main in Kiseljak, without an intermediate brigade commanding rank. The exception was the city of Sarajevo; Sarajevo was a distinct sector within Bosnia-Hercegovina Command and fell under the commander of the French contingent, who was also Deputy Commander for Bosnia-Hercegovina.[16]

On his appointment in January 1994, General Rose noted that the Bosnia-Hercegovina Command had a number of serious shortcomings, despite its straightforward structure. First, there was no clear *plan de campagne* to implement the mandate. Also, Bosnia-Hercegovina Command Main was burdened with a disproportionately high number of high-ranking officers. This was of course a direct

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[13] CRST. UNPROFOR aide memoire to Troop Contributing Nations. Chapter 5, Command and Control, p. 5-3. Sie LL. Fax NLO 93/075/360 contribution by Brigadier Cordy-Simpson, 24/11/93, (quote on p.113).
[14] Morillon, Croire et oser, pp. 105-106.
[15] Morillon, Croire et oser, pp. 107-110.
[16] Briquemont, Do something, pp. 30-31. Rose, Fighting for Peace, p. 23. Interview V. Andreev, 07/07/00.

result of the UN practice of 'rewarding' troop-contributing nations with the offer of HQ staff positions, an offer which these countries were not inclined to pass up. This practice, Rose noted, did not result in the required expertise and lacked efficiency. He felt that efficient management was impeded by the influence of the various national contingents within the headquarters. Officers from the various countries would relay the decisions of the Bosnia-Hercegovina Commander to their own national military authorities, which not uncommonly resulted in a counter-imperative. Rose wanted to put an end to this.[17] Ignoring the scepticism of the residing Chief of Staff, the British Brigadier General A. Ramsay, Rose launched a thorough rationalization in which nationality became an irrelevant factor at the level of the individual officer.

*Sector North East in Tuzla*

The order to rationalize the organization had in fact been given much earlier by Force Commander Cot to Rose's predecessor Briquemont. For Rose, this brief formed the basis of his own campaign plan. He introduced a new commanding rank between Bosnia-Hercegovina Command and the various battalions in the field, which was a highly significant move from an operational perspective. Rose's decision was motivated to an important extent by the fact that, between October 1992 and February 1994, the number of mechanised infantry battalions had grown from four to eleven.

Rose decided to divide his operation area into three sectors. Sector Sarajevo remained as it was, encompassing the entire land area of Sarajevo, Gorazde and Zepa. The two new sectors were Sector North East with its headquarters in Tuzla and Sector South West with its headquarters in Gornji Vakuf (see map on page #). Each sector headquarters was run by a proportionally formed multinational staff. Rose believed that having a competent staff team in place in the shortest possible time prevailed over having an optimal balance between the contributing nations of the Bosnia-Hercegovina Command.

The goal of the rationalization was to delegate as many tasks as possible to the sectors, so that Bosnia-Hercegovina Command could focus on a limited number of core tasks. In particular, the three new sector headquarters were to focus on integrating and coordinating political, humanitarian and military activities within and between the different sections for intelligence (G2), operations (G3) and contacts with civilian authorities (G5). They were to keep track of developments in their sector, gather intelligence and facilitate humanitarian relief, for example by organizing convoys and planning special activities such as humanitarian evacuations, ceasefires, the disengagement of conflicting parties and demilitarization. The sector headquarters were also responsible for planning evacuations, security, and resolving misunderstandings and conflicts with respect to the Freedom of Movement which UNPROFOR troops had been guaranteed.

In order to realize these objectives, the sector headquarters had to have a wide array of communications instruments (telephone, satellite and HF radio), easy and permanent access by road and helicopter, and direct contact with authorities in the operation area. In practice, this meant that sector commanders had to see to roads maintenance and monitor the supply of gas, water and electricity. Rose had ordered each sector commander to make a special effort to achieve a close collaboration with UNHCR, the International Red Cross, UNMO and ECMM, either by maintaining close contacts or sharing the same housing. In the sector command post, therefore, places were reserved for a UNHCR representative as well as representatives of non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Bosnia-Hercegovina Command continued to bear primary responsibility for the administrative and logistic facilities for UNPROFOR units; the sector headquarters were to concern themselves as little as possible with these tasks.[18]

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[17] Rose, Fighting for Peace, pp. 14 and 23.

[18] Rose, Fighting for Peace, p. 35. UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 200, file Bosnia-Hercegovina Command 12 Feb – 17 Feb 94: fax 320/94, BH Comd G3 OPS to Britfor et al., 16/02/94. Order for the establishment of Sector Command Structure; Ibidem: Appendix A: Role of Sector HQ. UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 59 file. Civil Affairs 2.5 Bosnia-Hercegovina Command: 01/03/94: A Campaign Plan for Bosnia Hercegovina, appendix 1 to Appendix E.

Since its establishment in March 1994, Sector North East in Tuzla had fallen under the command of reserve Brigadier General Ridderstad of Sweden. Two infantry battalions were located in his operation area, the Scandinavian Nordicbat 2 and Dutchbat. A medical company and a Norwegian helicopter detachment were also stationed in this area. In addition to Ridderstad, the sector staff comprised Ken Biser, the Civil Affairs Coordinator, and representatives of the UNHCR and NGOs, as stated above. Five sections fell under the responsibility of the military Chief of Staff, which was always a Dutch officer. The four sections which usually made up a military staff had been merged into two: a small section for personnel, administration and logistics (G1/G4), and a larger section for intelligence and operations (G2/G3). There were separate sections for the engineering corps and civil-military matters (G5), respectively. Finally, a modest Headquarters Command section bore responsibility for a variety of matters, including communication connections.[19]

This completes our general overview of the chain of command in which Dutchbat operated. Within the Safe Area of Srebrenica, Dutchbat also worked with two other United Nations organizations which operated under UNPROFOR: the UNMOs and the UN police officers (UnCivPol), which we discuss below.

*The United Nations Military Observers (UNMOs) organization*

The United Nations Military Observers (UNMOs) are part of the military branch of UN peacekeeping operations. UNMOs are well-educated professional soldiers assigned to the UN by their countries in order to carry out liaison duties and monitor the conflicting parties in the peacekeeping operation area. UNMOs report on military developments by the conflicting parties. In the former Yugoslavia, an important part of their work consisted of establishing the facts about attacks on military or civilian targets and the scale of hostilities, which they did often at great personal risk. Five aspects distinguish UNMOs from the military peacekeeping corps: they are impartial as UNMOs are recruited from many different countries, they are unarmed, they operate independently in the area concerned, they are highly flexible and mobile, and finally they operate and live among the local population.

As 'the only real sensor (eyes and ears)' of the Security Council and the UN Secretary-General in the field, the UNMOs made professional military observations. Their weak point was their vulnerability to hostile acts by the conflicting parties. Nevertheless, their presence was vital; they were usually the first to arrive in an operation area and the last to leave hotbeds of conflict. After the expansion of the UNPROFOR operation area, the Security Council's first move was to deploy UNMOs in the new areas in order to establish the UN's presence. The first fifty UNMOs were loaned to the Secretary-General on 8 January 1992 (UN resolution 727). It was their task to improve the enforcement of the ceasefire between Croatia and the Yugoslav army.[20] Because of their particular interest in the activities of the conflicting parties, they were all but welcome and often carried out their duties at considerable risk to their lives. During the operation in the former Yugoslavia, one UNMO died in the course of his duties; seven other fatalities were due to road accidents.[21]

As the war spread over the former Yugoslavia, the number of UNMOs and their brief grew likewise. From the first deployment of UNMOs until April 1994, the Security Council deployed a total of 748 UNMOs. Because they had their own brief, the UNMOs were considered to be a distinct organization in UNPROFOR. They were headed by a Chief Military Observer, whose headquarters was

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[19] UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 200, file Bosnia-Hercegovina Command 12 Feb – 17 Feb 94. Fax 320/94, BH Comd G3 OPS to Britfor et al., 16/02/94: order for the establishment of Sector Command Structure; Ibidem: Appendix B: Task specification. UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 59 file: Civil Affairs 2.5 Bosnia-Hercegovina Command: 01/03/94: A Campaign Plan for Bosnia Hercegovina, appendix 1 to Appendix E.

[20] UN doc S/23592. United Nations, United Nations Peace Force UNMO HQ Zagreb, UNMO in UNPROFOR/UNPF Post Mission Report (1992-1996) (Zagreb 1996), p. 4.

[21] UNPROFOR, Force Commander's End of Mission Report, p. 20. United Nations, United Nations Peace Force UNMO HQ Zagreb, UNMO in UNPROFOR/UNPF Post Mission Report (1992-1996) (Zagreb 1996), Appendix 2.

located in Zagreb, and fanned out over the different regions of the operation area where they operated under their own distinct structure. Bosnia-Hercegovina was divided into five UNMO sectors: Bihac, North East, South West, Gorazde and Sarajevo. Sarajevo was the headquarters. The basic structure of the UNMO in each of the sectors comprised a multinational team of eight, including the commanding officer. Although formally the organization operated independently, the Chief Military Observer regularly consulted the UNPROFOR Force Commander in Zagreb about the deployment of the teams. Likewise, the commander of the UNMOs acted as advisor to the Force Commander and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG), Yashusi Akashi. The UNMO organization independently collected and analysed information and reported directly to New York.[22] Formally, UNMO was part of UNPROFOR and an important source of information for the analyses of the Military Information Officer at UNPROFOR headquarters in Zagreb (see also Chapter 1 of the Appendix to this report regarding intelligence, C. Wiebes, Intelligence and the war in Bosnia). In practice, however, UNMO had sufficient freedom to operate independently from the Force Commander and Akashi.

The UNMO mandate was as complicated as UNPROFOR's mandate. The UNMOs had been given additional tasks that on the surface bore little relation to military observation and liaison. As a result, the conflicting parties mistrusted UNMOs' claim to impartiality. Accusations of espionage were made and UNMOs freedom to operate curtailed.[23] The UNMOs had to operate in the UNPROFOR area of operation and in Lesser Yugoslavia, controlling the airports to ensure the enforcement of the no-fly zone laid down in resolution 786.

There were several advantages to the deployment of UNMOs next to the regular peacekeeping forces. UNMOs were unarmed, impartial, independently operating teams of highly mobile experts. They made observations, helped bring about agreements, monitored violations of these, investigated the background to and facts of incidents and thus had frequent contacts with the conflicting parties. Carried out by experienced observers, usually officers, this work had a two-way effect. The first effect, and also the primary objective of deploying UNMOs, was that they provided reliable information to UN New York and to the peacekeeping force. A side effect of their functioning, however, was that they succeeded in reducing the mutual feelings of mistrust among the conflicting parties and assuaging the anxiety of the civilian population by countering the relentless flow of rumours with reliable information. As the UN's alert eyes and ears, they operated on the front lines and in inaccessible regions. One of their regular tasks was to verify all claims made by the conflicting parties and to establish what actually took place in confrontations. They were also regularly called on by UNPROFOR to analyse damage caused by mortar and artillery attacks. For example, in March 1993, when a few UNMOs from the Banja Koviljaca team (near Zvornik) accompanied General Morillon at his request to Srebrenica. In Srebrenica, UNMO observers were a constant, active presence from the arrival of the Canadian battalion in April 1993 until after the fall of Srebenica in July 1995. Srebenica was assigned its own independent UNMO team in November 1993. This team operated in the enclave as well as in the surrounding area controlled by Bosnian Serbs. The team was made up of six UNMOs and three interpreters, two Muslim interpreters for activities in the Safe Area and one Bosnian-Serb interpreter to facilitate contacts with parties outside the Safe Area, primarily the military forces of the Bosnian Serbs. The UNMOs, in conjunction with the liaison staff officers of the Canadian battalion (S5) and, later, Dutchbat, maintained contacts with the conflicting parties.[24]

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[22] United Nations, United Nations Peace Force UNMO HQ Zagreb, UNMO in UNPROFOR/UNPF Post Mission Report (1992-1996) (Zagreb 1996), pp. 25-29.

[23] United Nations, United Nations Peace Force UNMO HQ Zagreb, UNMO in UNPROFOR/UNPF Post Mission Report (1992-1996) (Zagreb 1996), pp. 4-5.

[24] UNPROFOR, Force Commander's End of Mission Report, 20-21. United Nations, United Nations Peace Force UNMO HQ Zagreb, UNMO in UNPROFOR/UNPF Post Mission Report (1992-1996) (Zagreb 1996), pp.4-6 en pp. 14-15. Interview J. Zoutendijk, 06/04/01. UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 434, file: UNMO Srebrenica. TA to TX6A, 03/05/95, no. IN.365.

In Srebrenica and in other Safe Areas, UNMO was instructed to carry out the following five primary tasks:

- To provide military support to UNHCR and other recognized humanitarian aid organizations;
- Permanent presence in the area of operation;
- To observe the activities of all parties to the conflict;
- To monitor compliance with the ceasefire by investigating real and supposed violations thereof, inspecting weapon sites, controlling the withdrawal of heavy weapons and registering weapons at so-called Weapon Collections Points.
- To carry out special assignments given by own headquarters.[25]

*The United Nations Civilian Police (UnCivPol) and aid organizations*

The United Nations Civilian Police, or UnCivPol, was the second organization under UNPROFOR with its own brief. UnCivPol was established simultaneously with UNPROFOR in February 1992. Its purpose was to ensure that local police forces in UNPROFOR protected areas treated all inhabitants equally and respected their human rights. Like UNPROFOR, UnCivPol's mandate would be extended in the course of time as a result of new resolutions by the Security Council. This is discussed in more depth further on in this report.

In Bosnia-Hercegovina, UnCivPol operated only at Sarajevo airport, in Mostar and in Srebrenica. In accordance with resolution 819 of the Security Council and a subsequent agreement with the conflicting parties, UnCivPol monitored law enforcement and the humanitarian situation in the Safe Area. The organization maintained contacts with the local police, ensured that individual citizens' rights were respected and investigated reports of violations of human rights.

UnCivPol also provided support to authorized aid organizations such as UNHCR, *Médecins sans Frontières* (MSF) and the Swedish Shelter Project (which are all described in Part II of Chapter 4). In order to establish friendly relations with all the parties in the Safe Area, UnCivPol carried out regular patrols. UnCivPol ended its activities in Srebrenica in the Spring of 1995.[26]

To summarize, the most important institutions in the UN structure in which Dutchbat would operate were: UNPROFOR in Zagreb, the Bosnia-Hercegovina Command in Sarajevo, Sector North East in Tuzla, UNMO and UnCivPol. In carrying out their work, Dutchbat troops also had contact with the UNHCR and the non-governmental organizations in Srebrenica, mentioned above. In Bosnia-Hercegovina, the UNHCR was the main organization for humanitarian relief. UNPROFOR's task was to create optimum conditions for UNHCR to carry out its tasks as best as possible.

As mentioned above, several non-governmental organizations were stationed in the Srebrenica Safe Area, the main ones being MSF and the Swedish Shelter Project. MSF, in cooperation with UNHCR, provided medical care to the population in the Safe Area. The Swedish Shelter Project ran in 1993-1994 and involved building homes for refugees on the southern border of the Safe Area. After completion of the houses, the name Swedish Shelter Project stuck.

## 4. Standing Operating Procedures and Rules of Engagement

At the beginning of this chapter, we noted that the chain of command within the military component of a peacekeeping operation cannot be compared with the situation in a regular army. In part, this is due to the enormous diversity of the participating military units in technical military, national and cultural terms. Such differences are not usually removed by laying down a system of formal instructions and rules. To some extent, however, the different chain of command is also due to the restrictions or

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[25] United Nations, United Nations Peace Force UNMO HQ Zagreb, UNMO in UNPROFOR/UNPF Post Mission Report (1992-1996) (Zagreb 1996), 11.

[26] UNPROFOR, Force Commander's End of Mission Report, E-2 and E-7. UNHCR: fax, UNCIVPOL Commissioner Zagreb to UNCIVPOL commander Bosnia-Hercegovina Command etc, 19/01/94: Mandate of UNCIVPOL.

conditions which national governments attach to its contribution of troops for the peacekeeping operation. Common practice within NATO is that all national units fall under the operational command of the NATO commander. This large-scale transfer of command gives the NATO commander a large degree of freedom in the deployment of participating units.

In UN peacekeeping operations, however, only the more restricted operational control tends to be transferred to the UN commander, who can thus only deploy units within the restrictions of the mandate, in a certain area and for a certain period of time. For example, Nordicbat could only be deployed in the Tuzla area, and an additional condition of the Danish government concerned the inclusion of a tank squadron.

According to the interpretation of the Netherlands' Ministry of Defence, the transfer of operational control meant that troop-contributing nations would be closely involved 'in the peacekeeping operation's progress, especially at times when the implementation of the mandate is under threat'. There could be no question of direct national intervention, but a constant dialogue 'would have to be maintained with all parties involved in order to secure the effectiveness of the operation'.[27]

The transfer of operational control to the United Nations is usually laid down in a Transfer of Authority agreement. The assent of troop-contributing nations is required for any change in operational control. In principle, a government can decide independently to pull back a unit, even without consulting the UN. As described in Part I, Chapter 13, however, the Dutchbat battalion had been provided unconditionally to the UN to function as part of UNPROFOR.

Immediately on its arrival in the former Yugoslavia, Dutchbat came under the operational control of UNPROFOR. No conditions had been attached to the battalion's deployment. The Netherlands had agreed to its deployment in Srebrenica and Zepa, but did not object at a later stage to giving one Dutchbat company a different area of operation. This was a clear message that there were no national conditions regarding the location of the deployment of the Dutch battalion. Interestingly, we have been unable to trace any document containing a Transfer of Authority for Dutchbat. The Dutch government did not lay down conditions (of a different sort) until a later stage, when it stated that the deployment should not exceed 18 months and that Dutchbat was to be relieved in July 1995.[28]

It is also important to note that Dutchbat received no operational instructions from the Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army. General Couzy's operational order to Dutchbat I and successive Dutch battalions merely involved an order to relocate and to commence its duties under the UNPROFOR Force Commander as soon as possible after its arrival in the former Yugoslavia. The Netherlands thus complied in full with the UNPROFOR Rules of Engagement without assessing them in the light of existing Dutch rules. This contrasts with the procedures followed in other NATO countries such as the United Kingdom and the United States. These countries laid down their own rules with respect to the use of force on the basis of the peacekeeping operation's Rules of Engagement. The purpose of this was to prevent misunderstandings and soldiers taking action that conflicted with national legislation.[29]

The fact that Dutchbat did not have a national operational order did not give UNPROFOR more influence over the battalion with respect to its operational command. But the absence of a clear protocol on which rules and laws applied, at which times and in which situations did result in

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[27] DCBC. No. C95/277 95016171, Director of Dept. of Legal Affair, Ybema, to Director of General Policy Affairs and Chief of Defence Staff, 23/08/95; appendix: Command and Control in UN operations.
[28] DCBC. No. 95000785, DJZ/IJB Van Lent to CDS/Chief of Operations Van Dam, 09/08/1995. ADEF Defensiestaf: no. C95/277 95016171, DJZ Ybema to DAB, 23/08/95. Klep en Van Gils, Van Korea tot Kosovo, p. 278. Vertrekpunt Den Haag, I, pp. 131-134. For UNPROFOR Under-chain of command see: ADEF DOKL/OZ: no. OZ/7767 Scheffer to mailing list, 07/02/94 appendix: Operations order No.24 (DUTCHBAT UNPROFOR) BLS sub 5a2.
[29] DOKL/OZ. No. OZ/7767 Scheffer to mailing list, 07/02/94 appendix: Operations order No.24 (DUTCHBAT UNPROFOR) BLS sub 2. The orders to Dutchbat II (24A) and III (24B) are identical in this respect. Confidential Information (117). Parks , 'Deadly Force Is Authorized' in Proceedings (2001)(January), pp. 33-37. Kroon & Jacobs, 'Rules of Engagement' in: Military Spectator 166 (1997)3, pp. 129-130.

uncertainty with respect to the chain of command. This ambiguity existed, for example, in the application of the Rules of Engagement, in establishing sanctions on violations of this rule, and in the prosecution of violations considered punishable according the Standing Operating Procedures of UNPROFOR but not according to Dutch military criminal law.

Since the early 1990s, the United Nations has had a code of conduct and set of orders for peacekeeping operations. These rules and orders cover both administrative and operational aspects. Within UNPROFOR, they were operationalized at every level of command into the organization's 'own' legislation. This usually involved a repetition of the rules applicable to the next higher level, and if necessary the rules were operationalized specifically for the level itself. The basis of all instructions laid down in UNPROFOR was formed by the Force Commander's Policy Directives, a general brief for the operational and administrative sub-units which arranged in detail all aspects of the operation in a given area. In addition to these were the Standing Operating Procedures, the UN's guidelines for the peacekeeping operation. Next to UNPROFOR's Standing Operating Procedures, the Bosnia-Hercegovina Command in Sarajevo and Sector North East in Tuzla each had their own Operational Orders and Standing Operating Procedures. At the battalion command level, these instructions and orders were laid down in a so-called standing brief.

The administrative brief in particular was more or less fixed, while the operational brief was revised from time to time. This could be done for a variety of reasons: ambiguity in existing instructions, a change in the structure of the peacekeeping force, or the need for supplementary rules due to changes in the actual situation. Dutchbat had to comply with all the Force Commander's Policy Directives laid down by headquarters in Zagreb, and with the Standing Operating Procedures of Sarajevo and Tuzla. In this sense, UNPROFOR was like any other military organization. All these instructions ultimately served a single purpose: to ensure uniform conduct, action and dispatch by units in the areas of operation.

In an ad hoc multinational peacekeeping force, standardized rules and instructions were especially important to soften the effect of inherent differences in language, military doctrine, training and equipment, which complicated command and coordination.[30]

A detailed description of the numerous briefs for the different levels of command would serve no purpose here. Some, concerning close air support, given by Akashi as part of the Standing Operating Procedures, are discussed in Part III of this report. In the Appendix 'Medical concerns: Dutchbat and the population', we discuss the brief on providing medical assistance. In Part IV we discuss the briefs concerning the protection of refugees and the violations of human rights and war crimes, respectively.[31] The implementation of the operational brief in Dutchbat's 'standing brief' is discussed later on in Part II, Chapter 6 on the operational deployment of the Dutch battalion.

Here, we restrict ourselves to a discussion of the Force Commander's Policy Directive number 13 concerning the Rules of Engagement, and Sector North East's Security Directive of April 1994. These played a role in the peacekeeping operation as a whole, and were particularly important with respect to Dutchbat's line of action.

According to the Netherlands' definition of 1992, Rules of Engagement are 'a means for the competent authority to restrict the use of force by the units under that authority's command.'[32] There are various reasons why rules might be laid down concerning the use of force. First, such rules aim to optimize the safety of the peacekeeping units by preventing incidents and containing conflicts. Another objective of the Rules of Engagement was to prevent civilian casualties, as this would undermine social

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[30] Cumner, 'Challenges Faced by the Military in Adapting to Peacekeeping Missions', Peacekeeping & International Relations (1998) (January/February), pp. 13-14.

[31] On medical relief: FCPD 22 / SOP 506. On refugees: BHC SOP 206 'on protecting persons seeking urgent assistance'. On violations of human rights and war crimes: BHC SOP 208 'on human rights and war crimes'. Not discussed: BHC SOP 504 on logistic affairs, SOP 202 on convoys, BHC SOP 105 'on Security of Documents' and BHC SOP 108 'on Communications and Infosystems'.

[32] DJZ. Rules of Engagement. (Den Haag 1992)

and political support for the peacekeeping operation. Finally, for the sake of the peace negotiation process it was important that the negative backlash of using force was restricted as much as possible.[33] For the peacekeeping operation in the former Yugoslavia, the UN Secretary-General ruled that the use of force was to be kept 'to the minimum extent necessary', in other words only 'in self-defence'.[34]

The Force Commander adopted this as the primary principle of his Rules of Engagement, laid down on 24 March 1992. The interpretation of the term self-defence played a crucial role in the implementation of the rule. The countries participating in the peacekeeping operation each tended to have their own interpretation and this hampered a clear understanding of the rule within UNPROFOR. This ambiguity ended when the rule was amended in June 1994, broadening the term self-defence to include direct attacks on persons falling under UNPROFOR's protection.[35] How this was put into practice during the fall of Srebrenica is discussed in Part III, Chapter 7.

Next to the substantive aspect of the Rules of Engagement, there is the legal status of such rules. Rules prescribing the conduct of soldiers may not conflict with the national laws of the participating countries, nor with international law. These effectively restrict the scope of such rules. The status of Rules of Engagement for a peacekeeping operation is not laid down in Dutch law, nor is there a procedure in case of violations thereof.[36] It is possible that the Dutch operational orders contained stipulations on this subject.

UNPROFOR's Rules of Engagement were laid down on 24 March 1992. It was first amended on 19 July 1993, followed by a second amendment on 24 June 1994. The actual rules of engagement were preceded by a general introduction. The Rules of Engagement were a brief as well as a guideline to be used by commanders at all levels of the peacekeeping force. In accordance with the brief given by the UN Secretary-General, the main principle of the Rules of Engagement was that the use of force should be kept to a minimum. The peacekeeping force was only equipped with light weapons for self-defence; retaliatory acts were strictly prohibited.

The use of weapons was allowed in exceptional circumstances. UNPROFOR soldiers were authorized to defend themselves, other UN personnel and persons or land under their protection in case of a direct attack, 'acting always under the order of the senior officer/soldier at the scene'. Weapons could also be drawn to resist violent attempts intended to stop UNPROFOR from carrying out its tasks. Finally, UN troops were authorized to use their weapons in the case of attempts by military or paramilitary troops to enter United Nations Protected Areas in Croatia or, after the amendments of July 1993 and June 1994, any of the other Safe Areas supervised exclusively by UNPROFOR. How these general principles were put into practice by Dutchbat during the fall of Srebrenica is described in detail in Part III, Chapter 7.

The 1992 Rules of Engagement comprised six rules, the amended versions seven. The main gist of these amended versions follows, below. Each rule provided at least two options, or standardized responses.

The first rule laid down the circumstances under which weapons could be or should be carried. The options were: may not be carried, and may be carried.

The second rule concerned the state in which the weapon could be carried. The two options were: semi-loaded, and loaded.

The third rule laid down how forces should respond to a hostile threat of force without using weapons. UNPROFOR gave three options for response: a) observe, report to superior officer and retreat in order to protect one's own unit; b) observe, report to superior officer, unit stays put and establishes contact with opponent and/or local authorities; c) observe, report to superior officer, unit

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[33] Kroon and Jacobs, 'Rules of Engagement" in: Military Spectator 166 (1997)3, p. 125.
[34] United Nations, Report of the Secretary-General pursuant to Resolution 721 (1991), (appendix III para.4), no. S/23280, 11/12/91.
[35] Kroon & Jacobs, 'Rules of Engagement" in: Military Spectator 166 (1997)3, pp. 125-126.
[36] Kroon & Jacobs, 'Rules of Engagement" in: Military Spectator 166 (1997)3, pp. 129-130.

stays put, warns aggressor that it will use force if necessary and demonstrates that intention by loading weapons or taking combat positions.

The fourth rule prescribed the response to hostile action in which UNPROFOR troops were taken under fire. In that case, there were two possible responses. The first option for a unit under fire was to immediately take protective measures, make observations and report to superiors. The commanding officer on location would then warn the aggressor that force would be used and make necessary preparations for doing so (as option c of the third rule). The firing of warning shots was authorized. If the hostile action did not cease and the UNPROFOR unit was in a life-threatening situation, the next higher commanding officer could give the order to open fire. This last action in effect comprised the second option for responding to hostile action. Next to these options, the fourth rule also explicitly stated that retreating, breaking out or escaping were also allowed, as were staying put and defending oneself.

The fifth rule concerned self-defence against hostile action. In these situations, protective measures had to be taken immediately and direct shots could be fired.

Under the sixth rule, which concerned the disarming of civilians, paramilitary troops and soldiers, the use of force as a first option was prohibited. In the 1993 Rules, the second option allowed disarmament 'if failure to do so prevents the UNPROFOR from carrying out its task'. In the amended version of 1994, this provision was scrapped, effectively authorizing the use of minimum but necessary force - including direct firing - during disarmament in order to ensure that this took place as quickly as possible. The Bosnia-Hercegovina Command, however, almost immediately ruled out the use of force during disarmament.

The seventh and last rule concerned the controlled use of own weapon systems, such as mortars and guns. The first option prohibited the manning, preparing, positioning and firing of such weapons in the presence of the conflicting parties. Under the second option, these actions were allowed in the presence of the conflicting parties. In November 1994 this rule was changed to also allow the use of anti-tank weapons and artillery (see also Part III, Chapter 7).[37]

For each rule, the Force Commander would decide which option would normally be appropriate. Lower ranking commanders could however decide to deviate from the Force Commander's instruction. In UNPROFOR, the standard procedure was to carry semi-loaded weapons when leaving the compound (rules 1 and 2, option b). In case of a hostile threat without force, UNPROFOR would remain in place (rule 3, option b); the standard response to a hostile threat with force was to give out a warning that force would be used and if necessary to fire warning shots (rule 4). In response to enemy fire, UNPROFOR would shoot in self-defence (rule 5), but would not disarm civilians, paramilitary troops or soldiers (rule 6, option a) and would not get its weapons ready in the presence of the conflicting parties (rule 7, option a).

To ensure that the use of force was kept to a minimum, UNPROFOR added three supplementary provisions to the seven rules above. First, before UNPROFOR soldiers were authorized to open fire in self-defence they were to give the aggressor a verbal demand to cease their fire. If this did not help, UNPROFOR soldiers were to fire in the air, and only if that action failed to have the desired effect would the commander be authorized to give the order to fire back.

There were other restrictions, too, to the use of weapons by UNPROFOR in self-defence. Soldiers could not open fire if there was a possibility of causing collateral damage, and UNPROFOR had to stop firing as soon as the aggressor did so, too. Any form of retaliation was strictly forbidden. UNPROFOR soldiers were allowed to open fire immediately without first firing warning shots only if their lives were at risk or if UN personnel or individuals under UNPROFOR's protection were at risk of serious injury. In theory, changes to the Rules of Engagement (indicating that a different option could be used in a different prescribed situation) were made by the Force Commander. The Bosnia-

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[37] UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 116, file SNE Memo In Sep 94 – Dec 95. Commander SNE to Nordbat 2 and others, 04/06/95.

Hercegovina Commander was not authorized to change the rules for his area of operation until June 1994. Until that time, that authority was delegated to the sector commanders -- comparable with arrangements in Croatia - and Bosnia-Hercegovina Command's own operational responsibility was disregarded.[38]

During UNPROFOR's mission in the former Yugoslavia, few changes were made to the Rules of Engagement. The wording of the seven rules and in particular the supplementary provisions governing the use of weapons clearly showed that force was intended to be used in exceptional circumstances only. In that sense, the Rules of Engagement were in harmony with the traditional peacekeeping spirit which coloured the whole UN approach to the former Yugoslavia. There was no question of stepping up the rules in view of the critical situation on the ground in Bosnia-Hercegovina. The amendments of 1993 and 1994 did not affect the core of the Rules of Engagement. In applying the Rules of Engagement, commanders had two choices when their unit was threatened: they could follow the principle of minimum use of force (in which case they would likely elect not to shoot) or take a strict interpretation of self-defence (in which case they would be more likely to decide to respond to the hostile act).

A commander's decision, in practice, was based on three elements: the unit's attitude and mentality with respect to the peacekeeping operation, its analysis of the conflicting parties and its estimation of what the consequences of its actions would be for the rest of the mission. Dutchbat's interpretation and application of the Rules of Engagement are described in Part II, Chapter 6.

Even before Dutchbat had been deployed in Bosnia-Hercegovina, clearly conflicting views had been exchanged on the substance of the Rules of Engagement between General Couzy, Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army, and General Brinkman, Commander of the Dutch Airmobile Brigade. The latter believed UNPROFOR's presence should be 'robust' and that soldiers should respond immediately if attacked. General Brinkman felt that the rules were adequate and that the crux lay in their application. It was important, he felt, 'to let the conflicting parties know, right from day one, who they're dealing with'. By contrast, General Couzy felt that the Bosnia-Hercegovina Command strove for 'the lowest possible scale of violence' and that UNPROFOR should and could only threaten to use force if UN troops actually intended to carry through their threat.[39]

The second permanent brief, or Standing Operating Procedure, relevant to Dutchbat was the Security Directive of Sector North East, which came about with the establishment of the sector headquarters in March 1994. The Sector North East brief was based on various existing Standing Operating Procedures laid down by the Bosnia-Hercegovina Command with respect to security, the tasks of staff officers, document security, communications and information systems. The Security Directive basically only repeated and regrouped existing rules, adapted to the specific situation within the sector and at Tuzla headquarters. The Security Directive laid down the responsibilities of the Chief of Security (G2) and the Chief of Personnel and Communications (G1/6). The Directive also prescribed the procedure for security incidents and contained provisions on military security. This comprised a series of measures to protect information, equipment and personnel. Interestingly, the Directive was rather casual on this point: it contained no stringent instructions or rules, only generally formulated admonitions to protect information, equipment and lines of communication and about admitting various categories of individuals onto the premises of Sector North East. The Security Directive did not synthesize and classify the provisions of the pre-existing Standing Operating Procedures of the Bosnia-Hercegovina Command in any logical order; it thus remained a fairly inefficient brief on internal security. The aims of the document could only be understood with a background analysis of the preceding Standing Operating Procedures laid down by Sarajevo.[40]

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[38] BDL. Force Commander's Directive No.1: Rules of Engagement, 24/03/92. SMG, 1004. FCPD No.13 Rules of Engagement Part I – Ground Forces, 19/07/93. Ibidem: FCPD No. 13 Rules of Engagement Part I – Ground Forces, 24/06/94.

[39] P.G.M. van Even, 'Vierkant en robuust' in: Armex, 77(1993)12, p.4.

[40] CRST. UNPF stukken: Security Directive HQ Sector North East, 04/94.

The internal UNPROFOR briefs described above all aimed to facilitate the operational command of UNPROFOR. As mentioned earlier, the Dutch government had only transferred the operational control of Dutchbat to the UN. Just as the other troop-contributing nations, the Netherlands retained responsibility for personnel and administration, even in cases requiring the application of specific UNPROFOR rules; for example, the rules concerning leave, establishing violations punishable according to UNPROFOR, repatriation for medical, social or disciplinary reasons, reporting casualties and so on. The commander of the Dutch contingent in the former Yugoslavia was responsible for the monitoring and enforcement of these rules. In September 1994, these rules were brought together in a publication titled *Beleidsbundel Commandant Nederlandse Troepen in voormalig Joegoslavië.*[41]

This concludes our general sketch of the backdrop against which Dutchbat operated. In the UNPROFOR chain of command, Dutchbat occupied the fourth tier, with the sector commanders occupying the third tier. The fourth tier primarily had an operational task. Within this structure, Dutchbat was expected to operate as an independent unit with its own logistic arrangements. Dutchbat was dependent on the UNPROFOR organization to some extent for crucial supplies such as fuel. For the rest, it was expected to obtain its supplies from the Netherlands. From an organizational point of view, the battalion had two lifelines: UNPROFOR and the Royal Netherlands Army.

Dutchbat had been assigned responsibility for the Srebrenica Safe Area. Neither UNPROFOR nor Bosnia-Hercegovina paid much attention to Srebrenica, however. Srebrenica was situated in eastern Bosnia, which was geographically and mentally far removed from Sarajevo and Zagreb. The rest of the world was focused on the fight for Sarajevo and the peace process. As a Safe Area, Srebrenica only occasionally managed to attract the attention of the world press or the UN Security Council. That is why the Dutch troops there remained of secondary importance, in operational and logistic terms, for so long; and why the importance of the enclave in the battle for domination between the Bosnian Serbs and Bosnian Muslims failed to be recognized for so long. In the next chapter, we describe the relations between Bosnian Serbs and Bosnian Muslims at the beginning of the war in Bosnia to enable a full comprehension of the relation between the two conflicting parties in Srebrenica.

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[41] CRST. Beleidsbundel Commandant Nederlandse troepen in voormalig Joegoslavië.

# Chapter 2
# The history preceding the conflict in Eastern Bosnia up until the establishment of the Safe Area

## 1. The economic and political crisis of the eighties

This chapter will describe the disintegration of Yugoslavia on the micro level of the local communities in Eastern Bosnia, among them Srebrenica.[42] After the death of Josip Broz Tito (1980) Yugoslavia found itself in a downward spiral of economic decline and political and ethnic tensions which ultimately led to the dissolution of the multi-ethnic state. Tito had been able to keep the country together through his popularity and charisma, and he was one of the few Communist leaders who could really rely upon the mandate of the people. There was no one of his calibre to step into his footsteps and the unity of the multi-ethnic state quickly began to show cracks, which only became larger as the economic crisis in Europe increased in the eighties. Tito's death signalled the start of a moral and political crisis as well, one that toppled the Yugoslav socialist system he had built up. Not a year after his death, a revolt started in Kosovo among the Albanians who demanded their own republic, and there were nationalist tendencies in other places as well.

The economy of the country was affected by low productivity, lack of labour discipline, widespread corruption, and ever-increasing inflation. The Yugoslav system of labour self-management seemed incapable of solving the problems that had arisen. About the middle of the eighties various companies were on the brink of bankruptcy and were only able to survive through state subsidies. Financial scandals, such as the *Agrokomerc* affair in 1987, revealed the close and unhealthy ties between the regional and local party bosses and the local economy. The sorely needed political and economic reforms did not get off the ground because the Communist elite did not want to give up its control over the economy.

The crisis considerably affected the average Yugoslav's feeling of existential security and standard of living, so that a political crisis was inevitable. To combat this, Communist politicians at the end of the eighties began to play the nationalist card. The crisis also caused a growing rivalry between the various federal republics. Behind the official facade of 'Brotherhood and Unity', political life in the Communist

one-party state came increasingly under the banner of discord and dissension. More and more, the leaders of the federal states advocated the 'national' interests of their own republics, and in a multi-ethnic state like Yugoslavia this meant that nationalism and ethnic conflicts would irreversibly be a normal part of affairs. In the second half of the eighties, this rivalry between the republics led to a barely cloaked nationalism, whereby the leaders of the republics sought support from nationalist groups in their own republics instead of their fellow Communists in the other republics.

It was Slobodan Milosevic who let the genie out of the bottle by openly supporting the Serb interests in Kosovo and other parts of Yugoslavia, following the Serbian Orthodox Church and the nationalist opposition. He carefully played on the widespread feelings of insecurity among the common Serbs who were afraid of losing their jobs and incomes. He knew that in areas such as Kosovo, Croatia and Bosnia there were enough desperate Serbs he could mobilize to put into Serb hands the control of factories, mines and other economic resources providing incomes or to keep it there once the republics would start on the path to independence. He cultivated and exploited the age-old theme of Serb

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[42] This chapter is based to a large extent on the Appendix of Ger Duijzings, *History, Memory and Politics in Eastern Bosnia*. For a more detailed description of the events (with extensive source references), see this appendix.

suffering and victimization - under the Ottoman 'Turks', the Croatian Ustashe, and most recently under Tito - that in times of economic crisis always fell on fertile soil.

The rising Serbian nationalism was a cause for unrest, particularly in multi-ethnic Bosnia, and the Bosnian authorities did all they could to try to restrain expressions of this sort, whether they came from the Serbian, Croatian or Muslim camp. That was no easy task in the Bosnian countryside, however. Despite earlier attempts of the Communist rulers to integrate the ethnic communities, life continued to be lived within one's own group. Bosnian Serbs and Muslims lived separately in villages that were ethnically homogenous. Only in the cities, and then primarily among younger people, was there anything that could be called a Yugoslav culture that was shared by all groups.

*Demography of Eastern Bosnia*

In Bosnia, and in Eastern Bosnia in particular, the ethnic tensions increased during the eighties because the ethno-demographic relationship shifted to the advantage of the Muslims. The share of Muslim population in the cities of Srebrenica, Bratunac and in particular Vlasenica (see map in this section) grew, while that of the Serbs decreased. In the first two cities, the Muslims gained a clear majority in their share of the population, whereas the relationship had been more or less equal. The share of Serbs dropped, in absolute numbers as well, because many of them moved to Serbia. In general in Bosnia, the Muslims outpaced the Serbs as the largest group at the beginning of the seventies.

At the same time, they started to play an increasingly important role in government and the economy, which ultimately was the result of the recognition of Muslims as a people in 1968. A growing self-consciousness among the Muslim elite went hand in hand with a cultural and religious revival which the Bosnian Serbs experienced as threatening. This resurgence went too far for the Communist establishment as well, which led to a reaction in the eighties against what was called emerging 'fundamentalism' and 'Muslim nationalism'. In 1983 a group of Muslim intellectuals (among them Alija Izetbegovic) was put behind bars for a number of years after a show trial in Sarajevo.

The fact that the tensions between the population groups increased as a result of the economic decline could also be seen on the local level in the form of envy towards those who did manage to keep their heads above water. Old rivalries and enmities reemerged about who would get a given job, a given apartment or whose children could go to Sarajevo to study. In the countryside, people were convinced that certain villages were privileged through their good contacts with people in regional government, while other villages without such contacts were believed to be treated poorly. The fact that the villages were mostly either Muslim or Serb strengthened the idea that it was in fact ethnic hostility behind this situation. In the town of Vlasenica in 1988 it came to an open conflict between the local authorities (mostly Muslims) and the Serb-dominated mining town of Milici.

The bauxite mines in Milici had grown in the seventies to become the largest in Europe and consequently a great deal of money poured into the till of '*Boksit Milici*', which to an important degree ended up for the benefit of the predominantly Serb population of the town. Since Muslims in Vlasenica had come to be the majority as of the seventies, the fear was great among the Serbs that Muslims would eventually call the shots politically and economically. Among local Serbs the call became stronger for Milici to be made a separate municipality again, as it had been in the fifties.

These fears were fed by the nationalist hysteria that took over Serbia when Milosevic began to raise his fist against the Albanians in Kosovo at the end of the eighties. There was talk of a renewed battle between Christianity and Islam that would be fought out in Kosovo. In the spring of 1989 all of this came to a climax when Milosevic carried out an intense campaign to abolish the autonomy of Kosovo. After he succeeded in this - which was celebrated on a large scale in June 1989 with the 600 year memorial of the Battle of Kosovo - Milosevic began to aim his sights at Bosnia as well. After the Serbian media had worked for a year on the mood against the Bosnian Muslims and on Islam in general, the Serbian regime began seriously to interfere in Bosnian affairs in the summer of 1989.

In August the media in Belgrade began to speak of 'ethnic cleansing' of which Serbs in Eastern Bosnia, in Bratunac and Srebrenica in particular, were the victim. The whole matter became front page

news when 'confidential' documents of the Serbian State Security Service, SDB, were leaked out; they spoke of Serbs being pushed out of Eastern Bosnia, in particular in areas around the Drina, under pressure from the Muslims. According to the documents, Muslim nationalists and fundamentalists controlled the municipal offices and local businesses of Srebrenica and Bratunac.

These accusations were denied vigorously by the authorities of Bratunac and Srebrenica who pointed out that the Serbian exodus was motivated primarily by economic reasons and not as a result of Muslim pressure. A number of local Serbian officials also expressed that opinion publicly, which was not appreciated by many Serbs (in the villages in particular). Despite the fact that important Muslim and Serbian Communist officials spoke out against the reports, the fuse had already been placed in the dynamite keg of ethnic relations. All it took was the nationalist press in Serbia to pour more oil on the fire. Reports appeared in the Serbian press which spoke of forced exodus and discrimination against the Serbian inhabitants of villages along the Drina and of a creeping Islamization of Srebrenica.

In some reports Eastern Bosnia was even called a second Kosovo. Moderate politicians were marginalized in the Serbian press, and if reference was made to them at all, they were depicted as naive, unrealistic or even dishonest. The Bosnian Government accused the Serbian State Security Service of interference for the purpose of destabilizing the republic. Parallels were drawn with the period just before the First World War when Serbia sent secret agents to Bosnia to prepare a revolt against the Austrian Government which would lead ultimately to the murder of the Austrian Archduke Francis Ferdinand in Sarajevo. In Serbia similar historical parallels were drawn: the Bosnian authorities were said to be involved in the same kind of campaign against the Serbian people as the Austrians in 1914.

## 2. The 1990 elections in Bosnia

The Communist single party state fell in 1990 and a rapid process of pluralization began. New parties were set up, and in the course of that year free elections were organized all over the former Yugoslavia. In multi-ethnic Bosnia, there was the danger of disintegration and civil war if the political arena were dominated by the nationalists, and consequently the authorities tried to hold down nationalist aspirations for as long as possible. They made attempts to not allow parties based on ethnic or religious grounds, but this measure was revoked in the course of the year by the Bosnian High Court. Quickly, the political spectrum came to be dominated by newly established ethnic-national parties.

On the Muslim side this was the SDA under the leadership of Izetbegovic. On the one hand, the SDA was made up of a traditional, populist, village-oriented stream that appealed primarily to religious and Bosnian-national sentiments, and on the other a somewhat more enlightened and more urban stream that ultimately was given the short end of the stick. The counterpart to the SDA was the Bosnian-Serbian SDS, whose primary goal was, alongside the furthering of the interests of its own group in Bosnia, the integration of Serbian areas in Bosnia in what remained of Yugoslavia or in a Greater Serbia that they would form. The party was very religious and nationalistic in inspiration and had strong ties to both the political leaders in Belgrade and the Serbian-Orthodox hierarchy.

In the summer of 1990 the election campaign (on the municipal level and on that of Bosnia as a whole) was a source of increasing tension, particularly in Srebrenica. Due to the strained situation, the leaders of the Yugoslav Federal Army (the JNA) decided to empty the local arms depots to prevent the weapons from falling into the hands of the Muslims. The weapons were ultimately funnelled via the SDS to the Serb population, to the local Serb stronghold of Kravica for example. Ethnically motivated incidents and nationalist demonstrations fed the reciprocal animosity, such as the massive memorials of the massacres of World War II.

In September, the local SDA leaders in Eastern Bosnia also started plans to arm its own Muslim population. Although not much actually came of this, it showed that an atmosphere of fear and violence existed before the elections in November took place. This did not bode well for the future. It all seemed to revolve around the struggle for the control of companies and economic life in general in a time when society was moving from a collective to a capitalistic and market-oriented system.

It was clear to the two largest nationalist parties in Srebrenica, the SDA and the SDS, that the elections would be decided in the countryside. The population of the countryside formed the majority of the electorate and consequently was the key to political power. Thus, the local branches of the SDA and SDS concentrated their election campaigns on the villages, leaving the town of Srebrenica more or less aside because they knew they could gain little there. This strategy was, as it turned out, fruitful.

The elections of November 1990 were a great victory for the nationalist parties SDA, SDS and the Croatian HDZ that had formed a coalition on the overall level of the republic of Bosnia-Hercegovina to prevent the old Communists from maintaining power. After their loss in the elections, the Communists were removed from power and the nationalist parties tried to divide up the positions that had become available, which quickly led to arguments and conflicts. This occurred on the republic level as well as on the local level. These conflicts turned quickly in the direction of an actual division of Bosnia among the three nationalist parties, because in every municipality the party that had gained the majority took over the actual power. In Srebrenica it was the SDA that assumed power.

The struggle for strategic positions and power was now in full swing, and this struggle took place against the background of a worsening economic situation. In the beginning of 1991 production collapsed and inflation rose to great heights. Not only did these developments increase tensions *between* the various nationalist parties, the struggle for power also caused a considerable battle *within* the nationalist parties themselves. The differences of opinion ran primarily along the line of moderates versus hardliners and city versus countryside.

*Consequences of the elections for Srebrenica*

The struggle between the SDA hardliners and the moderates in Srebrenica hardened quickly. It soon became clear that the first group had a much better position to win the battle because the election success was mostly owed to them. They gained the upper hand, partially because they mobilized their supporters in the villages to go to Srebrenica to achieve their ambitions. At the end of January 1991 the SDA hardliners led by Hamed Efendic, Ibran Mustafic and Besim Ibisevic won and took over the power in Srebrenica. Ibisevic became mayor of Srebrenica. The moderates led by Malik Meholjic were forced out of the party. Such conflicts also existed, although to a lesser extent, in the SDS: Serb farmers accused the local SDS leader and attorney Goran Zekic of having been too indulgent with the SDA.

Srebrenica was now ruled by the local SDA hardliners. Serb directors of companies, schools and hospitals were given early retirement and SDA loyalists were put in their place. All of this fuelled the Serb fear that the SDA would completely take over the local economy and government and would place companies under Muslim control as soon as they were privatized. Similar tendencies were visible in all parts of Bosnia, but also just over the border in Serbia for example, where local companies sacked their Bosnian Muslim employees.

As a result, the tensions between Muslims and Serbs increased. Society disintegrated, citizens refused to pay municipal taxes, and minor local conflicts and incidents hurt the situation even more. Authority and order disappeared almost completely and economic crime escalated even more than

before. At the same time, a tug-of-war started up about the local police. In the summer of 1991 Naser Oric, an adventurer from Potocari, appeared as bodyguard, chauffeur and confidant of SDA hardliner Ibran Mustafic. He played an important role in a number of weapons deals and in the formation of a local Muslim paramilitary group.

At about the same time the wars in Slovenia and Croatia started up. Serbs and Muslims from Eastern Bosnia left for areas where hostilities were taking place and joined one of the warring parties. Bosnia was overrun by units of the Yugoslav Federal Army (JNA) and paramilitary groups that had taken part in the fighting in Croatia. Local militants became more and more open in their display of nationalist flags, symbols, photographs of nationalist leaders and extremists, as well as other paraphernalia. The situation was aggravated further through irrelevant conflicts between individuals from different ethnic backgrounds. Although such incidents would have been given little attention during peace time, they now served to increase the polarization.

At the end of August 1991 the tense situation threatened to turn into a veritable civil war. At first the JNA tried to gain possession of the draft and reservist files in Bratunac and Srebrenica, but this was thwarted by the SDA town leaders. In Bratunac it almost came to an armed incident between Muslim demonstrators and Bosnian units on the one side and local Serbs and JNA units on the other. Attempts were made by the Bosnian faction to organize defence by expanding the police force and by forming paramilitary units, but the Muslims were far behind the Serbs and found it almost impossible to acquire weapons.

Daily life in Srebrenica and Bratunac included more and more incidents, provocations and fights in cafes. Certain cafes were known as gathering places for Serb or Muslim nationalists who frequently stormed in to provoke fights and to tear the place apart. Groups of young people from such nationalist strongholds as Potocari and Kravica went around cafes in Bratunac every evening to stir up trouble. It came as no surprise in this volatile atmosphere when on 3 September 1991 the first deaths occurred.

A group of Muslim nationalists fell into a Serb ambush in Kravica; two of them were shot and killed. The next day the streets of Bratunac were full of protesting Muslims and it looked briefly as if the situation would get out of hand. Many Serb inhabitants of Bratunac, women and children primarily, moved out to Ljubovija in Serbia out of fear that matters would explode. Extra police troops from Tuzla and a number of Bosnian politicians who rushed to the scene restored order in Bratunac. After the Kravica incident local groups of Muslims and Serbians began to organize armed patrols in their own villages and neighbourhoods. Armed incidents occurred in other parts of Bosnia as well, in Visegrad for example (see map in section 1).

*The paths of Bosnian Serbs and Bosnian Muslims diverge*

In the autumn of 1991 Bosnia-Hercegovina took the first steps in the direction of independence. The Bosnian Serbs opposed this fiercely. They wanted to continue for the time being to be part of Yugoslavia and started to form the Serbian Autonomous regions. One of those regions was Birac which included the municipalities of Bratunac, Srebrenica, Zvornik, Vlasenca, Sekovici, Kalesija, Zivinice and Kladanj. In October the Bosnian Serbs formed their own parliament, and in a referendum in November they declared themselves against a sovereign Bosnia. On the local level the SDS started to set up separate Serbian municipalities that were partially 'cut out' of the existing and Muslim-dominated municipalities (such as was the case in the Serb-dominated areas of Skelani and Milici), while in other cases, parallel Serbian municipal structures were set up.

When it became clear that Bosnia-Hercegovina was heading towards independence, the Yugoslav Federal Army began to strengthen its positions in the Serbian villages that came under Srebrenica. The population of strategically positioned Serbian villages (such as Brezani, Podravanje, Orahovica and Ratkovici) were given weapons. In December 1991 Bosnia-Hercegovina submitted a request to the European Community for diplomatic recognition, while the Bosnian Serbs set up their own Serbian republic in January.

In the period before the Bosnian referendum on independence (planned for the end of February or beginning of March), security worsened every day. In Srebrenica antagonism increased when the local SDA demagogue, Ibran Mustafic, called on Muslims to settle the score with the Serbs. The Serbian press in Belgrade poured even more oil on the fire by writing that the SDA leaders in Srebrenica were preparing the mass murder of Serbs. Urged by their leaders, many Serbs fled the town.

## 3. The beginning of the war, April 1992

After the majority of the Bosnian population, that is to say the Muslims and Croats, had voted for independence in the referendum, the European Community recognized the independence of Bosnia on 6 April 1992; this referendum and everything related to it was considered in detail in Chapter 5 of Part I. The referendum was held without the approval of most of the Serb population who had boycotted it. The recognition that was about to be granted at the end of March/beginning of April led to large-scale animosity in Eastern Bosnia where paramilitary forces from Serbia, known as the 'Arkan Tigers' took over Bijeljina. Subsequently, the Yugoslav Federal Army (JNA) along with a large number of paramilitary groups started an offensive along the Drina, to gain control of the area that bordered on Serbia. Within a few days the attack on Zvornik and Visegrad was also begun. Zvornik was taken quickly, but the conquering of Visegrad was more difficult. Nonetheless, the JNA and other Serbian warring groups had seventy percent of Bosnian terrain under their control within a few weeks. Local SDS crisis committees were set up everywhere to plan and coordinate the ethnic cleansing. The normal pattern was for the JNA to take over strategic roads and intersections and then to fire at Muslim settlements, whereupon paramilitary groups would enter the village and plunder it. The population was terrorized, killed or chased out.

The primary goal of the Drina campaign was to gain control of Eastern Bosnia on the border of Serbia to assure that all of the 'Serb' areas in Bosnia could be coupled to one another and to Serbia. The main objective was, just as during the Serbian revolt at the beginning of the nineteenth century to obtain one, large, linked Serbian area in which Eastern Hercegovina, Romanija and the Bosnian Krajina would be connected to one another and to Serbia. That was only possible if Eastern Bosnia, which was dominated by the Muslims, also came into Serbian hands (see map in section 1). Thus, it is no surprise that the first large military campaign in Bosnia was along the Drina and was intended to obtain complete control over this area. The following objective of the Serbs was to cleanse these areas of their Muslim population.

*War reaches Srebrenica*

After the most important cities in Eastern Bosnia were brought under Serbian control, the next step was to conquer the smaller towns and villages where the majority of inhabitants were Muslims, so as to consolidate the hold on the area. It was only in this stage that the war reached Bratunac and Srebrenica. In Bratunac first of all, Serbian pressure led to a formal division of the municipal police on 9 April. Now that there was a Muslim and a Serbian police force, war psychosis began slowly to take hold. Next, the TV masts were blown up so that the populations of Srebrenica and Bratunac could no longer receive the Bosnian channels nor the federal Yugoslavian channel, Yutel (set up under the Markovic Government), only Serbian channels.

On 10 April the SDA leaders of Srebrenica yielded to the pressure of the SDS to divide up the town of Srebrenica, which was decided in an extraordinary town council meeting a few days later. Subsequently, the following day, 11 April, the police station in Skelani, a border spot on the Drina that was part of the municipality of Srebrenica, was forcibly placed under Serbian control. Next, on 17 April, Bratunac was overrun by units of the Yugoslav Federal Army and paramilitary groups from Serbia. The meeting between SDA and SDS leaders on that day which had been convoked in Srebrenica was held upon request of the Serbs 'for reasons of security' in Bratunac, where the mayor of Srebrenica, Besim Ibisevic, and a few other Muslims were given an ultimatum by the SDS. They had to

turn over the power in Srebrenica the following day to the SDS and see to it that all armed militias were disarmed. The authorities in Bratunac were presented with the same ultimatum.

When the Muslim delegation in Srebrenica returned and made clear to the population that Bratunac was now in the hands of the JNA and Serbian paramilitary groups, the population began to flee. Almost all of the Muslim elite of the town of Srebrenica, including the mayor, packed their bags and left in the direction of Tuzla. The following day in the afternoon, units of the Novi Sad corps of the JNA and paramilitary units took control of the town which had been abandoned and had offered no resistance whatsoever. Paramilitary units began to plunder the town. It was only in the town of Potocari and in Stari Grad (the higher, older section of the town of Srebrenica close to the Turkish citadel) that they did not dare to penetrate because of the Muslim militias hiding there.

Part of the population of Srebrenica took flight to the woods and hills in the surrounding area. In a number of villages around Srebrenica, the Muslim population began to organize local resistance groups. The first major act of resistance took place on 20 April in Potocari when Naser Oric ambushed a number of vehicles of the 'Arkan Tigers' and the local Serbian police. At least four Serbs were killed in this ambush. Right after, the JNA started artillery assaults on the Muslim stronghold Potocari and surrounding villages.

The Serbian conquest of Bratunac and Srebrenica signalled the beginning of large-scale ethnic cleansing. These acts of cleansing took place first of all in the surrounding villages and ultimately in the town of Bratunac itself where a great many Muslims were still in their houses. First, the head of the local SDS crisis committee of Bratunac, Miroslav Deronjic, sent ultimatums to the most important Muslim strongholds in this municipality, Voljavica, Glogova and Konjevic Polje (see map section 1) to disarm the population and to surrender all of the weapons. They were given until 1 May to meet this demand, and when they refused, the Serbs began that day with a large number of attacks on Muslim villages. The attacks were carried out and coordinated from two places, Bratunac and Milici. Instead of sending SDS delegations, paramilitary units and local SDS militias were sent to the villages; they chased the Muslim population out of their villages, killed them, plundered their houses and set them in flames. In Bratunac, the Bosnian-Serbian authorities began to pick up Muslims, political leaders and intellectuals primarily, also from Srebrenica, a large number of whom were killed. Some Muslim leaders from Srebrenica were followed as far as Montenegro. A number of them disappeared there, probably abducted and killed.

On 6 May, Muslims carried out their first counterattack on a Serb village, Gniona, to the north of the town of Srebrenica. It was the first Serb village to be attacked and captured by Oric in this way. It was of strategic importance because it offered access to another centre of Muslim resistance, Suceska, where Zulfo Tursunovic held sway. On 7 May, a number of Serbs were killed in Srebrenica where the militias of Hakija Meholjic and Akif Ustic were fighting around Stari Grad. On the same day armed Muslims laid ambush near Osmace on the way to Skelani, an extremely important communication route for the Serbs. After first cutting off the road between Srebrenica and Bratunac in Potocari, the Muslims now closed off this important exit route connecting Srebrenica to the outside world. This marked the beginning of a long series of attacks on Muslim villages in the new Serbian municipality Skelani, led by the local SDS president Dane Katanic. The attacks began on 8 May 1992 and within a few days more than twenty Muslim villages were completely emptied. Hundreds of houses were set on fire, more than 1,300 Muslims were transported to Macedonia and another 900 were chased away to other Muslim villages in the direction of Srebrenica.

Despite these actions, the morale among the Muslim fighters was given a considerable boost when it became known that the SDS president of Srebrenica, Goran Zekic was killed in the afternoon of 8 May on his way from Srebrenica to Bratunac (on the mountain road by way of Sase). According to reports he was shot by Muslim fighters, although other sources suggest that the moderate Zekic was perhaps done in by SDS extremists. Although the responsibility for Zekic's death was not established with certainty, it was enough to inspire the Serbs to a new wave of violence against the Muslims, this time in the small town of Bratunac and surrounding villages.

On 9 May, sixty Muslims from the village of Glogova were driven into a field near the local mosque and executed. On 10 May, the Serbs forced thousands of Muslims from the town of Bratunac into the local sport stadium, separated the men from the women and children, and placed about seven hundred men in the gymnasium of a school, where one of the bloodiest and cruellest episodes of the war took place. Hundreds of men were tortured and killed, primarily by members of paramilitary forces who did not come from Bratunac. About half of the men did not survive the torture and executions, and the rest were transported a few days later out of the area and handed over.

The slaying of Zekic did have as a result that Srebrenica's last connection with the outside world was now considered by the Serbs to be unsafe. Shocked by the killing of Zekic, the Serb population fled the town in panic that very evening and night. On 9 May the Muslim militia of Akif Ustic were the first to enter the town. In the following days, the Muslims who had been hiding in the woods for weeks on end emerged and gradually returned to their houses. The Muslims held the town for about three years after this, while almost all of the Serb inhabitants fled to Bratunac or elsewhere. Although the Serbs had to abandon Srebrenica, they continued their attacks on the Muslim villages to the west, north and southeast of Bratunac. The Muslim population was herded together at various assembly points and the women and children were deported from there to Central Bosnia. The men were either killed, placed in the prison camp Susica near Vlasenica or were held at other spots. The Muslim villages along the Drina, to the southeast of Bratunac, were in a certain sense an exception to this pattern. Large numbers of the population withdrew into the mountains, in the direction of Srebrenica, to Muslim villages that had not yet been attacked by the Serbs. They were the first large group of Displaced Persons to enter the Muslim enclave of Srebrenica. They were housed in homes and apartments in the town that had been abandoned by the former inhabitants. Many Displaced Persons would follow.

## 4. The Muslims fight back

These new Serb actions were answered by the Muslims starting on 15 May with a series of coordinated attacks on Serb villages. The first targets were villages located close to Srebrenica: Viogor, Orahovica and Osredak (see map in section 1). The objective of these attacks was to establish a compact, connected area which would link the variously located Muslim resistance centres. This intent succeeded, and on 20 May it was agreed in the village of Bajramovici to put all of the resistance groups under the joint command of Naser Oric. A number of weeks later (1 July), a civil governing body was also installed, the War Presidium of the municipality of Srebrenica which was housed in the post office building. The first president of this wartime Government, called the War President of the Opstina (municipality) of Srebrenica, was Hajrudin Avdic; Hamdija Fejzic was the chairman of the Executive Board. Nonetheless, Naser Oric as commanding officer of the army and local hero was the most important power factor in the enclave.

Starting at the end of May, Displaced Persons who had been driven out of their homes and villages and who had hidden in the woods and hills, began to stream into the enclave from all directions. Other Muslim enclaves located nearby such as Zepa, Konjevic Polje and Cerska received large numbers of refugees as well. In the town of Srebrenica only about three to four hundred of the original inhabitants were left; the rest were Displaced Persons from nearby or more far-off places. From a Serbian point of view, the objective of purging Eastern Bosnia of Muslims was not at all a success. Even though the largest share of Muslims had been driven away from hearth and home, there was now a number of Muslim enclaves that represented a serious threat to the Serbs. The enclaves grew and also became more and more closely joined. The Serbs worked out their frustration over the unexpected Muslim successes through acts of revenge that were often exceptionally violent.

It became clear that the Serbs would suffer even greater losses because more and more Serb villages and hamlets were being attacked by the Muslims. Various Serbian commanding officers were killed or were seriously wounded in fighting, for example at Kravica and Konjevic Polje. Given the fact that villages in this region were for the most part ethnically homogenous and small in size, it was easy for large groups of Muslim attackers to distinguish Serb from Muslim villages. If it was a Serb

settlement, it was directly and without regard to persons plundered and burned down. In the summer and autumn of 1992, the sallies into the Serbian area became increasingly frequent and violent. Moreover, Muslims who had been driven out of their villages went back to pick up the food and possessions they had had to leave. The food situation in the enclave of Srebrenica became more and more acute, which was a strong incentive for carrying out raids. The Muslim forces were constantly looking for ways to strengthentheir strategic positions. Finally, revenge also played a role. The regular troops were often unable to restrain the large groups of civilians who took part in the sallies, although the fear that these caused the Serbs was convenient to them.

After more than half a year of sallies, thirty Serb villages and seventy hamlets had fallen into Muslim hands and there were only a few places left that were Serb, among them Bratunac. Kravica was one of the last to fall into Muslim hands, on Orthodox Christmas (7 January 1993). There were at least a thousand Serb civilian casualties in all. Consequently, it is understandable that the Serbs saw the situation around Srebrenica as a war of aggression by the Muslims. They felt more and more threatened; many people had lost family or friends; and the humiliation and bitterness experienced as a result of the Muslim attacks was great. Most Serbs sought revenge if the opportunity presented itself.

The area under Muslim control continued to grow and the various Muslim resistance centres were connected and forged into a whole. The military leaders in the enclave kept working on the integration of the armed forces and the strengthening of defence. The whole area under Muslim control (including the enclaves that initially stood alone: Srebrenica, Konjevic Polje and Cerksa) were brought together in November 1992 under one military commando led by Naser Oric, whose seat was Srebrenica. The integration of the Muslim forces did not always proceed smoothly, however. There was friction between some of the commanding officers, for example between Naser Oric and Hakija Meholjic, who did not unquestioningly accept Naser Oric as his superior. Aside from these frictions, there was also political opposition to Oric in the enclave, which was led by his former protector, the SDA leader Ibran Mustafic.

Since Mustafic had been present at the outbreak of war in Sarajevo, he did not go back to Srebrenica until December 1992 when he succeeded in returning to the enclave. The SDA wanted him to return because it wished to try to regain its influence in the enclave after almost all of the local SDA leaders had left and Oric had disbanded the SDA. This situation was not in any way unique. In other parts of Bosnia that had also suffered from acts of war, the SDA was marginalized as well. Local military bosses had seized power and taken on the organization of defence, which the SDA had neglected before the war. Upon his return, Mustafic found that guns ruled the enclave. He accused Oric of having gained power by means of a coup and having installed a military junta.

The following winter of 1992-1993 was the hardest one the Muslim inhabitants of the enclave of Srebrenica would experience during the war. There was little or no humanitarian help; that only got going after the institution of the Safe Area in April 1993. People died from starvation and exhaustion that winter. On 28 November, after seven months of war, the first UNHCR food convoy arrived to the jubilation of the desperate population. The food and medical situation in the enclave was wretched then already, as the journalists who travelled along with the convoy observed. Nonetheless, as the Muslims had greater numbers and were driven by hunger, they succeeded in driving the Serbs farther back. The area that the Muslims controlled at the end of December 1992 / beginning of January 1993 reached almost to the edge of the town of Bratunac. It was surrounded on three sides and found itself in an utmost precarious situation. Given that many on the Serb side feared that Bratunac was on the verge of falling into Muslim hands, military reinforcements were rushed in from Krajina in Northwestern Bosnia. The state of the local Serb defence was abominable and morale had sunk to a low due to the fact that many local Serbs had fled to Serbia for various reasons.

Although the population that had stayed behind saw these Serbs as deserters, the authorities called on them to join in the defence of the town. The authorities promised that any recruits would be taken into the regular army units and would not be led anymore by non-professional people as had been the case in the past. They were referring here to the local SDS leaders who had commanded the Territorial Defence units at the beginning of the war. Initially they were able to hide their lack of

competence through the large-scale support they had received from the JNA and the paramilitary units from Serbia. But as soon as the support left, it became clear that they were not skilled enough to defend Bratunac.

The Serbpopulation was very frustrated about the situation in Bratunac, and some of them held the local SDS directly responsible for this. There was also dissatisfaction about the role of the paramilitary forces. Most were only present at the beginning of the war, when there was something to gain, but as soon as they had taken the booty they left. They had saddled the Serb population with an 'unsolvable' situation: the Muslims had not left and were living only a few kilometres away in an ever expanding enclave. Large groups of Serbs were now themselves living as Displaced Persons in Bratunac under the most miserable conditions and with little humanitarian help.

In the beginning of January 1993, the fall of the Serb stronghold Kravica, which in the past had always been an important symbol of Serb resolve, created a shock wave in Eastern Bosnia. The population of Bratunac panicked and the authorities had to close the bridges over the Drina to prevent people from crossing the river en masse. For the Muslims, however, the victory over Kravica was a considerable boost. This conquest allowed Oric to connect with the resistance forces in Konjevic Polje and Cerska, yielding one large Muslim terrain from Zepa and Srebrenica almost to Zvornik. However, the Serb call for vengeance was great. As a local Serb chronicler wrote, the Serbs were looking forward to the day they would finally be able to take revenge. After Kravica the Muslim attacks continued. Instead of opening a large offensive on Bratunac, Oric decided to strike Skelani first. The objective was to chase the Serb units out of this area and to destroy the bridge over the Drina to prevent the Serbs from gaining reinforcements from Serbia. The attack on Skelani took place on 16 January 1993, and at least 48 Serbs died in this battle. The attack failed and this marked the beginning of the end of Oric's successes. Public opinion in Serbia was alarmed by the fact that points inside Serbian terrain were targeted, and the VRS and the Yugoslavian army prepared a large joint counteroffensive, led by Ratko Mladic.

## 5. Consequences of the Serb counteroffensive for Srebrenica in the beginning of 1993

The advance of Naser Oric in the second half of 1992 prompted the VRS to improve its organization on the local level. As we have said, the local defence in Bratunac and elsewhere in the Bosnian-Serbian area originally relied too much on the units of the Territorial Defence that were subordinate to the local SDS party branches. The Muslim attacks in the autumn and winter of 1992-1993 made it clear that the Territorial Defence under the direction of the SDS in Bratunac was not equal to its task. A drastic change of tack was called for: the responsibility now came to rest primarily with the new local units of the regular army that were to be set up. This was a development that could be observed in all of the fighting parties: the army and command structures became better organized and centralized, and the paramilitary units and local militias were integrated into the newly established armies and stopped operating independently.[43]

At first there were quite a few problems to overcome, primarily in the area of recruiting. The biggest problem for the VRS was the lack of manpower and, according to numerous articles in the local paper Nasa Rijec, there was a lot of bitterness about the fact that many Serbs from Bratunac and Srebrenica had fled to Serbia. They were called upon to return to help defend Bratunac; if not, they would lose their homes and possessions and their civil rights. A related problem was the low morale in the units: many Serbs who had been mobilized came from elsewhere and were demoralized because they were displaced and were not deployed in their own areas to defend or win back their homes. There

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[43] This section is not based on Duijzings' appendix and therefore consequently contains references. The events related in the rest of this chapter have been discussed on the macro level in section I; here we are concerned with the micro level of Srebrenica.

was a large group of Displaced Persons from Zenica in Central Bosnia for example, who found themselves in Bratunac. Since many local Serbs had fled, the morale of those who were fighting, and especially of those who came from elsewhere, was seriously undermined. A related problem was that the status of VRS soldiers was unclear: the Republika Srpska had not officially declared war, which meant that combat active soldiers were not recognized as such and could not count on compensations or pensions for themselves or their families. In case of death or disability they or their family had nothing to fall back upon. It bothered many that war profiteers earned millions and could enrich themselves tremendously, whereas normal soldiers received an extremely low salary.[44]

None the less, the VRS succeeded in gaining a grasp of the situation on the local level in Bratunac. Particularly after the town was closed in on almost all sides, improvements were implemented in the organization and coordination of defence. The first impulses for this came in November and December of 1992 with the formation of the Bratunac Brigade.[45] Reinforcements arrived from other parts of the Republika Srpska, from Krajina for example. The Yugoslavian army also became involved in the fights. The Muslim attack on Skelani and the shootings on the bridge over the Drina were seized by the JNA as a reason to take part actively in the actions against Naser Oric, which resulted in a complete turnaround in power. As of the middle of January 1993, the Serb troops succeeded in steadily pushing back the borders of the Muslim-controlled area. As we know, this led to their almost taking the enclave of Srebrenica in April 1993.

The large-scale counteroffensive that started on 20 January 1993 was carried out by regular troops of the VRS and the Yugoslavian army. According to Muslim sources, various corps of the Yugoslavian army (the Novi Sad, Uzice and Valjevo corps) were part of the actions which were led by Ratko Mladic and the commanding officer of the Drina corps, Milenko Zivanovic.[46] Various paramilitary groups were also set in. In particular the Panthers, a paramilitary unit from Bijeljina led by Ljubisa Savic - nicknamed 'Mauser' - played an important role in pushing back the Muslims between December 1993 and April 1994.[47] According to reports, Russian mercenaries also took part in these actions; these were Afghanistan veterans who deserted the Russian army after the takeover of Boris Yeltsin. They had their own headquarters on the mountain of Majevica and were primarily active in Eastern Bosnia, including the Bijeljina region.[48]

Belgrade first strengthened its artillery positions on the Serbian side of the Drina; they posted artillery units in Bratunac on Bosnian terrain and brought special army and police units to Bajina Basta. These last units were mostly former paramilitary units that had been integrated into the army or police. Preparations were made for air support from the air force base in Uzice. A psychological war was also implemented: a propaganda campaign was started in the media to destabilize the military leaders in the enclave and to undermine morale. Pamphlets were strewn over the enclave to influence the Muslims to surrender, and loudspeakers mounted on army vehicles played a propaganda message on the front lines in the direction of the Muslims. Played to the music of the well known 'March to the Drina', the most famous World War I Serbian military march, the message called for the Muslims to stop the battle.[49]

The attacks on the enclave came from four main directions: Skelani, Bratunac, Zvornik and Milici. Artillery attacks were carried out from Serbia on the Muslim-controlled villages along the Drina. On 30 January Jezero, a strategically important village, returned to Serb hands.[50] In February, the press service of the Uzice corps of the Yugoslavian army announced that the right bank of the Drina (the

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[44] See the interview of the deputy commanding officer for moral, legal and religious matters of the Drina corps, Col. Slobodan Cerovic, gave to the newspaper *Interviju*, 05/02/93, pp.10-11.
[45] *Nasa Rijec*, 09/12/92, p.1; *Nasa Rijec*, December 1993, p.2; Masic, *Istina o Bratuncu*, pp.126-127.
[46] Masic, *Istina o Bratuncu*, p. 93. See also Bassiouni, *Final Report*, Appendix IV, p.36. Milenko Zivanovic was born in Ratkovici (in the hamlet of Ducici) in the municipality of Srebrenica (Oric, *Srebrenica*, p.157).
[47] *Nasa Rijec*, 04/03/93, pp.3 en 8; *Nasa Rijec,* December 1993, p.2; See also Masic, *Istina o Bratuncu*, p.97.
[48] Bassiouni, *Final report*, Appendix III.a, p.134.
[49] Interview Boban Tomic 11/11/99.
[50] Oric, *Srebrenica*, pp.176-177.

Serbian side) was again completely safe. There was some incidental shooting at the hydro-electric plant in Perucac, but that was not seen as a real threat. The Uzice corps denied involvement in the fighting on the Bosnian side of the river.[51]

Out of Bratunac, the Serbs recovered first Voljavica and Zalazje from the Muslims in the beginning of February 1993, and in the middle of February many other villages along the Drina and in the hinterland. In March, the VRS advanced in a southerly direction along the Drina, slowly surrounding the eastern side of the enclave and making it possible for attacks in the direction of Srebrenica.[52] Moving from Zvornik, Kamenica was the first to fall in the hands of the VRS, followed in March by Cerska and Konjevic Polje. Since the advance did not go as quickly as expected, the Serbs tried to break the Muslim resistance at the end of January by offering the civilians trapped in Cerska, Kamenica and Konjevic Polje free crossing through a corridor to Tuzla. On the first night, many civilians did succeed in getting away, but on the second day the Serbs attacked the column and began to fire, killing many Muslims. Others were captured and have been missing since. The rest had to turn around and go back to Cerska.[53]

The humanitarian situation in Kamenica, Cerska, Konjevic Polje and Srebrenica became more acute every day, although it was not completely clear how grave the situation was. The Bosnian Government placed considerable pressure on the UN Displaced Persons organization UNHCR to bring aid to the Muslim enclaves. The Bosnian Government also pointed out that if Kamenica, Cerska and Konjevic Polje would fall completely into Serb hands, large numbers of Displaced Persons would try to go to Srebrenica, where the humanitarian situation would become even worse.

UNHCR worker Larry Hollingworth has described how he attempted to lead a convoy to Cerska in February 1993, the intention being to also offer assistance to Kamenica and if possible to survey the situation in Srebrenica. The convoy was initially held up in Zvornik because the Serbs were involved in conquering Kamenica at that moment. Large groups of Muslims were already fleeing through the snow in the direction of Konjevic Polje. In Kamenica the Serbs found a mass grave which they showed to the international press.[54]

Since the UNHCR convoys to the Eastern Bosnian enclaves were constantly held up, the situation of the Displaced Persons degenerated rapidly. After a delegation from Srebrenica arrived in Sarajevo to sound the alarm, they started a hunger strike and said they would refuse all international aid if nothing was done about the situation in Srebrenica and the other eastern enclaves.[55] It was decided to organize airdrops to ease the painful situation. American planes dropped large amounts of food over Sarajevo and the eastern enclaves. Serbian sources maintain that the Muslims in Srebrenica also were given military equipment, weapons and ammunition.[56] The first airdrops to Cerska took place in the night of 28 February 1993, but since the Serbs had this area under their control by that time, a significant share of the goods came into their hands.

The first airdrops to Konjevic Polje took place on 2 and then 4 March.[57] Later there were many complaints that the drops actually hurt rather than helped the enclaves. They created chaos because the population went out en masse to find the dropped aid packages. Moreover, the aid only helped the strongest who were able to reach the spots the fastest and once there, fight off the others. In general, the principle of the 'survival of the fittest' applied. The Muslims maintain that this was one of the reasons that Cerska was taken by the Serbs directly the following day on 1 March 1993.[58] Fearing a humanitarian catastrophe, General Philippe Morillon, the Commander of the UN units in Bosnia,

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[51] *Intervju*, 05/02/93, pp.10-11.
[52] Masic, *Istina o Bratuncu*, pp.94-97; Oric, *Srebrenica*, p.176.
[53] Masic, *Istina o Bratuncu*, p.97; Masic, *Srebrenica*, p. 132. See also Oric, *Srebrenica*, p.173.
[54] Hollingworth, *Merry Christmas*, pp.151-66.
[55] Hollingworth, *Merry Christmas*, pp.166-68.
[56] Ivanisevic, *Hronika*, p.118.
[57] Masic, *Istina o Bratuncu*, p.118.
[58] Masic, *Istina o Bratuncu*, p.98; Oric, *Srebrenica*, pp.173-174.

wanted to take a personal look at the situation. Morillon invited Larry Hollingworth of UNHCR to come along to Zvornik to try to push through to the area where the fighting was going on. Morillon asked Hollingworth to take along a doctor from the World Health Organization (WHO). That was Simon Mardel from the UK. With a number of others, they left for Zvornik where they requested permission to continue in the direction of the fighting. After receiving permission, the convoy went on and arrived in Konjevic Polje where Morillon spoke with Oric and the local authorities.[59] There were many Displaced Persons from Cerska which had just fallen. Mardel indicated that he would like to continue to Srebrenica, and Morillon gave the green light.

A skilled climber, Mardel walked through the snow to Srebrenica that night with a small group of Muslims. The journey lasted six and a half hours. When Mardel arrived in Srebrenica he was taken immediately to the hospital where he was introduced to Dr. Nedred Mujkanovic, a young doctor and army captain who had been sent to Srebrenica by the ABiH; he arrived in the beginning of August 1992. He had carried out more than 1,300 operations, frequently without anaesthesia or medicine. Mujkanovic gave Mardel a tour through the hospital where the situation was worse than expected: there was no food, no medicine, and about twenty deaths a day. Mardel wanted to leave the enclave quickly, but the authorities would not let him go and refused to escort him back to Konjevic Polje. Mardel's presence in Srebrenica quickly became world news. After a few days he walked back on his own, and shortly before Konjevic Polje fell into Serb hands (15 March 1993), Mardel was evacuated. Konjevic Polje was still full of Displaced Persons at the time and was constantly under Serbian fire. Dozens of people died as a result .[60]

Shortly before the fall of Konjevic Polje, thousands of Muslims left in the direction of Srebrenica, now overrun by a new stream of Displaced Persons. The Muslim forces then left their positions and joined the Displaced Persons, and the Serbs retook control of Konjevic Polje, Kravica and Glogova.[61] Some Displaced Persons were taken in by families or friends, whereas the rest were housed in schools and factories, often under inhuman conditions. The last Displaced Persons to arrive in Srebrenica were forced to bivouac in the streets in the bitter spring cold.[62] On 11 March, Morillon succeeded in taking a medical convoy, escorted by Canadian soldiers and accompanied by members of the UNHCR (among them Larry Hollingworth and Laurens Jolles), a UNMO team and three people from *Médecins Sans Frontières* (MSF) along the mountain road from Bratunac via Zalazje to Srebrenica.[63]

While Morillon was talking to Oric and the civil authorities of Srebrenica in the post office building, Hollingworth and his fellow UNHCR worker took a walk through the town. It was very cold (22 degrees below zero) and they saw Displaced Persons everywhere in the streets, sitting in circles around a fire; most of them had arrived within the last twenty-four hours from Konjevic Polje. Generally, they carried their possessions with them in a bag or a bundle, and there were only a very few with coats. Some did not even have shoes. Most of the Displaced Persons had not eaten in days; they were hungry, tired, confused and distraught. Some had been drifting since April and came from Zvornik, travelling through Kamenica, Cerska and Konjevic Polje before ending up in Srebrenica. People walked up and down the street with madness in their eyes, as Hollingworth writes.[64]

Members of *Médecins Sans Frontières* inspected the situation in the hospital which they found indescribable. Operations were being done without anaesthesia or the most essential equipment. The operating theatre used during the war was improvised (the hospital had not carried out any operations before the war); worn-out equipment was boiled in a pan to sterilize it. Threadbare, spotted bandages hung to dry above a stove. Two bulbs mounted on a riding frame and attached by a thin wire to a car

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[59] Morillon, *Croire et oser*, p.162.
[60] Hollingworth, *Merry Christmas*, pp.170-83. See also Oric, *Srebrenica*, p.174.
[61] Masic, *Istina o Bratuncu*, p.99; Oric, *Srebrenica*, p.174.
[62] MSF, Brussel. 'Interview Dzema, aunt of Emira', 18/10/1995.
[63] Morillon, *Croire et oser*, pp.169-181. Hollingworth, *Merry Christmas*, p.184-86.
[64] Hollingworth, *Merry Christmas*, pp.188-91.

battery formed the lights.[65] Nedred Mujkanovic, who had had hardly any surgical experience before the war, had become an experienced war surgeon. *Médecins Sans Frontières* reported that there was no water or electricity in the enclave, that many thousands of people had to go without health care and were threatened by starvation; the Displaced Persons were not prepared for the cold and lacked clothing and shoes, and warmed themselves by burning rubbish. Dozens of people died of starvation every day. There was a tremendous lack of everything: food, housing, medical care and sanitary facilities.[66] An annex to the hospital building, not far from the town hall, had been transformed into a ward where men with amputated limbs lay to recuperate. They made clear that they wanted to leave Srebrenica.[67]

Hollingworth also witnessed the airdrops made in the vicinity of the town. The first took place on 6 March; they would continue for the whole month, mostly in the woods near the town and the village of Bajramovici. The precise locations were never known ahead of time. Every evening, the inhabitants of the town (including women and children) went into the hills to watch for American planes in the hope of obtaining some of the aid. Fires were built to draw attention. As soon as the packages were dropped, it was the law of the jungle. It was a chaotic situation; it was usually dark and everyone did all he could to gain some of the booty. 'It is survival of the fittest that prevails' according to the report of *Médecins Sans Frontière.* People fought for food, using knives even, and there was regular loss of life.[68] In the beginning whole pallets weighing several hundred kilos were dropped, sometimes crushing the awaiting people. A total of 35 to 40 people were killed by such incidents during the airdrops. Later, small packages were made with food and medicine and thrown out of the aeroplanes. People kept the food for themselves and brought the medicine to the hospital. Sometimes the Serbs fired upon the airdrop locations.[69]

In his eyewitness report, Hollingworth describes the course of events at such an airdrop. He knew that it was every man for himself and that the authorities of the town complained about having no control over the distribution of the aid. Still, it was worse than he thought; Hollingworth drove to the spot where the drops took place and saw hundreds of men, women and older children run through the woods and fight over the aid. The largest and strongest grabbed the most and everyone screamed at one another. Within a few minutes everything was gone and there was nothing left for the local authorities to pick up. During the airdrop witnessed by Hollingworth four people died; three were crushed by pallets and one man was stabbed to death in a fight over the goods.[70]

When Morillon wanted to leave the enclave on 12 March, the population refused to let him go. Morillon's vehicle was blocked by a large group of women. The authorities, who at first stood to wave goodbye to him, suddenly disappeared or said they could do nothing against the crowd. The following night, Morillon attempted to escape from the enclave but did not succeed. On 14 March, Morillon made the speech from the balcony of the hospital that was soon to become world news; he declared that from that point on the population was under the protection of the UN. Hollingworth stuck a UN flag out of the window and the crowd cheered and applauded. Instead of being a hostage, Morillon was suddenly a hero. He settled in the post office building and was given two rooms with a stove by the authorities.[71] Not much later the authorities let Morillon leave. When he departed he left behind eight Canadian soldiers, nine United Nations Military Observers (UNMOs) and two UNHCR people.

On 18 March Mladic agreed to a temporary ceasefire. The following day in the afternoon, a large UNHCR convoy arrived made up of nineteen lorries bearing two hundred tons of goods. People

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[65] Hollingworth, *Merry Christmas*, pp.192-93.
[66] MSF, Brussel. MSF Brussels to UNHCR (Joan Edwards), 15/03/93. UNGE, UNHCR. Report on Srebrenica, Laurens Jolles, 11/03/93. See also Hollingworth, *Merry Christmas*, pp.187-88.
[67] Hollingworth, *Merry Christmas*, p.194.
[68] MSF, Brussel. MSF Brussels (Alain Devaux), 14/06/93. UNGE, UNHCR. HQ Geneva Carminati to Girard (HCR Rhein-Main Air Base), 18 March 1993 re: airdrops.
[69] Masic, *Istina o Bratuncu*, p.118-19. Interviews Nedred Mujkanovic 02/12/98, Ilijaz Pilav 31/01/98; Hatidza Hren 02/02/98.
[70] Hollingworth, *Merry Christmas*, pp.200-01.
[71] Morillon, *Croire et oser*, pp.172-74; Hollingworth, *Merry Christmas*, pp.195-200. Interview Burt Horn 17/11/99.

were waiting in the streets and cheered when the lorries arrived. Morillon led the convoy which was taken to a warehouse and unloaded there. The acute food shortage was solved in one fell swoop in this way.[72] However, when the convoy wanted to return to Tuzla the next morning, chaos erupted when hordes of people tried to climb on the lorries and even children were crushed. The police shot into the air but ultimately almost seven hundred people went along to Tuzla.[73]

At the end of March a following transport reached the enclave. When this convoy wanted to return to Tuzla, the same scene took place as two weeks previously. At least two children were crushed to death.[74] Up until the beginning of April a total of at least 5,560 people and a few hundred wounded were evacuated.[75] On 24 March, an airbridge was opened which was intended to evacuate critically wounded by helicopter, but this was stopped a few days later because the Serbs shot at the aircraft, resulting in a number of casualties and wounded.

Bosnian Government circles were not at all happy with the evacuations, and even the local government in Srebrenica wanted to call a halt to them. As of that moment, no one else was allowed to leave, not even those older than sixty. The convoys that went to the enclave on 6 and 7 April returned empty.[76]

In the meantime, the Serbian advance continued. At the end of March various villages to the east of Srebrenica fell into Serb hands. The Serbs tightened the ring around Srebrenica slowly but surely and the town came under constant artillery fire and bombardment. Serbian artillery was set up around Srebrenica and in Serbia itself, and fighter bombers and helicopters carried out daily bombings.[77]

On 12 April Zalazje and Zeleni Jadar (see map in section 1) fell into Serb hands. On 13 April the situation became more serious when, during firing on the enclave, at least fifty-six people were killed, among them fifteen children who were playing football on the schoolgrounds, and seventy-three seriously wounded. UNHCR official Louis Gentile was there when this happened and described the atrocity he had seen: the ground was bathed in blood, there were human parts against the fence, and one child had been beheaded.[78] Larry Hollingworth voiced the hope that the VRS commanding officer responsible for this would 'burn in the hottest part of hell'.[79] By around the middle of April the Serbs had advanced to 1,800 metres from the town centre of Srebrenica. From their positions on the hills Kvarac and Pribicevac they had a good command of Srebrenica.[80] Srebrenica was now on the verge of falling into Serb hands. Some people feared that this would be a bloodbath given the Serb desire for revenge after the events of the first year of war.

According to an official foreign document Milosevic too was exasperated and was extremely concerned that if the Bosnian Serb Armies entered Srebrenica there would be a massacre because of the tremendous bad blood that existed surrounding the Muslim leader that the Bosnian Serbs blamed for the Bratunac incident. Milosevic believed it would be a great mistake to take Srebrenica and personally instructed Karadzic not to do so.[81]

Naser Oric had actually given up the fight. When the Serbs had taken positions in the hills near the town centre, he realized that his troops could not resist any more. The Muslim-controlled area was reduced from 900 square kilometres to 140 square kilometres around Srebrenica and 110 square kilometres around Zepa. Bratunac was consequently almost completely in Serb hands.[82]

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72 Masic, *Istina o Bratuncu*, p.119; Hollingworth, *Merry Christmas*, pp. 209-10.
73 Confidential information (111).
74 Confidential information (112).
75 Confidential information (109).
76 Confidential information (113).
77 Oric, *Srebrenica*, pp.157-58.
37 Confidential information 114.
79 Hollingworth, *Merry Christmas*, p.215.
80 Masic, *Istina o Bratuncu*, p.96; Oric, *Srebrenica*, pp.177-179.
81 Confidential information 43.
82 Masic, *Istina o Bratuncu*, p.100.

On 15 April, the Muslim authorities sent a confidential message to the UN saying they would surrender if a number of conditions were met: evacuation of wounded soldiers and civilians and free passage for Muslim soldiers to Tuzla.[83] On 16 April 1993, however, the Security Council of the United Nations passed resolution 819 declaring Srebrenica a Safe Area. Events related to this UN decision will be discussed in the following chapter.

[83] Interview Lord Owen, 27/06/01.

# Chapter 3
# Srebrenica under UN protection: demilitarized and Safe Area (March - June 1993)

## 1. Introduction

In Chapter 10 of Part I we discussed the dramatic developments at the beginning of 1993 in Eastern Bosnia that were to result in the designation of Srebrenica as a Safe Area by the Security Council of the United Nations and the agreements between the ABiH and the VRS about the demilitarization of the area. That chapter also related how the commanding officer of UNPROFOR in Bosnia, the French general, Philippe Morillon, elicited the anger of the Bosnian authorities at the beginning of March when he stated after a visit to Cerska - a town to the north of Srebrenica that had been captured by the VRS a few days earlier - that he had seen no signs of mass murder, in contrast to what the media had reported.

When it became clear that the VRS was continuing its offensive against Srebrenica, and the Bosnian-Serb authorities continued to refuse to allow UNHCR convoys into the Muslim area, which was shrinking every day, Morillon decided to take action. He feared that the VRS offensive and the ethnic cleansing in Eastern Bosnia would end in a bloodbath, like the one in Vukovar in 1991. Just like the French government, he was convinced that a bloodbath in Srebrenica would deal a mortal blow to the Vance-Owen plan, which had been achieved after difficult negotiations. Morillon hoped that he could stabilize the situation by going to Srebrenica himself with an aid convoy and a few UNMOs, and in that way introduce a UN presence. Without consulting his Force Commander Wahlgren, he left his headquarters in Sarajevo on 10 March 1993 for Srebrenica by way of Tuzla with the consent of VRS commanding general Ratko Mladic.[84]

Despite General Mladic's approval, Morillon was blocked in Zvornik. After negotiations with a strong Bosnian-Serb delegation of commanding officers from the Srebrenica area, he was allowed to continue his journey to Srebrenica. However, he was not allowed to take the UNHCR convoy with him. Only a truck from *Médecins Sans Frontières* with medical supplies and a group of 19 people were allowed to accompany him the following morning.

Morillon's journey with his company is described in Chapter 2 of this Part. The conditions under which that journey took place were important for the topic of that chapter: how the negotiations under Morillon and other UNPROFOR commanding officers took shape.

No matter how you look at it, Morillon's expedition was risky, because no measures had been taken for UNPROFOR support in case there were problems or in case the small convoy was attacked.[85] Morillon reached Srebrenica on 11 March 1993 from Zvornik and Bratunac by means of a snowy, undermined mountain road, because he had been told by his Bosnian and Serb counterparts that the Yellow Bridge between Bratunac and Potocari was damaged.

The following day, on instructions from the local authorities and the Bosnian government, the refugees in the enclave made it impossible for Morillon and some of his party to leave the enclave by completely blocking his YPR and the vehicles of his convoy. The UNHCR saw the blockade of Morillon by 1,500 women and children primarily as an act of desperation.

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[84] Barros-Duchêne, *Srebrenica*, p. 75. Honig & Both, *Srebrenica*, pp. 83-85. Rohde, *Endgame*, p. 45. Van Cant, *Lessen in waanzin*, pp.125-127. Interview J. Zoutendijk, 06/04/01. Interview L-E. Wahlgren, 03/06/99.

[85] The group was made up of five Canadian soldiers, two American officers (for the food drops), three MSF workers, three UNHCR workers (L. Hollingworth, L. Jolles and Kojic), four UNMOs, his Cabinet chief, the British major Piers Tucker and his bodyguard and interpreter Mihailov. (S. Mardel, the WHO doctor reached Srebrenica by foot from Konjevic Polje a few days earlier than Morillon. (Morillon, *Croire et oser*, p. 168. Barros-Duchêne, *Srebrenica*, p. 78. Interviews Nedred Mujkanavic, 20/04/99 and J. Zoutendijk, 06/04/01)

By taking the Bosnia-Hercegovina Commander hostage, the Sarajevo authorities hoped to force UNPROFOR and the UNHCR to offer humanitarian help and to evacuate the wounded. At the same time they hoped to force the VRS and the leaders of the *Republika Sprska* in Pale to stop the offensive against Srebrenica. Morillon decided to make a virtue out of necessity. It was not made known to the outside world that the Bosnia-Hercegovina Commander had been taken hostage. On 13 March, standing on the roof of his YPR, he announced that he would stay in Srebrenica out of solidarity with the refugees. This resulted in a slight relaxation of the hostile atmosphere. Morillon was given the top floor of the post office as his 'general's suite', and the others set up temporary quarters on the ground floor. On 14 March Morillon announced from the balcony of his 'suite' that the population of Srebrenica was under the protection of UNPROFOR. As a sign of this he had the UN flag raised at the post office.[86]

In Morillon's words, Srebrenica was a hell.[87] There were many wounded as a result of the continual VRS firing. Refugees continued to stream into the town; they lived without cover in winter conditions; the food situation was very bad. The refugees especially suffered from hunger; there was hardly any medical help and only one doctor in the emergency hospital. In addition, the situation between the 5,000 original inhabitants of Srebrenica and the continual stream of refugees - estimated by UNHCR on 11 March as 9,000, on 25 March as 30,000[88] - was very tense. The town was completely desperate. The local government did almost nothing and there was absolutely no coordination in dealing with the stream of refugees. The original population was not concerned about the refugees and only worried about themselves. The only hope in this macabre existence were the American airdrops of food that had started a few days before Morillon's arrival.[89] However, as was described in the last chapter, the rule of the survival of the fittest saw to it that the aid did not find its way to the weakest or those who needed it most.

Morillon's arrival did have some effect on the VRS: the artillery firing stopped. Since he came with a truck filled with medical supplies, as well as a team from *Médecins Sans Frontières* and representatives of UNHCR, a quick start could be made to cataloguing what was needed, and initial preparations were carried out for evacuating the wounded. The four UNMOs who had come with Morillon were also able to start their work. Nonetheless, Morillon remained a hostage. The Srebrenican authorities did not want to let him go until sufficient goods had been provided and evacuation of the wounded had been organized.[90]

In his statement of 14 March, Morillon placed great responsibility on UNPROFOR and the United Nations. The UNPROFOR mandate provided only for support of the humanitarian aid of UNHCR by protecting convoys and personnel of aid organizations. The Bosnia-Hercegovina Commander now forced the peacekeeping mission to protect an area and its inhabitants. For Morillon's staff that seemed like no more than a promise of convenience made to secure their release. No doubt that played a role, because Morillon was hit hard by his being held hostage.[91] Personally, he expected that his agreement was only temporary, because the Vance-Owen Plan would put an end to the hostilities in all of Bosnia in the very near future. According to that plan Srebrenica would remain in Muslim hands.[92] Morillon's statement was a declaration of intent to improve the situation in the enclave. He had said that already on 10 March during his negotiations in Zvornik. In the beginning, his intentions about ending the fighting around Srebrenica and improving the living conditions of the refugees were not brought out all that clearly.

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[86] Owen, *Balkan Odyssey*, p. 131. Sudetic, *Blood and Vengeance*, p. 179. Morillon, *Croire et oser*, pp.169-175. Barros-Duchêne, *Srebrenica*, p. 84. Honig & Both, *Srebrenica*, pp. 84-85. Rohde, *Endgame*, p. 46. Interviews with Dr Nedred Mujkanavic, 20/04/99 and J. Zoutendijk, 06/04/01.

[87] Morillon, *Croire et oser*, p.171.

[88] Confidential information (135).

[89] Confidential information (136). UNNY, UNPROFOR, file 87305 DFC 3300 – Srebrenica vol.2 Mar 93: appendix to Wahlgren to Annan Z-327, 15/03/93 'UNMO BiH North: Special Report on situation in Srebrenica area' drawn up by Cdt R. Denyft. Ibid: fax Cordy-Simpson (BH Comd main Kiseljak) to HQ UNPROFOR Zagreb, 15/03/93. Interview J. Zoutendijk, 06/04/01.

[90] UNNY, UNPROFOR, file 87305 DFC 3300 – Srebrenica vol.2 Mar 93: fax Cordy-Simpson (BH Comd main Kiseljak) to HQ UNPROFOR Zagreb, 15 March 1993. Interview J. Zoutendijk, 06/04/01.

[91] Interview J. Segers, 16/06/00. Interview V. Andreev, 07/07/00.

[92] Rohde, *Endgame*, p. 46.

Other priorities arose: Morillon, the UNHCR and UNPROFOR had their hands full trying to relieve the acute need in Srebrenica, and consequently the first issue was to see to it that the UNHCR convoys were let through by the Bosnian Serbs and that the wounded could be evacuated. This process moved very slowly and as long as no UNHCR convoy arrived in Srebrenica, the civil and military authorities would not allow Morillon to leave. In their eyes, he was more useful as a means of pressure as a hostage in the enclave than as advocate and negotiator outside. On 15 March they allowed members of the *Médecins Sans Frontières*, the UNHCR teams and a few UNMOs to leave, but threatened to kill Morillon and 13 other UNPROFOR military personnel if the UNMOs did not return in two days with a convoy.[93] The first humanitarian convoy arrived in Srebrenica on 19 March, and Morillon himself remained another four days before he finally left on instructions of the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations in New York.[94]

The realization of Morillon's promise to protect Srebrenica was not the work of UNPROFOR alone. Many parties played a role. The VRS and the authorities in Pale held important cards because they were winning on the battlefield. UNPROFOR and Morillon were also dependent upon the cooperation of both the Bosnian government in Sarajevo and the civil authorities and ABiH in Srebrenica. Outside of Bosnia, the Security Council played a role, in particular in the active participation of the non-aligned countries in the process. In essence, it had to do with creating a stable military situation on the basis of a ceasefire in order to set in motion humanitarian aid and the evacuation of wounded and refugees. Attention focused first of all on humanitarian aid and evacuation. It required a great deal of effort to get this action going at the highest international level.

This chapter will concentrate primarily on the question of how UNPROFOR in Bosnia tried to stabilize the situation and thus to assure the continued existence of the Muslim enclave of Srebrenica. UNPROFOR tried to achieve this stability through a demilitarization agreement based on the Geneva Convention of 1949, and to seal this agreement through UNPROFOR presence. In addition to the problems related to preparing the agreement and the difficulties of implementation, there was also the question of to what extent this approach was in line with the status of a Safe Area as designated for Srebrenica by the Security Council on 17 April 1993. UNPROFOR seemed to operate on the basis of a 'classic' peacekeeping concept, but ran into opposition over such elements as demilitarization and disarmament.

Thus, the question arises whether the UNPROFOR approach fit in this concept and if it did, why UNPROFOR did not succeed in finding support for it in New York. Was that the result of strictly military thinking and an implicit underestimation of the reality on the ground, or an overestimation of the existing possibilities? Three phases can be distinguished in the process of creating the Safe Area in Srebrenica in the spring of 1993. The first starts with the arrival of Morillon in Eastern Bosnia on 10 March 1993 and ends with the first demilitarization agreement for Srebrenica on 17 April 1993. The second phase covers the period of the implementation of this agreement and the evacuations through the second demilitarization agreement of 8 May 1993. The third phase runs until the beginning of June when the situation stabilized although the envisioned goal of demilitarization was not reached.

## 2. Ceasefire and demilitarization under UN presence (10 March - 17 April 1993)

A 'process of rumour and panic' as a 'reflection of fear' had - in the words of Morillon[95] - Eastern Bosnia in its grasp. The Muslims and the Bosnian Serbs lived in continual fear of massacre by the other party. The vicious circle of fear and panic, as Morillon put it in his meeting in Zvornik with regional Bosnian-Serb authorities on 10 March 1993, could only be broken by a ceasefire and the stationing of

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93 UNNY, UNPROFOR, file 87305: DFC 3300 – Srebrenica, vol 2 Mar 93: coded cable Z-237, Wahlgren to Annan, 15/03/93.

94 UNNY, DPKO, coded cables UNPROFOR: MSC-394, 22/03/93, Annan to Morillon.

95 Interview J. Zoutendijk, 06/04/01; appendix: report of meeting of Morillon with Lukic et al in Zvornik on 10/03/93. (notes of Zoutendijk, who attended the meeting).

UNMOs as neutral observers. His phrase was: 'Against the mistrust we have to build confidence.'[96] Since the attention of the world was focused on Srebrenica, in Morillon's opinion the *Republika Srpska* would do itself a favour by allowing the evacuation of wounded in keeping with international agreements and giving up the blockade of the enclave.[97] Morillon made a similar statement to Naser Oric and the civil authorities in Srebrenica. Morillon would try to achieve a ceasefire and the arrival of humanitarian convoys. Oric and his ABiH forces would have to desist from provocations and Srebrenica would become a demilitarized zone. UNPROFOR would contribute to the stabilization of the situation by stationing UNMOs in the enclave. On 18 March, Oric agreed to this on behalf of the civil authorities and the government in Sarajevo.[98]

In the following days Morillon continued - in Srebrenica - to develop his plans. In the short term he wanted to achieve a ceasefire to make it possible to evacuate the wounded; in the longer term he wished to have UNPROFOR protection through the stationing of a UNPROFOR contingent of UNMOs and a Canadian company, and through the establishment of a demilitarized United Nations Protected Area (UNPA), as had been done earlier in the Serbian areas of Croatia. Time was of the essence in carrying out these plans, because otherwise, in Morillon's opinion, Srebrenica would fall in four days (this was 15 March).[99]

Morillon wanted to create a stable situation in three steps to bridge the period until the Vance-Owen peace plan would be implemented. As part of this, after the ceasefire (step one), Srebrenica would be a demilitarized zone (step two) and after that was achieved a UNPROFOR contingent would monitor the situation (step three). At the time this plan did not seem realistic. Morillon's primary problem in the first phase was acquiring VRS cooperation in a ceasefire. The VRS did not want to consider the situation in Srebrenica separately from the situation in Bosnia as a whole. The Bosnian-Serb army had been trying to achieve a ceasefire for all of Bosnia since November 1992, but according to the VRS every agreement had not lasted long because of ABiH infractions. In fact, both parties had begun an offensive to improve their positions on the ground during the preparation of the Vance-Owen plan. The ABiH tried to conquer the suburb of Ilijas near Sarajevo and had started a counteroffensive from Tuzla in the direction of Eastern Bosnia, as a response to a VRS offensive on Muslim areas, in particular the area around Srebrenica, that had started in the middle of February 1993.[100]

After the arrival of Morillon, the VRS was still not interested in a ceasefire for Srebrenica alone. VRS Chief of Staff Milovanovic repeated this to Morillon on 15 March during a meeting at Yellow Bridge on the border between Muslim and VRS territory near Bratunac. The VRS attack on Srebrenica would stop - according to Milovanovic who was speaking for Mladic - as soon as the ABiH stopped its attack on Ilijas near Sarajevo and the offensive from Tuzla in the direction of Eastern Bosnia.

Two days later, during the meeting of the Mixed Military Working Group (MMWG) in Sarajevo, a negotiation group of the belligerents under UNPROFOR, it became clear that a ceasefire was still not a topic of discussion for the VRS delegation. Four days later Mladic's deputy, General

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[96] Interview J. Zoutendijk, 06/04/01; appendix: report of meeting of Morillon with Lukic et al in Zvornik on 10/03/93. (notes of Zoutendijk, who attended the meeting).
[97] Interview J. Zoutendijk, 06/04/01; appendix: report of meeting of Morillon with Lukic et al in Zvornik on 10/03/93. (notes of Zoutendijk, who attended the meeting).
[98] Honig & Both, *Srebrenica*, p. 85. UNNY, file 87305 (DFC 3300 Srebrenica vol 2 Mar 1993): fax Chief Press and Information BH Command Kiseljak to Chief Press and Information Zagreb, 13/03/93: appendix: press release of Morillon. Interview Nedred Mujkanavic, 20/04/99.
[99] UNNY, UNPROFOR, file 87305 (DFC 3300 – Srebrenica, vol 2 Mar 93) fax BH Comd Main Kiseljak to HQ UNPROFOR Zagreb, 15/03/93. Honig & Both, *Srebrenica*, pp. 89-90.
[100] Honig & Both, *Srebrenica*, pp. 81-82. Sudetic, *Blood and Vengeance*, pp.172-173.

Gvero, repeated to Morillon that he was only willing to consider a ceasefire for all of Bosnia. He was opposed to 'tactical ceasefires for [the] convenience of [the] Muslims'.[101]

Nor did the VRS want to agree to an increased UNPROFOR presence in Srebrenica. Morillon wanted to start on the placement of a large number of UNMOs and to back this up later with UNPROFOR troops. Mladic had flatly refused that idea. On 23 March, the day of Morillon's departure from Srebrenica by order of UN headquarters in New York, only seven UNPROFOR representatives and one UNHCR representative remained.[102] There was not much hope of realizing Morillon's plan as long as the VRS would not budge. After Morillon left Srebrenica the VRS started its bombardments again. Assessments of the situation were very bleak. The special envoy of the UNHCR for the former Yugoslavia, J. Mendiluce expected a 'mass exodus, on foot, to Tuzla'. Morillon feared 'an irresistible BSA advance'.[103] The recently designated Swedish Force Commander, General Wahlgren, drew the conclusion from the intensified fighting that it would only be possible to achieve a pause or end to the VRS offensive against Srebrenica by placing heavy pressure on Mladic.[104]

On advice of the Russian ambassadors in Zagreb and Belgrade, Wahlgren now tried to gain Mladic's cooperation through Milosevic for an agreement about Srebrenica. Wahlgren himself thought that Mladic could not ignore Milosevic's opinion because of the VRS's dependency on the Yugoslavian army, the JNA. During a discussion arranged by Milosevic on 26 March, Wahlgren and Mladic did indeed agree to a ceasefire for all of Bosnia which was to begin on 28 March.

*Mladic and Halilovic confer*

They also agreed that Mladic and the ABiH Commander in Chief, General Halilovic, would discuss an end to the hostilities on 6 April at the airport of Sarajevo in a meeting chaired by UNPROFOR. Mladic did not yet want to talk about increased UN presence in Srebrenica. He argued that consent of the *Republika Srpska* parliament was required for the introduction of more UNMOs and a UNPROFOR contingent. Mladic was not prepared to withdraw in any way from his strategic position around Srebrenica. He said he was willing to allow refugees to leave Srebrenica and humanitarian convoys to enter. The recurrent theme of the discussion was the Bosnian-Serb accusation emphasized by Mladic that the UN chose the side of the Bosnian Muslims and had no sympathy for the fate of the Serbian civilians in Muslim areas.[105]

Mladic's refusal to allow a larger UN contingent in Srebrenica did not mean that the topic had been removed from the agenda. UNPROFOR did not submit a request to the Bosnian-Serb parliament, but Morillon proposed to use the calm of the ceasefire to send extra UN troops to Srebrenica without the approval of the belligerents. This was clearly intended as a counter move to hamper continuation of the VRS attack. The Bosnia-Hercegovina Commander tried to present this move as an advance step for the implementation of the Vance-Owen plan which included the deployment of extra troops and the opening of humanitarian corridors. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations in New York, however, found this manoeuvre too dangerous for political reasons.[106] Still, this did not mean that the option of sending in UNPROFOR reinforcements to Srebrenica without the cooperation of the VRS was eliminated.

After the VRS breached the ceasefire on 2 April, the High Commissioner for Refugees, Sadako Ogata, insisted on an immediate reinforcement of the UN presence in Srebrenica 'in order to turn the

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[101] UNNY, UNPROFOR, file 87305 (DFC 3300 – Srebrenica, vol 2 Mar 93): fax BH Comd Main Kiseljak to HQ UNPROFOR Zagreb, 15/03/93. Confidential information (138). Quotation in: UNPROFOR: fax BH Comd Main Kiseljak to HQ UNPROFOR Zagreb, 22/03/93.
[102] UNNY, DPKO, code cables UNPROFOR: MSC-394, 22/03/93 Annan to Morillon. Confidential information (67).
[103] UNNY, DPKO coded cables UNPROFOR: Z-383, 24/03/93, Wahlgren to Annan.
[104] UNNY, DPKO coded cables UNPROFOR: Z-365, 21/03/93, Wahlgren to Annan. Ibid: Z-382, 24/03/93 Wahlgren to Annan. Ibid: Z-383, 24/03/93, Wahlgren to Annan.
[105] UNNY, DPKO, coded cables UNPROFOR: Z-382, 24/03/93, Wahlgren to Annan. Ibid, Z-383, 24/03/93, Wahlgren to Annan. Ibid, Z-411, 29/03/93. Confidential information (68) and (138).
[106] UNNY, DPKO, coded cables UNPROFOR: MSC-451, 30/03/93 Annan to Wahlgren and Morillon.

enclave into an area protected by the UN'[107]. If that did not happen, the only remaining option was a large-scale evacuation of the population of Srebrenica. The chairman of the Security Council insisted in a statement on the implementation of Ogata's proposal. Wahlgren and his staff decided in consultation with Morillon and his chief-of-staff to take action. They decided not to negotiate with the VRS and the ABiH, rather announced their decisions as facts to the belligerents and New York. In a letter of 4 April 1993 Wahlgren demanded that the ceasefire be honoured and the siege of Srebrenica stopped. He announced the deployment of extra UNMO teams and a Canadian company, as well as the opening of a corridor for humanitarian aid and the evacuation of wounded.[108]

Although the aid convoys and the evacuation of wounded now got underway, the Bosnian-Serb side continued to be very hostile towards UNPROFOR. They believed that UNPROFOR had chosen the Muslim side. This attitude was expressed in high-handed actions by local commanding officers. On 27 March, sections of the town of Srebrenica as well as the helicopter landing zone were fired upon from Bratunac, apparently to obstruct the evacuation of wounded that had begun a few days before. Two Muslims were killed and two Canadian soldiers wounded. Morillon himself was the victim of a well-planned 'spontaneous' attack of furious Serbs on his armoured vehicle in Zvornik. For the Bosnian-Serb authorities he was the embodiment of UNPROFOR's '[taking] the side (...) against [the] Serbian people'.[109]

Since the VRS had begun firing on Srebrenica again after Morillon's departure on 23 March, the UNHCR thought that she could make an end to the humanitarian calamity by implementing a large-scale evacuation of 15,000 refugees out of Srebrenica. The UNHCR special envoy to Yugoslavia, J. Mendiluce, dismissed accusations of the Bosnian authorities that this would mean cooperating with the ethnic cleansing. According to his explanation, the UNHCR followed a two-pronged policy: evacuation of the refugees who wished to leave and the supply of aid to those who chose to remain in Srebrenica. To carry out this operation the UNPROFOR contingent in Srebrenica would need reinforcements.

After Karadzic refused his approval for this on 5 April, Wahlgren decided to send a Canadian company from Kisovo to Srebrenica to support the large-scale evacuation. Mendiluce tried in vain to convince the representative of the International Red Cross in Tuzla to declare Srebrenica as a protected area under the Geneva Convention by raising the Red Cross flag at the Srebrenica hospital. The idea was that this would have offered the combined UNHCR-UNPROFOR operation extra protection. In addition to international pressure, the military balance of power was also reason for the determination of UNPROFOR and UNHCR. The VRS offensive had stopped on 28 March as a result of the ceasefire and the bad weather conditions. After artillery firing started up again from the north, east and west on 2 April, UNPROFOR was afraid that VRS would continue, surround the enclave and take it.[110]

Wahlgren held off with sending a Canadian company to Srebrenica because, after an initial meeting on 6 April in Sarajevo between the VRS and ABiH about details of a ceasefire, he wanted to have Mladic's endorsement. Wahlgren undertook direct negotiations with Mladic in Belgrade to try to bring an end to the VRS offensive against Srebrenica. The talks on 9 April yielded little results however. Mladic and his deputy Gvero used their talk with Wahlgren, Morillon, his Chief of Staff Thornberry and UNHCR representative J. Kumin primarily to blow off steam about the international attention on Srebrenica. They continued with their well-known complaint about insufficient support for the Bosnian Serbs and murderous attacks of the

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[107] UNNY, DPKO, coded cables UNPROFOR: MSC-482, 02/04/93. Appendix: letter.
[108] UNNY, DPKO, coded cables UNPROFOR: MSC-482, 02/04/93, Annan to Wahlgren. Ibid, Z-442, 04/04/93, Wahlgren to Annan). APVVN, file 910 Yugoslavia: coded message NYVU 314, 03/04/93.
[109] Sudetic, *Blood and Vengeance*, pp. 188-189. Morillon, *Croire et oser*, pp.179-180. UNNY, DPKO coded cables UNPROFOR, Z-462, 08/04/93, Wahlgren to Annan. Confidential information (140). Quotation from: NIOD, Coll. Wahlgren: Karadzic to Wahlgren and Boutros-Ghali, 04/04/93. UNNY, UNPROFOR, file 87305 DFC 3300 – Srebrenica vol 2 Mar 93:fax BHC Morillon to HQ Zagreb, 13/04/93.
[110] Honig & Both, *Srebrenica*, pp. 92-93. Confidential information (125) and (126). UNGE UNPROFOR Box 195, file 2.5.2. HQ BH Command weekly Infosum no.23, 05/04/93. UNHCR, Fonds 11 Records of the Central Registry Series 3: classified Subject Files 1985-1995 File: 619.5 Protection and General Legal Matters. Protection and related problems Arising from the Civil War in Yugoslavia 1993, Binder Z9. Fax Morillon to Gvero, re: Situation in Srebrenica, 07/04/93. MSF: satcom Arjan Laan, 07/04/93.

Muslims who did not keep their agreements. Wahlgren tried to pick up on this by saying that the international attention was a result of the VRS actions. According to him, the power to remove international attention was in Mladic's hands. This reasoning found as little response as Wahlgren's argument not to look at the past but to concentrate on the future. Mladic did not go along with Wahlgren's proposal '[to] break the escalation' and 'to deploy a company into Srebrenica and to demilitarize the town'. After the meeting he said to journalists about Wahlgren's proposal: 'Over my dead body, and the bodies of my family'.

Wahlgren had gained nothing in other words. Mladic had only agreed to renewing the ceasefire as of the following day, 10 April at 14:00 hours and to a meeting with ABiH leader Halilovic on 12 April in Sarajevo. Srebrenica would be the only item on the agenda. Mendiluce concluded that Mladic had again won time and that on 12 April the only item on the agenda would be the surrender of Srebrenica.[111] Halilovic boycotted the meeting out of protest against the continued VRS offensive against Srebrenica.

Again, the meeting between Mladic and Wahlgren on 12 April yielded nothing. Mladic refused all cooperation in relieving the UN personnel in Srebrenica and sending a Canadian company. The VRS Commander in Chief did not answer when asked whether he would take Srebrenica by force. He limited himself to the remark that it would not be 'politically expedient' and that - if he had wanted - he could have taken it ten days earlier. He remained willing to talk to Halilovic about a political solution for Srebrenica. Halilovic would not budge and the impasse seemed irresolvable.[112]

*Srebrenica lost?*

It seemed as if Srebrenica was lost. Morillon's promise of UNPROFOR protection on 14 March had done little for the enclave. The small international UNPROFOR detachment, UNMO, UNHCR, *Médecins Sans Frontières* amounted to only 15 people and could not offer any real protection against a VRS attack.[113] Because of his strong military position, Mladic was able to dismiss all UNPROFOR proposals to end the battle around Srebrenica. In exchange for the ceasefire for all of Bosnia he was not willing to oblige UNPROFOR in any way concerning Srebrenica: no reinforcements of the UN presence, no discussions about demilitarization or the deployment of a company.

On 12 April the artillery and mortar attacks started up again, resulting in 56 deaths and 73 wounded. In the opinion of two UNMOs that was a response to the firing of mortar grenades on Bratunac by the ABiH.[114] This brought a quick end to the cautious optimism of a month earlier. The VRS had come to within a few kilometres of Srebrenica on all sides: in the southeast Skendorovici, Pribicevec, Zleni Jadar and Banja Crni Guber were in their hands; in the northwest Bukunglava was attacked; and in the north-east the road in-between Gradina and Zalazje was under fire (see map in the first section of Chapter 2).

Given these circumstances the ABiH commanding officer, Naser Oric, came to the conclusion that Srebrenica was lost. On 14 April 1993 he informed representatives of international organizations that he wanted to surrender. He made three conditions for this: first of all, evacuation of wounded ABiH soldiers, evacuation of all civilians and finally 'guaranteed safe passage for all military personnel to walk to Tuzla'. The UNHCR representative brought this message personally to Belgrade on 15 April. The UNMO team announced it to the Bosnia-Hercegovina command in Kiseljak on the evening of 15 April on UNHCR radio.[115] A complicating factor was that the authorities in Srebrenica had not talked to the government in Sarajevo about the decision and did not want it to be part of the negotiations. For this

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111 Sudetic, *Blood and vengeance*, pp. 190-191; Confidential information (69); UNGE, UNHCR, F19 SF 6, binder Srebrenica protection 4. Fax Mendiluce to HC Ogata, 11/04/93.
112 UNNY, DPKO, coded cables UNPROFOR: Z-480, 13/04/93, Wahlgren to Annan. Confidential information (129).
113 UNNY, UNPROFOR, file 87305 DFC 3300 – Srebrenica vol 2 Mar 93: fax BH Comd UNMO to UNMO HQ Zagreb, 13/04/93 re: Mission Report Srebrenica Garrison Commander/SMO.
114 Interview J. Zoutendijk, 06/04/01.
115 UNGE UNPROFOR Box 195, file 2.5.2. Fax 16 0919 Apr 93, HQBH Command Kiseljak to BH Comd Fwd Sarajevo, 16/04/93. Honig & Both, *Srebrenica*, p. 95.

reason they had asked that the offer be treated as confidential. The confidentiality was short-lived however. The BBC intercepted the message and the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations announced it during an informal consultation of the Security Council on Srebrenica.[116]

Morillon negotiated directly with the VRS about Oric's conditions and translated these into a number of steps. The most difficult point seemed to be the implementation of the surrender. He made a distinction between 'disposal of weapons' and 'move of combatants'. At 8:00 am the following morning, 16 April, Morillon informed the authorities in Srebrenica that as of 12:00 pm or earlier 'an absolute ceasefire' would be in force. 'We have agreement in principle to an airlift on Sat[urday] 17 April. (...) It is essential that the Moslem forces do nothing to provoke or precipitate a Serbian breaking of the ceasefire'. Negotiations were underway about the surrender of ABiH weapons to UNPROFOR. Morillon would discuss 'further details of a possible surrender' later that morning on the telephone with Mladic.[117] Even though Mladic actually had the surrender of the ABiH in Srebrenica in his pocket, international pressure on him to halt the offensive increased.[118] With the agreement of Karadzic, Milosevic now asked Wahlgren to deploy 'military monitoring teams' in and around Srebrenica as quickly as possible 'in order to report movements, fire, etc. in the area'.

Wahlgren then ordered a company of the Canadian battalion, CanBat, to move from Visoko to Tuzla to be able to enter Srebrenica the following day if possible. It was still not clear whether Mladic was willing to cooperate.

*Negotiations on the basis of UN Resolution 819*

The fighting continued until into the morning of 17 April 1993; the ABiH reconquered a number of villages around the town. Mladic showed up in Sarajevo for the talks with Halilovic, Wahlgren and Morillon at 12:30 in the afternoon, a half hour late. Mladic's favourable bargaining position had been undermined by Resolution 819 which had been approved a few hours earlier by the Security Council. The Security Council had acted under pressure from the group of non-aligned countries under the assumption that Srebrenica had fallen or would fall. The resolution called upon all parties to treat Srebrenica and environs as a 'Safe Area which should be free from any armed attack or any other hostile act'.[119]

The negotiations in Sarajevo lasted 14 hours, until 02:00 am in the morning of 18 April. Wahlgren and Morillon had difficulties with the interpretation of the Srebrenica resolution. The resolution had been purposely kept vague and included no definition of the Safe Area; thus, it was unclear what UNPROFOR's task was in the implementation, and even the zone of the Safe Area was not defined. Sashi Tharoor, close associate to the chief of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, Kofi Annan, had made it clear to Wahlgren and Morillon that Resolution 819 'creates no military obligations for UNPROFOR to establish or protect such a Safe Area'. What was clear was that on the basis of the mandate, UNPROFOR would have to increase its presence immediately in Srebrenica to monitor the humanitarian situation.[120] That had been attempted unsuccessfully in the previous weeks. It now seemed possible.

In actual fact Wahlgren, Morillon and Chief of Staff of Bosnia-Hercegovina Command, General Hayes, tried during the talks on 17 April to implement the three steps that had been sketched earlier: a ceasefire, deployment of a Canadian company and the demilitarization of Srebrenica. Realization of the

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116 Confidential information. (70).

117 UNNY, DPKO coded cables: Wahlgren to Annan, Z-489, 16/04/93 with appendix: crypto fax 15 2249 Apr 93, HQ BH Command Kiseljak to BH Comd Sarajevo, 15/04/93. UNGE, UNPROFOR Box 53 File 1.2.6. HQ BH Command Weekly Infsum no.25 [11-17/4], 19/04/93. ADEF: DCBC: confidential memorandum 93/546 chief DAV to M via deputy DGPZ and S, 16/04/93.

118 Honig & Both, *Srebrenica*, pp. 95-96. Sudetic, *Blood and Vengeance*, pp. 205-206. Owen, *Balkan Odyssey*, p. 135.

119 Sudetic, *Blood and Vengeance*, pp. 206-207. Honig & Both, *Srebrenica*, pp. 103-104. UNNY, DPKO, coded cables UNPROFOR: Wahlgren to Annan, Z-490, 16/04/93. UNGE, UNPROFOR Box 53 File 1.2.6. UNMO HQ BH to HQ BH Comd re: Daily Situation Report 161800B APR – 171800B APR 93. Confidential information (71). Text of the resolution in *United Nations Yearbook 1993*, pp. 452-453.

120 NIOD, Coll. Wahlgren. Annan to Wahlgren, MSC-607, 16/04/93.

plan to stabilize the situation with the agreement of both parties now seemed possible due to international pressure and the ABiH's capitulation offer. However, this was not without difficulties either. Mladic seemed to have come only to accept the surrender of Srebrenica. Morillon became increasingly irritated during the negotiations over the wild and coarse manner of Mladic, whose army was about to take the enclave. It seems that Morillon even considered calling Karadzic personally to ask him to sack Mladic.[121] ABiH negotiator General Halilovic was calmness itself: according to Wahlgren, an intelligent man who understood the problems and ignored Mladic's provocations. Wahlgren tried to expedite the negotiations by talking to Mladic and Halilovic in different rooms.[122]

Halilovic, on the other hand, found Wahlgren's basic principles, a ceasefire, deployment of UNPROFOR troops and demilitarization, acceptable. The ABiH commanding officer wanted to fix as many details as possible in the agreement: the border of the demilitarized zone, how it would be marked and the position of UNPROFOR's observation posts (OPs). He also wanted to define a larger area as demilitarized zone than that within the actual confrontation line. Mladic for his part demanded that the ABiH soldiers hand over their weapons and be prisoners of war.

Wahlgren wanted in any case to set the demilitarized zone. Finally, after 14 hours of stormy negotiations, an agreement was reached between ABiH and VRS in the presence of UNPROFOR that was in the spirit of Resolution 819 of the Security Council.[123]

Core elements to the agreement included: a ceasefire on 18 April at 05:00 am; deployment of a Canadian UNPROFOR company in Srebrenica at 11:00 am of the same day; opening of an air corridor from Srebrenica via Zvornik to Tuzla as of 12:00 pm for the transport of wounded and seriously ill; demilitarization under the authority of UNPROFOR ('all weapons, ammunition, mines, explosives and combat supplies (except medicine) inside Srebrenica will be submitted/handed over to UNPROFOR') within 72 hours of the arrival of a CanBat unit, followed by verification by both parties; establishment of a working group under the direction of UNPROFOR for the working out and monitoring of the demilitarization; disclosure and cleaning up of mine fields; freedom of movement for UNHCR and the International Red Cross and admission of humanitarian help; transfer of all dead and wounded and preparation of the exchange of prisoners of war.

The agreement included a number of risky arrangements for UNPROFOR. The question was whether it would be possible to complete the demilitarization within 72 hours, whether it would be possible to maintain the demilitarized zone with a single Canadian company, whether it would be possible to establish the borders of the demilitarized zone, whether the exchange of prisoners of war would take place, and what would happen to the ABiH in the enclave. Nothing was determined about a free exit as Naser Oric had demanded. Mladic for his part had demanded but not received the surrender of all ABiH soldiers as prisoners of war.[124]

The demilitarization agreement for Srebrenica of 18 April 1993 was an important moment in the bitter contest between ABiH and VRS. From UNPROFOR's perspective, it achieved a number of points that had been indicated since Morillon's promise on 14 March 1993 as essential for a peaceful settlement of the Srebrenica conflict and a stabilization of the situation, namely a ceasefire, UNPROFOR presence and demilitarization. The fact that the agreement could be reached was due to the great international pressure on the *Republika Srpska*, the VRS and Milosevic on the one hand, and the hopeless military position of the ABiH in Srebrenica on the other. The ABiH had lost the military battle, but the defeat was masked by the political developments on the international stage; as a result Srebrenica remained a Muslim area. Mladic got less than was thought possible, but he went along with the agreement because he wanted to free up troops for the contest along the Posavina corridor.

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121 Honig & Both, *Srebrenica*, p. 105.
122 Honig & Both, *Srebrenica*, pp. 104-105. Interview L-E. Wahlgren, 03/06/99.
123 Interview L-E Wahlgren, 03/06/99. Interview V. Andreev, 07/07/00. Confidential information (65).
124 Confidential information (72) and (73). UNNY, DPKO coded cables UNPROFOR: crypto fax Wahlgren to Annan, 18/4/93 appendix: *Agreement for the Demilitarization of Srebrenica.*

The battle for Srebrenica was now over, but whether the agreement would be actually implemented depended upon the cooperation of the two parties. UNPROFOR was responsible for carrying out the central agreements (monitoring of compliance to the ceasefire, collection and storage of the weapons within 72 hours, evacuation of the wounded and sick, and monitoring of the implementation of demilitarization). UNPROFOR's position was strengthened so as to make that possible: its presence in Srebrenica would be increased, even though a company of 150 was insufficient for the extensive task of demilitarization in the required short time period.

A great deal would depend upon the cooperation of the VRS and ABiH in implementation. In that respect the omens were not good. There was no basis for trust between ABiH and VRS and neither army had worked all that loyally with UNPROFOR up to this point. UNPROFOR was frightened to take any action in Srebrenica without the prior agreement of the VRS because of the risks to its personnel in Srebrenica and elsewhere in the Bosnian-Serb area.

Thus, the prospects for implementing the agreement of 18 April 1993 were not favourable. Neither ABiH nor VRS had received what they had asked for: there were no arrangements for the withdrawal of ABiH and the demilitarized zone was not established as ABiH had wanted. The VRS was not given the ABiH forces as prisoners of war. In short, despite the agreement there remained more than enough conflicts in this extremely vulnerable construction.

## 3. Implementation of the demilitarization agreement of 18 April 1993

After the agreement on the demilitarization of Srebrenica was signed on 18 April, the company of Major Poirier of CanBat I received orders to move from Tuzla to Srebrenica. The company was made up of three infantry platoons, an engineering section and two groups with TOW anti-tank artillery, 150 men altogether. They left in 20 M-113 armoured personnel vehicles and arrived at 12:00 pm in the town, an hour later than instructed.

The Canadians were welcomed as saviours. Later in the day the CanBat commanding officer arrived in Kisovo, Lieutenant Colonel Geburt to lead the difficult assignment.[125] CanBat was the UNPROFOR name for a reinforced battalion of the 2nd Royal Canadian Regiment that had arrived in Bosnia in November 1992. Since deployment in the Bosnian-Serb area was problematic, the battalion had been stationed in Kisovo and used for all kinds of emergency assignments. According to UNPROFOR Commander in Chief Wahlgren this company was made up of 'well trained peacekeepers with heavy arms (...) the best that there was'.[126]

By chance, a few men from CanBat had gone with Morillon to Srebrenica at the beginning of March. They were part of the military engineering detachment and just happened to be in Zvornik when Morillon needed a YPR to go to Srebrenica and borrowed one from CanBat. This small group, led by Sergeant Morrison stayed in Srebrenica until 18 April. During an evacuation of wounded on 25 March, two soldiers of the group were injured by VRS firing.[127]

Without any specific preparation and almost totally unfamiliar with the area, the ceasefire line and the local conditions, the company of Major Poirier had the difficult task of demilitarizing Srebrenica. The assignment of Poirier's company was set out in an operations order from Bosnia-Hercegovina Command. Their first assignment was clearing and securing a landing zone for helicopters for the evacuation of wounded, as well as the coordination and support of this. The company was also charged with supervising adherence to the ceasefire in the town, and outside with the charting and observation of VRS positions, the

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[125] Taylor & Nolan, *Tested Mettle. Canada's Peacekeepers at War*, pp. 101-102. UNGE UNPROFOR Box 195 file 2.5.2. HQ BH Comd (Main) Kiseljak daily sitrep 18/04/93. Stankovic, *Trusted Mole*, 148-150. (Stankovic made a dating error. He dates the arrival of CanBat in Srebrenica as Sunday 17 april instead of 18 april.) 'Canadian troops Sent to Besieged City' *The Toronto Star*, 17/04/93. Honig and Both, *Srebrenica*, p.106 say that 'a silent crowd had witnessed the entry of the Canadians'.

[126] Interview L-E. Wahlgren, 03/06/99.

[127] Taylor and Nolan, *Tested Mettle*, pp. 100-101. DFAIT, file 21-14-6-UNPROFOR vol 26: memorandum DNHQ, Sitrep re:Morillon, 17/03/93. NIOD, Zylab 21536, declassified DND, Srebrenica rotation, 02/04/93.

establishment of contact with local civil authorities and the military commanders of the opposing parties. Finally, CanBat was to start the demilitarization in the town and then in the surrounding area by collecting and guarding all weapons, ammunition, mines and explosives. Instructions about the destruction of these materials would follow. Given the volatile situation, CanBat was instructed to report every hour to Bosnia-Hercegovina Command in Kiseljak.[128]

The evacuation of wounded from the enclave was slow in getting started. On 18 April British and French helicopters transported 133 wounded via Zvornik to Tuzla. On 19 April at the end of the day, 484 wounded had been evacuated by air. The week after that another 150 followed.[129] In actual fact, this was the only part of the agreement that was carried out to the letter. Naser Oric did not seem inclined to a smooth implementation of the agreement. He received no instructions from his superiors in Sarajevo to surrender or to carry out the demilitarization agreement. During the first meeting with Geburt, Naser Oric agreed to cooperate with UNPROFOR but he undercut that promise immediately by announcing that there was no question of evacuation of civilians.

Oric would allow no one to leave the enclave, including UN personnel. For the time being he did not make good his threats, however, and that evening the helicopters were able to leave for Tuzla without any problem.[130] Oric's announcement deterred the UNHCR from its plan to begin the next day, 19 April, with the evacuation of 25,000 refugees in two weeks. The civil authorities said that they were not interested in taking the refugees first to Tuzla if they were going to be able to go back to their villages within a few weeks - seemingly they expected that the Bosnian Serbs would accept the Vance-Owen plan as well. In their opinion, it would be better to bring back the 7,000 refugees who had gone to Tuzla since 19 March. They called for food and for building materials to repair the damage. A large-scale evacuation was no longer on the agenda.[131]

The biggest problems had to do with the implementation of the military parts of the agreement. The first days, the VRS and ABiH observed the ceasefire, but towards the end of April both parties started up fighting again on the ceasefire line. Demilitarization progressed with difficulty. No arrangements had been made in Sarajevo about implementation and CanBat had not received detailed instructions. The unit was too small to take charge itself of systematic collection of weapons and ammunition. UNPROFOR was dependent upon the cooperation of the ABiH for this crucial component of the plan. ABiH commanding officer Naser Oric wanted to put off the demilitarization of Srebrenica. To his mind, the CanBat contingent was not capable of defending the enclave against a VRS attack once the weapons would be handed over. Oric suspended cooperation until there would be reinforcements of CanBat. That was out of the question for the moment because the VRS refused to allow two extra Canadian platoons in Srebrenica.

To keep from affecting its own defence capacity in the enclave and still go along with the demilitarization, the ABiH decided to give its own interpretation. It used the discrepancies in terminology in the agreement. The agreement of 18 April did not include a precise description of the demilitarized zone around Srebrenica. It spoke of the 'demilitarization of Srebrenica' and of the ceasefire in 'the Srebrenica area'. The ABiH concluded from this that only the town had to be demilitarized and not the whole area in the 'achieved lines of confrontation'. In concrete terms, this meant that the ABiH took all modern and usable weapons and ammunition out of the town into the surrounding areas and turned over to CanBat only old and unusable weapons for which there was little or no ammunition. The result of the voluntary surrender by ABiH was extremely limited in other words. This put UNPROFOR in a precarious position.

To save the agreement, UNPROFOR was prepared to do everything possible to see to it that all weapons were handed over within 72 hours and that both parties would establish at 12:00 noon on 21 April that demilitarization was complete. It seemed unlikely that the VRS would agree. The previous

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[128] UNNY UNPROFOR, file87305 DFC 3300 Srebrenica vol 2 MAR 93: fax COS BH Comd Kiseljak to HQ UNPROFOR Zagreb, 18/4/93 appendix: CG/6054/93 Demilitarization of Srebrenica.
[129] UNNY, DPKO coded cables UNPROFOR: Wahlgren to Annan, Z-517, 21/04/93. Interview Nedred Mujkanavic, 20/04/99. Confidential information (129).
[130] Stankovic, *Trustful Mole*, p. 147 en 152.
[131] Confidential information (106).

evening Mladic said to Wahlgren that he estimated that the ABiH had 14,000 men in the enclave and that consequently CanBat had to take possession of at least 10,000 weapons. If that did not happen, he would take measures and would in such a case also demand the departure of UNPROFOR within 12 hours. That would mean the end of the demilitarization agreement. Wahlgren maintained that the demilitarization of Srebrenica was proceeding in accordance with the agreement. He suspected that in his anger about the chain of events, Mladic wanted to take the initiative again. Mladic said he wanted to conclude 'an honour deal' with ABiH Commander in Chief Halilovic, which Wahlgren suspected had to do with 'a surrender and free departure of Muslim troops'. Wahlgren assumed that it was too late for such a measure because he believed - incorrectly - that most of the ABiH soldiers had already escaped from the enclave.[132]

Thus, the danger existed that demilitarization would fail due to lack of clarity in the agreement and differences of opinion about the size of the demilitarized zone and the number of weapons to be handed over. In the talks of the Mixed Military Working Group in Sarajevo on 19 April 1993 a great deal of time was spent without result on the definition of 'the Srebrenica area'. The ABiH maintained that it was not responsible for demilitarization of the town - Wahlgren would later say to NIOD that this was a 'typical Muslim way of acting'.[133] Wahlgren's report to New York indicates that the VRS and UNPROFOR - contrary to what is found in the report of the Secretary-General of the UN of November 1999[134] - maintained that it meant that the whole area was inside the ceasefire line. This difference in opinion concerning the exact position of the border of the Safe Area would continue for a long time.

A compromise temporarily put off an impasse. Since both parties agreed that the town of Srebrenica and its immediate environs 'from which direct fire weapons can shoot into the city' were in the 'demilitarized zone', that is where a beginning would be made with the surrendering of weapons and ammunition. CanBat was given instructions to start.

Wahlgren and his Chief of Staff, Hayes, wanted to try to achieve a more comprehensive compromise, but tensions were growing in Srebrenica itself. In the opinion of CanBat the VRS was cooperating with the implementation of the agreement. ABiH, on the other hand, threatened to end the agreement. Bosnia-Hercegovina Command feared that if ABiH continued to work against the agreement, the VRS would recommence hostilities. Consequently, Hayes flew on the following day, 21 April to Srebrenica and after consulting with the CanBat commanding officer Geburt established the border of the demilitarized zone around the town on his own; this was an area of approximately six $km^2$. ABiH and VRS officials made an inspection the same day and determined that there were no military units or troops in this zone and that demilitarization in the area had been completed. The map on which the zone was drawn was added to the formal declaration on demilitarization and handed over to both delegations. The surrendered weapons and ammunition were stored and kept by UNPROFOR.

Neither of the belligerents was content with this result however. Hayes reported from Srebrenica that ABiH and VRS saw the declaration on demilitarization of the town as 'a first symbolic step', a remark that he borrowed from the official VRS commentary. The parties added their vision to the state of affairs in the commentary to their declaration. According to the VRS delegation, the real problem continued because ABiH units inside the ceasefire line had not been disarmed; that held primarily for the two brigades from Cerska and the one from Kula. According to VRS information, the ABiH had more than 16,000 weapons in the area inside the ceasefire line. Finally, the VRS delegation established that with its current strength, CanBat was not capable of monitoring the transport of weapons in the area inside the Srebrenica enclave ceasefire line.

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[132] UNNY, DPKO coded cables UNPROFOR: Wahlgren to Annan, Z-516, 21/04/93. UNGE UNPROFOR Box file 2.5.2. Fax HQ BH Command Kiseljak to HQ UNPROFOR Zagreb, 20/04/93 re: report demilitarization of Srebrenica, appendix: Material delivered to UNPROFOR during demilitarization. UNNY, UNPROFOR, file 87305 DFC 3300 Srebrenica vol 2 Mar 93: fax HQ BH Command Kiseljak to CO CanBat 2, 20/04/93 re: direction for CanBat force in Srebrenica. Ibid: fax 191518B, CPI BH Command to CPI Zagreb, 19/04/93 re: situation in BH. Ibid: fax 191645B, CPI BH Command to CPI Zagreb, 19/04/93 re: situation in BH. Interviews Smail Mandzic, 18/05/99 and Hakija Meholjic, 02/02/98.

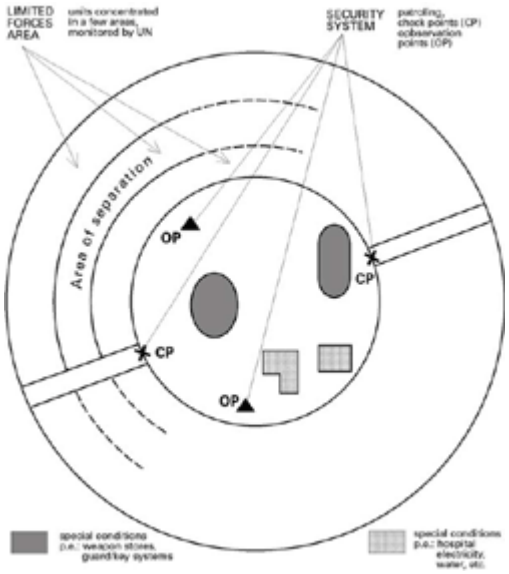
[133] Interview R-E. Wahlgren, 03/06/99.

[134] *Report on Srebrenica*, § 60.

The ABiH delegation stated in its comments that in exchange for the disarmament required by the VRS, VRS units should leave the Opstina of Srebrenica. That meant a withdrawal far behind the ceasefire line. The ABiH delegation also demanded an investigation into the possible presence of VJ units in the area, into violations of the ceasefire and into changes in the ceasefire line by the VRS.[135] In so doing, the ABiH brought the ceasefire line into discussion and implicitly claimed a larger area for the enclave.

Despite the reciprocal distrust evident in the comments of both parties in the establishment of the demilitarization of the town of Srebrenica, the Chief of Staff of Bosnia-Hercegovina Command, Hayes, was of the opinion that the basis for an improved situation had been laid. He wished to encourage that by taking a number of measures. First of all, he wanted reinforcements for CanBat. Secondly, he wanted to consolidate the demilitarization of the town and the ceasefire line, that is to say, he wanted to chart the border of the enclave. The CanBat reinforcements arrived on 27 April when the two platoons that had been detained were admitted. Hayes wanted to call in more reinforcements at the beginning of May with the rotation of Poirier's company. In addition, a regulation was needed about supplying CanBat's weekly provisions over the road, as well as an air bridge for daily liaison, evacuation in case of emergency, and emergency supplies. Hayes wanted to facilitate demilitarization by turning the unofficial declarations of 21 April into official documents. It was also necessary to mark the demilitarized area in conformance with the Geneva Convention. Lastly, he wanted to have UNMOs inspect the ceasefire line on the VRS side and ask for VRS cooperation in inspecting their artillery positions.[136]

Hayes was overly optimistic however. The VRS had made it clear on 22 April already that they wanted to stand by their interpretation - endorsed by UNPROFOR - of the agreement on disarmament of 18 April which included the surrender of all weapons within the ceasefire line around Srebrenica. The results up until then had been 'just a farce' according to VRS Chief of Staff Major General Milovanovic. He insisted to Wahlgren and Morillon that UNPROFOR fulfil its obligations and see to a real disarmament of the 15,000 ABiH troops.[137]




135 UNNY, DPKO, coded cables UNPROFOR: Wahlgren to Annan, Z-517, 21/04/93. UNNY, UNPROFOR, file 87305 DFC 3300 Srebrenica vol 2, Mar 93: fax 201800B, CPI BH Command to CPI Zagreb, 20/04/93. Ibid: fax 200119B, BH Command Hayes to Canbat 2, 20/04/93. Ibidem: fax CAC Andreev to DCM Zagreb Thornberry, 21/04/93. Ibid: fax 21 2059, HQ BH Command to HQ UNPROFOR Zagreb, 21/04/93 re: Report on demilitarization of Srebrenica. UNGE, UNPROFOR Box 53, file 1.2.6. HQ BH Command daily infsum 20/04/93.

136 UNNY, UNPROFOR, file 87305 DFC 3300 Srebrenica vol 2, Mar 93: fax 21 2059, HQ BH Command to HQ UNPROFOR Zagreb, 21/04/93 re: Report on demilitarization of Srebrenica.

137 UNNY, UNPROFOR, file87305 DFC 3300 Srebrenica vol 2, Mar 93: fax 23.21.24 LO BH Command to HQ UNPROFOR Zagreb, 23/04/93 appendix: letter 17/230-49, 22/04/93 Milovanovic to Wahlgren and Morillon.

The VRS did not continue to make an issue of the matter; however, nor did it cooperate with reinforcements for CanBat. That was a condition made by ABiH for demilitarization outside of the town. Consequently, the demilitarization process was deadlocked. By taking on a central role in demilitarization, UNPROFOR had put itself in a difficult position, for which there appeared no solution at the moment. There were no plans then for high level talks. Bosnia-Hercegovina Command was of the opinion that the presence of CanBat in Srebrenica would contribute to the stabilization of the situation and gradual improvement of relations in Srebrenica and thus would bring a solution closer at hand. Chief of Staff Hayes flew to Srebrenica a few times for this purpose. That did indeed contribute to a reasonable observance of the ceasefire and the supply of humanitarian aid, but had no effect on demilitarization.

Having discussed the first phase of the realization of demilitarization, we will now take a look at the contacts between UNPROFOR and the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations in New York. It is striking that as of 18 April UNPROFOR showed a greater degree of independence. That is evident from the complaints of Under Secretary-General Kofi Annan about insufficient information on the development of negotiations: Wahlgren had only sent the text of the agreement of 18 April. Information to New York concerning verification of the demilitarization agreement was therefore incomplete.

On other fronts as well communication did not seem to be clear. Wahlgren for his part did not appreciate having New York interfere with operational matters. A French offer to station 70 UNPROFOR soldiers in Srebrenica - made after the Canadian government expressed its concern about the situation of CanBat and had pressed for making the UN presence in the enclave more multi-national - was rejected straightaway by Wahlgren. After the Canadian company had been reinforced with two platoons and an engineering section on 27 April, Wahlgren made it known that the commanding officer of CanBat was against a 'mixed command' and that the present forces were sufficient.[138]

It is also important to note that the opinion existed in New York that Wahlgren had followed his own course in concluding the 18 April agreement. There was no reference in the agreement to Resolution 819 of the Security Council. That aroused some distrust in the Secretariat or the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. In their eyes Wahlgren had missed the opportunity to use the resolution to put pressure on the Bosnian Serbs. It called upon the belligerents to treat Srebrenica as a Safe Area, and that offered more possibilities to put pressure on the VRS than the agreement of 18 April. Annan explained his interpretation of the situation to Wahlgren, seemingly with the intention of informing him of the nuance of the vision in New York. Demilitarization was 'a step agreed by the parties, not one proposed by the UN'.

In Annan's words, UNPROFOR had offered its good services to save lives, 'to help both parties fulfil the commitment they have made to each other. This includes receiving weapons from defenders of Srebrenica for the purpose of demonstrating to the attackers that they have no reason to attack. In doing so, however, UNPROFOR takes on a moral responsibility for the safety of the disarmed that it clearly does not have the military resources to honour beyond a point.' According to Annan, this implied that CanBat would defend itself against small-scale attacks on the enclave. The underlying principle had to be, however, that UNPROFOR was deployed in Srebrenica 'in the context of an agreement, and that the onus remains on the *parties* to treat Srebrenica as a "Safe Area", as Resolution 819 demands'.

Annan continued by expressing the idea that the fact-finding mission of the Security Council, as determined in Resolution 819, undoubtedly would make the Force Commander aware of the 'strong feeling amongst several Member States' that UNPROFOR should not take an active part in 'disarming the victims'. Annan repeated his instruction that in the next meeting of the Mixed Military Working Group, UNPROFOR should give high priority to the withdrawal of the VRS out of the area around Srebrenica.[139]

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[138] UNNY, DPKO, coded cables UNPROFOR: Z-553, 28/04/93, Wahlgren to Annan. Ibid: MSC-666, 22/04/93 Annan to Wahlgren. Confidential information (66); UNNY, UNPROFOR, file 87305 DFC 3300 Srebrenica vol 2 Mar 93: Ibid: fax ZAY 180, 24/04/93, Wahlgren to Annan appendix: fax BH Command (Hayes to HQ Zagreb, 24/04/93 re; reinforcement Srebrenica.

[139] Confidential information (102).

While Annan was looking for ways to show the Security Council that Wahlgren also had used Resolution 819 as the underlying principle for his actions in Srebrenica, Wahlgren believed that the Department of Peacekeeping and Operations shared his preference for a demilitarized zone as the first step to a Safe Area.[140] The visit of the Security Council mission led by the Venezuelan Ambassador to the United Nations, D. Arria, did not bring the two points of view closer together. The mission was ill-informed about the situation in Srebrenica and seemed to be looking for confirmation of preconceptions about military intervention in favour of the Bosnian Muslims. Arria showed no actual interest in the situation in Srebrenica. To their displeasure, Arria was more interested in the media aspects of the visit and dismissed all UNPROFOR advice in that area. Some of Arria's statements were according to Hayes 'a little inflammatory and emotive', others 'open to misinterpretation'. The mission was primarily looking for 'Serbian intransigence'.[141] Arria, for his part, found that Bosnia-Hercegovina Command, and in particular Hayes did everything they could to obstruct the mission and to thwart a visit to Srebrenica. UNPROFOR was much too submissive to the VRS and according to Arria not prepared to implement Resolution 819.[142]

All in all, the Arria mission did nothing to improve mutual understanding between the Security Council and the UNPROFOR commanders in Bosnia. Wahlgren and those around him were convinced that the UN peacekeeping force should not manifest itself as the ally of ABiH and the 'enemy' of the VRS in the implementation of Resolution 819, as Arria attempted. The Force Commander maintained demilitarization on the basis of the principle of neutrality as the starting point for the establishment of the Safe Area of Srebrenica. After the visit of the Arria mission, he saw no reason to set a different course. Kofi Annan supported his policy despite criticism of some of the non-permanent members of the Security Council.

After the Arria visit, Wahlgren tried to give his policy a legal basis as well. His legal advisor shared his opinion that article 60 of the first additional protocol of the Geneva Convention of 1949 was the best basis for the establishment of a Safe Area around Srebrenica.[143] When, on advice of the Arria mission, the Security Council wanted to declare other places in Bosnia as Safe Areas as well, Wahlgren stood by his opinion that demilitarization was the best method for doing so. He understood the intention of the Security Council in indicating five other Safe Areas in Resolution 824 as a political signal against further VRS aggression.

However, Wahlgren foresaw problems if the Safe Areas would allow the presence of army units and military activities of one of the belligerents - contrary to the purpose of a demilitarized zone. If a Safe Area was not demilitarized, according to his line of thinking, the peacekeeping force would be limited to monitoring and reporting on the developments in the area, but would certainly not be able to take responsibility for the safety of the area. Even that minimum task in the Safe Area would be dangerous because of the risk of being taken hostage by one of the parties. In Wahlgren's opinion, UNPROFOR units should only be stationed in a Safe Area after agreement of both of the belligerents.[144] General Hayes's concerns about concept Resolution 824 of the Security Council were more political in nature. He found the timing of the new resolution unfortunate because, in his opinion, the Bosnian Serb parliament would approve the Vance-Owen peace plan in a few days, whereupon after implementation of proposals of Vice President Koljevic of the *Republika Srpska*, the demilitarization of certain areas could be started. The government in Pale would consider a new resolution as additional proof of the UNPROFOR's partiality, whereas after the peace plan for all of Bosnia was approved, an atmosphere could be created in which the VRS would cooperate in the inspection of the ceasefire lines.[145]

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[140] Interview L-E. Wahlgren, 03/06/93.
[141] *Report on Srebrenica* , 21 (para 63). Confidential information (141).
[142] Interview D. Arria, 10/05/00.
[143] Interview L-E. Wahlgren, 03/06/99.
[144] UNNY, DPKO, coded cables UNPROFOR: MSC-735, 04/05/93, Annan to Wahlgren. Ibidem: Z-588, 05/05/93, Wahlgren to Annan.
[145] UNNY, DPKO, coded cables UNPROFOR: Z-588, 05/05/93 Wahlgren to Annan, appendix 2: fax 05 1629 May 93, Hayes to FC Zagreb.

The discussion between New York and the UNPROFOR headquarters about the basic principles of establishing the Safe Areas continued for a time even after the endorsement of Resolution 824 on 6 May 1994. Although Wahlgren and his staff said that they followed the clear indications of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations concerning Resolution 824 as the basis for forming Safe Areas, demilitarization remained central in their view. Wahlgren indicated during the discussion with New York on Resolution 824 that it included the risk that 'the owners' of the territory of the Safe Area would use it for military purposes 'because it is a *Safe Area*.'[146]

Wahlgren wanted to prevent this by means of a plan based on the following argumentation. The Safe Areas were intended as forerunners to the implementation of the Vance-Owen plan. Thus, it would be advisable to use the peace plan as a conceptual model. A comparison between the demilitarization following the Vance-Owen peace plan and Resolution 824 revealed that there were few differences between the definitions, except that the resolution demanded the withdrawal of all VRS troops for the realization of the ceasefire.

Wahlgren preferred to follow the peace plan model because it was accepted by all parties. In so doing, he indicated implicitly that this made the complicated negotiations concerning the acceptance of the latest Security Council resolution superfluous, and he himself gave greater priority to demilitarization than to the withdrawal of the VRS. The concept as Wahlgren had worked it out first gave a definition of a Safe Area: a clearly specified space within which safety is guaranteed by means of entry clearance, patrols, checkpoints and observation points. According to this definition, the area was surrounded by a Limited Forces Area separating the two parties. No heavy weapons were allowed in the zone, whereas UNPROFOR would collect and store the weapons inside the Safe Area. Admission to the Safe Area was only possible through corridors under UNPROFOR control. Special buildings inside the area, such as hospitals and utilities would be marked in conformance with the Geneva Convention (see attached 'Safe Area diagram'). UNPROFOR's presence would contribute to 'confidence building' and normalization.

Wahlgren wanted to implement this blueprint for a Safe Area in five phases. He took Resolution 824 as his starting point. The first phase included a ceasefire and negotiations on an agreement for the establishment of the Safe Area. In the second phase, the safety of the area would be guaranteed by the presence of UN personnel and there would be freedom of movement within the area. UN personnel would be allowed to enter and leave the Safe Area unhindered. Agreements about the Limited Forces Area, the separation of the belligerents and verification of this formed the third phase. Maintenance of the Safe Area through the deployment of UNPROFOR, UNMO and UnCivPol in numbers agreed to by the parties was the fourth phase of the implementation plan. After demilitarization was completed and a well functioning observation system in place, a last step could be a reduction of the UNPROFOR presence. Wahlgren added a list of specific UNPROFOR tasks. Given the limited availability of UN personnel he gave highest priority to Zepa and continued implementation in Srebrenica, two Safe Areas for which demilitarization agreements had been concluded.[147]

Wahlgren's proposal stayed close to the plans drawn up in January and February 1993 by his predecessor Nambiar during the international discussion on Safe Areas. He did not try so much to obscure the differences between a demilitarized zone and a Safe Area, as to convince the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations and Secretary-General Boutros Ghali that misuse of the Safe Areas for military purposes was likely. He and his staff trusted that their arguments were understood, but later he told NIOD that the UN leadership lacked the necessary military insight.[148] It remains remarkable that in his blueprint, Wahlgren did not go into the consequences of the Safe Area model for implementing the demilitarization agreement in Srebrenica. Morillon was well aware that there were differences. He pointed out those differences in his elaboration of the UNPROFOR plan for the Safe Area. First of all, UNPROFOR was not responsible for the protection of civilians in the Safe Area, but

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[146] UNNY, DPKO, coded cables UNPROFOR: Z-588, 05/05/93, Wahlgren to Annan.
[147] UNNY, DPKO, coded cables UNPROFOR: Z-614 en Z-615, 10/05/93, Wahlgren to Annan. Ibid: Z-643, 18/05/93, Wahlgren to Annan.
[148] Interview L-E. Wahlgren, 03/06/99.

only in the surrounding Limited Forces Area. No collection or destruction of weapons would take place in the Safe Area. Soldiers were allowed to continue to carry weapons, and heavy artillery would be stored under UNPROFOR supervision.[149] It is not clear in Morillon's concept instructions whether the application of this Safe Area concept had consequences for CanBat's instructions in Srebrenica.[150]

In fact, Wahlgren and his staff carried out a rearguard action with the Security Council through the Secretariat. They could never win the discussion, despite the fact that their analysis might be militarily correct since they had taken into account the reality of the conflict and the viewpoints of the belligerents. The Security Council determined at the beginning of June 1993 which Safe Area concept the UN would follow in Bosnia. That concept was different than that of UNPROFOR in that it did not treat the belligerents on an equal footing. That lack of equality was evident in particular in the fact that the concept of the Security Council generally allowed the presence of the ABiH in the Safe Areas. That is not to say that the UNPROFOR concept was necessarily better or worse. That hypothetical question is difficult to answer after the fact. What is certain is that to carry out either concept, the cooperation of both parties was necessary. Without that cooperation Wahlgren's blueprint would have had no chance either. The events in Srebrenica in May and June 1993 were not encouraging in this respect. Experience in the other non-demilitarized Safe Areas was that they were often used for military purposes and that use resulted in continual reproaches from the VRS that UNPROFOR was partisan.

## 4. The second demilitarization agreement of 8 May 1993

The exchange of ideas between UNPROFOR and New York about Safe Areas and UNPROFOR's role in maintaining them was directly related to the developments in Bosnia itself. After the Vance-Owen plan was rejected by the Bosnian Serb parliament on 6 May 1993, the commanders of ABiH and VRS signed three agreements on 8 May1993 in Sarajevo during a meeting chaired by Bosnia-Hercegovina Commander Morillon. The first concerned a total ceasefire for all of Bosnia, the second the demilitarization of Srebrenica and Zepa, and the third was a general declaration on the ceasefire as a first step to enduring peace. The second document with its preamble and division into sections had all of the characteristics of a formal agreement. The preamble made reference to Resolution 824 of the Security Council and its demand that both places be treated as Safe Areas. The preamble also established that the Geneva Conventions and Protocols of 12 August 1949 concerning the protection of victims of international armed conflicts were applicable to the conflict in Bosnia. Agreements were set forth in the various articles of the document of 8 May more precisely than in the one of 18 April. The demilitarized zone would include the whole area within the ceasefire line and UNPROFOR would mark it with signs on which the following message would be given in English and Serbian: 'Demilitarized zone. Any military operation is strictly forbidden (article 66 Protocol 1 additional to the Geneva Convention)'.

The agreement provided for demilitarization by the withdrawal of military units from the enclave and the handing over of weapons and ammunition to UNPROFOR. On 10 May at 17:00 pm representatives of both parties in Srebrenica would establish whether the process had been completed and set that forth in a joint statement. UNPROFOR would supervise the demilitarized zone with at least one company and supporting units. The peace force would be given freedom of movement inside and outside the enclave. Non-belligerent parties were not allowed to bring weapons or ammunition into the demilitarized zone or to loiter inside the area. The agreement also determined that all stipulations of the additional protocol concerning the protection of civilians were applicable. It also covered the participation of UnCivPol, medical evacuation and access for humanitarian aid. Finally, it included agreements about the charting of mine fields, prisoners of war, graves for the dead, and the withdrawal

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[149] 11Lumbi. BH Command: concept of *Safe Area*, 17/05/93.
[150] UNGE, UNPROFOR Box 56, File 2.1. Fax 12 1500 (T 1006), 12/05/93, Wahlgren to BH Command re: UNPROFOR OP Instruction 7-93 – *Safe Area*s.

of heavy artillery in concentration areas and of infantry units to one and a half kilometres from the ceasefire line after demilitarization had been completed.[151]

Bosnia-Hercegovina Command had devoted a great deal of energy to the preparation of this agreement; that held in particular for the Bosnia-Hercegovina commander Morillon and his Chief of Staff Hayes. The history leading up to the agreement of 8 May was important for its implementation. This is true for both the Bosnia-Hercegovina Command of UNPROFOR and the belligerents; consequently, it is necessary here to take a step backwards in time to examine the situation. At the end of April Hayes had launched his proposal for a complete demilitarization of the Srebrenica Safe Area in his consideration of the concept of Resolution 824 for the designation of new Safe Areas. Hayes's proposal was made primarily out of concern about a resumption of fighting around Srebrenica, as there was 'very intense activity' on the ceasefire line. Bosnia-Hercegovina Command considered the situation 'a little difficult and delicate'. Headquarters could not determine with certainty the cause of this tension, but had the strong suspicion that increasing tension was a result of ABiH activities.[152] CanBat had tried since 18 April to stabilize the explosive situation in the enclave. Many patrols marched through the town to demonstrate UNPROFOR presence; vehicle patrols were made outside the town up to the confrontation line/ceasefire line.

CanBat had set up observation posts on the border of the demilitarized zone around the town of Srebrenica to prevent weapons from being taken into the city. CanBat commander Lieutenant Colonel Geburt and Major Poirier tried to create a basis of mutual trust through regular contacts with the ABiH and VRS. Geburt went to Bratunac regularly to meet with the commanding officer of the Skelani brigade, Colonel Vukovic, who was also the VRS liaison officer for UNPROFOR. At these meetings they provided information about their activities, asked about certain events and stimulated adherence to the agreement. Geburt - and in his absence Poirier - met every evening in the town of Srebrenica with the mayor, UNMOs, UNHCR and NGO representatives. Set items for discussion were the events of the day and the patrol plan for the following day. Possible improvements to the living conditions in the enclave were also considered. The result of CanBat's active approach and its intensive contact with the various parties was a more stable situation in and around the demilitarized zone.[153]

CanBat's action had almost no effect on the situation at the ceasefire line however. There continued to be an exchange of fire. As remarked above, considerable activity between the VRS and ABiH occurred on the ceasefire line at the end of April according to Bosnia-Hercegovina Command. Bosnia-Hercegovina Command Chief of Staff Hayes wanted to curb the situation through a drastic measure, namely the extension of the militarized zone to the ceasefire line. According to Hayes's reasoning, demilitarization of the Safe Area meant that the party in the enclave, the ABiH, would no longer have any weapons. This would end the many violations of the ceasefire, since Bosnia-Hercegovina Command had come to see ABiH as the primary source of the violations. Hayes set up an operation plan that would be carried out after the arrival of a second Canadian company in Srebrenica to relieve Major Poirier's company. The UNPROFOR contingent would then temporarily be double in strength which Hayes wanted to implement his plan without consulting the two parties.

That was going too far for Morillon, however, which is why he brought up the plan during a meeting with Vice President Koljevic of the *Republika Srpska* on 4 May. The following day in a meeting with Morillon in Srebrenica, Oric agreed to go along with the complete demilitarization of the Safe Area. On 7 May - one day after the decision of the Bosnian Serb parliament to put approval of the Vance-Owen plan to the people in a referendum - Mladic agreed in a meeting with Morillon on the implementation of Resolution 824 to allow the second Canadian company to go to Srebrenica. He gave

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151 *Agreement on the Demilitarization of Srebrenica en Zepa concluded between Lt Gen Ratko Mladic and Gen Sefer Halilovic on 8 May in the Presence of Lt. Gen. Philippe Morillon.* Text given in Karremans, *Srebrenica*, pp. 269-272. Confidential information (130).
152 NIOD, Coll. Wahlgren. Fax 30 2050 (R 4685), Morillon to UN New York (for Lord Owen), 30/04/93. UNNY, UNPROFOR, file 87305 DFC 3300 Srebrenica vol 2 Mar 93: fax 30 1115 (R4612), BH Command to HQ UNPROFOR, 30/04/93. Confidential information (131).
153 Interview Th.K.D. Geburt, 18/11/99.

UNPROFOR until 14 May to complete the demilitarization of Srebrenica. That was sufficient basis for Morillon to set forth the agreement in a new, improved document. The following day after a discussion chaired by Morillon, Commanders Mladic and Halilovic signed the agreement on the demilitarization of Srebrenica and Zepa.[154]

In actual fact, the agreement of 8 May set out the same method for realizing demilitarization as that of 18 April. The main difference was that the preamble now explicitly coupled the status of Srebrenica and Zepa to Resolution 824, and the demilitarization to the provisions of article 60 of the Additional Protocol of the Geneva Convention. However, the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations in New York was less enthusiastic about the new clarity of the agreement reached under Morillon's leadership. In the opinion of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the Security Council would find the agreement unacceptable, despite a reference to Resolution 824, because it did not in any way address the central point of the resolution, namely a first step to ending the VRS threat to the Safe Area through the withdrawal of its troops.[155] Core elements of the agreement remained the surrender of all weapons or the withdrawal of military units from the enclaves of Srebrenica and Zepa, verification of the demilitarization by both belligerent parties and then withdrawal of VRS units from the ceasefire line as border to the demilitarized area.

After the experience with the agreement of 18 April, the intention of the 8 May accord was to eliminate misunderstandings about the area of the demilitarized zone. On the other hand, only three days were set aside for the demilitarization of this large, virtually inaccessible area. It is not clear why this was. One possibility is that Mladic ultimately went back on his offer to Morillon concerning completion of demilitarization on 14 May. What is clear is that Bosnia-Hercegovina Command and Morillon saw the agreement as a means of stabilizing the situation in Srebrenica and Zepa. Morillon operated from an assessment of the local situation and tried to establish in an agreement between the two parties whatever was possible. He seized the chance to make use of a plan of his Chief of Staff - which originally would have been carried out without the knowledge of the ABiH and VRS - now with the endorsement of both parties. Morillon seemingly trusted that the assent of the ABiH commander of Srebrenica was sufficient basis for implementation of the agreement. The VRS could continue to follow the same course under the agreement: first the ABiH had to surrender its weapons and only then was it the VRS that had to make a move. Up until then the VRS could continue its military threat by keeping Srebrenica surrounded and had as ultimate means the renewal of attacks. Enlarging the demilitarized zone to the total area of the enclave might end up giving the ABiH less space for actions against the VRS on the ceasefire line, but it did not place it in a position in which it could not move. The ABiH could be confident about Resolution 824: the resolution did not forbid the presence of Muslim troops in the Safe Area and focused first of all on Bosnian-Serb aggression.[156]

## 5. Failure of the second demilitarization of Srebrenica

An extra company of the second battalion of the Royal 22nd Regiment was made available for the demilitarization operation. Upon arrival, its commander, Lieutenant Colonel Desjardins, was given responsibility for the northern part of the enclave and immediately demonstrated his presence in the operation area, but the results of the demilitarization were not encouraging. The whole process of collecting arms lasted much longer than had been anticipated and was far from completed on 10 May, as is indicated in the available sources. In the existing demilitarized zone around the town of Srebrenica, a superficial demilitarization was carried out again by means of a house-to-house check by

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154 UNNY, UNPROFOR, file 87305 DFC 3300 Srebrenica vol 2 Mar 93: fax (R 4549), BH Command to Canbat2 and Britbat, 03/05/93 re: Operation order for expansion of Srebrenica DMZ. UNNY, DPKO, coded cables UNPROFOR: Z-588, 05/05/93, Wahlgren to Annan appendix 2: fax05 1629, 05/05/93, Hayes to Wahlgren. Ibid: Z-611, 09/05/93, Wahlgren to Annan appendix: BH Command to HQ Zagreb, 07/05/93. Confidential information (132).
155 *Srebrenica Report*, § 69. UNNY, DPKO, coded cables UNPROFOR: MSC-760, 08/05/93, Annan to Wahlgren.
156 *Srebrenica Report*, § 67.

UnCivPol and the local police. Outside of the town, demilitarization began in three of the four sectors. Once again, the ABiH surrendered to the Weapons Collection Point old weapons or ones that did not function due to a lack of ammunition. Two T-55 tanks, which were out of petrol and ammunition, were turned over. Later, 4 anti-aircraft systems were added.

On 19 May, CanBat destroyed a portion of the surrendered ammunition. Usable guns, mostly hand guns were not surrendered on order of ABiH general Halilovic, rather carefully hidden in the enclave. The ABiH used the same argument for the surrender of only unusable weapons as during the first phase: the strength and armament of CanBat was insufficient to hold off a VRS attack. None the less, CanBat believed that it could round off this first phase on 24 May. The VRS delegation for verification of demilitarization, however, refused to testify to the complete surrender of weapons.[157]

*CanBat sets to work to meet the terms of the agreement*

After extending the demilitarization to the whole area of the enclave on 10 May 1993, CanBat also made serious work of seeing to its monitoring. So as to work as efficiently as possible, CanBat divided the enclave into two parts, with two sectors each. A company of 5 officers and 111 soldiers were responsible for each part. CanBat established its headquarters in the post office building where Morillon had also been located in March. It hoped to reduce the level of violence between the belligerents inside the enclave by means of a 'demonstrable presence'. That was done primarily by being 'tough on the Muslims' and by taking seriously the complaints of the VRS.[158] Still, this did not mean that CanBat took a one-sided position against the ABiH. In the first weeks after the expansion of the demilitarized zone there were regular problems between CanBat and the VRS as well. On 12 May CanBat set its checkpoint post at Zeleni Jadar and demanded the withdrawal of the VRS infantry to 1.5 km behind the ceasefire line. At the same time thirteen permanent observation posts (OPs) were established on the former confrontation line. During the summer these were rebuilt and turned into permanent reinforced posts.

In principle, CanBat placed these posts on the ceasefire line and only did not when another position offered a better view of the terrain and the two parties. This was the case with the observation post on the road between Srebrenica and Zeleni Jadar (OP-Echo or OP-E). Unlike what was said later by the Muslims, the post was set on VRS territory because the view of the terrain was better. Despite many allegations from the ABiH and Muslim side,[159] there is no hard evidence that CanBat moved its observation posts between April 1993 and March 1994 on the insistence of the VRS. UNPROFOR's discussion about the borders of the Safe Area and moving them was fed by the fact that there had never been an official marking of the area since there had never been official agreement about completing demilitarization. CanBat did draw up a map on which the border of the Safe Area was drawn in red, the red UNPROFOR ceasefire line. This ceasefire line had no official status.

Discussions in the Mixed Military Working Group in Srebrenica bogged down because the VRS was not willing to make any agreements until demilitarization was complete. In determining the border line, it was also significant that CanBat had to work from inside the enclave because the VRS did not allow any UNMOs or CanBat officers on their side of the confrontation line. Furthermore, CanBat assumed that the VRS infantry would pull back 1.5 km and its artillery 10 km from the border. That did not happen however: only in a few places did the VRS pull back its heavy arms.[160]

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[157] Confidential information (133). Interviews Nedred Mujkanovic, 10/03/99; Hakija Meholjic, 02/02/99; Th.K.D. Geburt, 18/11/99 and P. Desjardins, 12/11/99.
[158] Interviews P. Desjardins, 12/11/99 and Momir Nikolic, 20/10/00.
[159] Interviews Nedred Mujkanovic, 10/03/99; Fahrudin Salihovic, 04/02/98 and Hazrudin Kisic, 17-18/05/99.
[160] Interview Nedred Mujkanovic, 10/03/99. Interview Fahrudin Salihovic, 04/02/98. Interview Desjardins, 12/11/99. Interview D. MacIssac (57th Engineer squadron), 16/11/99. Interview Hazrudin Kisic, 17-18/05/1999. Interview (VRS) Momir Nikolic, 20/10/00. Interview J. Zoutendijk, 06/04/01.

Aside from observation of the ceasefire line, important tasks that CanBat fulfilled were compliance with the ceasefire and demilitarization. In the beginning, movement was not possible in all parts of the Safe Area because of mine fields, in particular in the north-eastern part of the enclave. The UNMOs took over some of the patrols. While CanBat tried to gain a grasp of the military situation in and around the enclave through manning of the observation posts and intensive patrolling, tensions between the Canadians and the VRS increased. On 12 May a CanBat soldier at the observation post at Zeleni Jadar was wounded by gunshot fire. CanBat responded with directed fire and killed probably two VRS soldiers. Afterwards as well patrols were regularly fired upon by snipers. In such incidents CanBat always returned directed fire. In fact such confrontations were nothing new; since their arrival in March, the UNMOs had also experienced that whoever came too close to the VRS lines or positions would be shot at.

A tense atmosphere came into being which was also expressed in threats and insults during discussions of the CanBat commander Desjardins with VRS Col. Vukovic in Bratunac. The ABiH contributed to the tensions by making use of CanBat's presence to set up positions inside and outside of the ceasefire line. According to the ABiH, the VRS regularly pushed into the enclave and was able to gain territory at critical moments. The Canadian commander checked on such reports personally; he would walk in the direction of the Bosnian-Serb army and summon the unit to withdraw. CanBat reported many violations of the ceasefire as of the end of May, without having any insight into the exact circumstances. Requests for intelligence from the Bosnia-Hercegovina Command in Sarajevo went unanswered.[161]

Matters stabilized somewhat in June 1993 in that both parties seemed to be resigned to the situation. The VRS replaced its regular troops with local units. After the acceptance of Resolution 836, with its definition of the Safe Area and the establishment of the UNPROFOR mandate for those areas (for the circumstances leading up to this resolution, see Chapter 11 of Part I), the ABiH did not have to worry about any large-scale UNPROFOR attempt to force demilitarization. As Wahlgren had predicted, the ABiH used the Safe Areas as exercise and rest areas for its units and as a base for raids into the Bosnian-Serb area. Srebrenica was used as an exercise area for its units there and as a base for raids. In as far as could be determined, the VRS undertook little military activity and tried to keep the ABiH and the Muslims inside the enclave.

There were changes in CanBat as well. CanBat II, the first company of which arrived in Srebrenica at the beginning of May, was known as the *Vandoos*, a unit of swaggering French-speaking Canadians from Quebec, most of them under twenty, who attracted attention with their RayBan sunglasses and non-regulation clothing. CanBat II had a different way of doing things: patrols on foot were done away with and contact with the local population avoided. As a result of the decreased Canadian contingent in Bosnia, the two companies of CanBat II were replaced with one company. Consequently, the activities of CanBat had to be reduced as well. Five of the thirteen observation posts (OPs) were no longer permanently manned, which caused a great deal of disquiet among the ABiH.[162] Although the Bosnia-Hercegovina Command reported the military situation almost every day as: 'Srebrenica: situation relatively calm and stable' that does not mean that it really was all that calm. There were many incidents between the belligerents along the ceasefire line.

CanBat reported violations of the ceasefire every day. In the period of 17 to 30 June 1993, CanBat reported 1,200 violations with small calibre weapons, mortars, tanks and artillery. In the period of 7 to 16 November the amount was 4,000, 1,836 on 13 November alone. Observation posts were shot at regularly and patrols came under fire. In addition there was directed fire on CanBat, an action that was consistently answered, in keeping with the *Rules of Engagement*, with .50 or other calibre

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161 UNNY, DPKO, coded cables UNPROFOR: Z-626, 14/05/93 Wahlgren to Annan. Confidential information (134). Interview P. Desjardins, 12/11/99. Interview Nedred Mujkanovic, 10/03/99. Interview Th.K.D. Geburt, 18/11/99. Interview J. Zoutendijk, 06/04/2001. Interview Ramiz Becirovic, 16/04/1998.

162 Taylor and Nolan, *Tested Mettle*, pp.104-105. Interview J. Champagne, 12/11/99; Sie LL. De strijd om Srebrenica, p. 64. Briquemont, *Do something General*, p. 224.

weapons. This had little to do with peacekeeping. It was more survival under war circumstances because the demilitarization agreement of 8 May 1993 was never really implemented.[163] In that sense the situation could be called 'stable'. This was the situation that DutchBat I would land in upon its arrival in the enclave in February/March 1994.

## 6. Conclusion

After the arrival of Bosnia-Hercegovina Commander Morillon in March 1993, the implementation of the accords for stabilization and demilitarization of the enclave foundered in May. After that a period of *drôle de guerre* followed. Given the situation in the Safe Area of Srebrenica as of the summer of 1993 it would be going too far to conclude that Morillon's actions did not actually achieve anything. His arrival in Srebrenica in March 1993 broke through an extremely precarious situation and prevented the town's immediate capture by the VRS.

A highly insecure and vulnerable situation did continue, but that was not simply due to the initiatives of UNPROFOR and its headquarters in Bosnia. UNPROFOR's actions in the light of the developments in the Security Council and the signals from the Department of Peacekeeping Operations in New York were not always adequate. In hindsight, the significance of the second demilitarization agreement of 8 May 1993 was not great: there were clear differences between the political desirability, such as had been formulated in the international political arena, in particular in the Security Council, and the military-political reality in Bosnia. Morillon and Hayes sought a possible solution from the point of view of this second factor; desirability was of secondary importance to them. In New York it was exactly the opposite and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations of the UN did not succeed completely in mediating between the two poles.

What remains essential, however, is that both parties frustrated a real implementation of the stabilization and demilitarization plans. Both parties were responsible for obstructing the implementation of the agreements. The VRS remained the besieger and the ABiH remained the besieged with a correspondingly more difficult military position and with a fundamentally greater responsibility for the civilian population in its area. There was in actual fact a 'prisoner's dilemma' in which neither of the parties was willing to make a concession before the other out of fear that if they did, they would lose.

Neither the UN nor UNPROFOR succeeded in resolving that dilemma on the spot. The result was that all involved parties accepted an unstable *status quo* waiting for new developments. The VRS frustrated demilitarization by refusing to allow a larger UN presence. The ABiH contributed to this by placing the size of the demilitarized zone under discussion and by surrendering no or few weapons.

The fact that after some time some sort of 'safety' - as vulnerable as it was - came into existence was primarily a result of the actions of CanBat. However, the threat that the situation might deteriorate again was still great and constantly present. That threat had been there as of April 1993 due to limited UN presence. The tension between 'moral responsibility for safety' and insufficient 'military resources' for its implementation, which Kofi Annan had remarked at the end of April[164], continued in full force.

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[163] DefatOttawa. Red Folder Secret, UNPROFOR Zagreb to NDHQ Ottawa: sitreps 17/06/93 – 30/06/93 and 07/11/93 – 16/11/93.

[164] UNNY, DPKO, coded cables UNPROFOR, Annan to Wahlgren, MSC-676, 23/04/93.

# Chapter 4
# Srebrenica in the time of CanBat - the humanitarian situation and the arrival of the NGOs

## 1. The humanitarian situation

On 18 April 1993, the CanBat detachment arrived in Srebrenica, as we have described, with about 150 men, to protect the recently established Safe Area. This chapter covers the period of the Canadian battalion presence in the enclave, which was to last just under a year. The point of view is humanitarian; for a military perspective of this period, the reader is referred to the appendix 'CanBat in the Srebrenica enclave', attached to this report.

When the first Canadians arrived they were shocked by the state of the town and its inhabitants. They saw 'human skeletons' clothed in inadequate, dirty and totally threadbare clothing, who often walked the streets without shoes.[165] There was a stench; bodies of dead animals were lying in the streets, and the mountains of household rubbish lay in heaps in the river and the streams. Much of the town was damaged and most of the inhabitants made it clear that they wanted to get out of the enclave as quickly as possible.[166] CanBat officers moved into the post office building and the troops were housed in a textile factory 300 metres away. UN helicopters immediately carried out evacuations of the seriously wounded from the local football field.[167]

CanBat's presence in Srebrenica meant a return to normal life to a certain degree. The Canadians divided the enclave into two parts, north and south; one company was assigned responsibility to each. CanBat placed 13 observation posts on the edge of the enclave and white signs to indicate the border of the demilitarized zone. The number of ABiH soldiers was drastically reduced as a result of the demilitarization. The weapons present in the enclave were forced out of the streets to a great extent, which increased the sense of security among the population and afforded a considerably calmer atmosphere.[168] CanBat tried as much as possible to restore calm and to gain the trust of the warring factions by organizing regular meetings with the most important military and civil leaders on both the Muslim and Serb sides.

Although calm returned to the enclave, other problems arose immediately. The number of inhabitants had grown considerably through the tremendous flow of refugees. Before the war, the town of Srebrenica had fewer than 6,000 inhabitants; now the number of people in the town was about 25,000. The total number of inhabitants in the enclave was not known precisely; the municipal authorities and aid organizations used a figure of about 43,000, which was the number after the evacuation of 7,700 women, children and elderly at the end of March, beginning of April 1993.[169]

Initially, the two most important aid organizations, *Médecins Sans Frontières* and UNHCR used high numbers in their reports, namely 50,000 or more inhabitants. As of July 1993, *Médecins Sans Frontières* presumed 43,000 whereas UNHCR adjusted the figure in November to 44,000 inhabitants.[170]

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165 Scott and Nolan, *Tested Mettle*, pp.101-102. Others also generally responded with shock when they first entered the enclave. See the report of the Swedish NGO worker Richard Svärd (Becirovic, 'Zivjet cu').
166 Interviews Thomas Geburt, 18/11/99 and Dan MacIssac, 16/11/99.
167 Interview Nedred Mujkanovic, 20/04/99.
168 Interview Muhamed Durakovic, 21/11/99.
169 NIOD, Coll UNHCR, UNHCR, 5-13/04/93, re: Weekly Information on the former Yugoslavia.
170 Thorsen, *UNHCR*, pp. 110-114. Material for this chapter and chap. 7 makes grateful use of reports written by Kirsti Thorsen upon request of NIOD on the activities of UNHCR and three other NGOs. These reports give detailed descriptions and analyses of the archival material made available to NIOD by these organizations. Wherever possible, reference is made to the original documents, but sometimes to the reports, because the relevant documents are organized

These sorts of numbers were also cited in other sources and probably came from the municipal government of Srebrenica. According to these figures, in round numbers, 11,000 people in the enclave were original inhabitants and 32,000 were Displaced Persons. Due to the evacuations of women and children, the number of men was higher than that of women, with a ratio of approximately 4:3.[171] It is likely that the municipal government inflated the figures somewhat to be able to ask for more humanitarian aid, as the CanBat commander in Srebrenica, J. Champagne, suggested to NIOD.[172]

To take an example, 2,000 people were recorded as 'original inhabitants', whereas no more than 366 returned to Srebrenica after Oric and his men had retaken control of the town (in May 1992). It should be remarked that a portion of this higher number used by the municipal authorities of 'original' inhabitants can be explained by the fact that many of them came from surrounding villages and had settled in the town at the beginning of the war. Actually, most of the civil and military leaders who ran the enclave during the war belonged to this category. They did come from the municipality, but not from the town of Srebrenica, and had moved into houses and apartments in the first months of the war that had been abandoned by the original inhabitants.

Nonetheless, a certain discrepancy remained between the figures of the Opstina (the municipal authorities) and the figures used by *Médecins Sans Frontières* for example. In May 1994, the figures used by this organization were an average of ten percent lower than those of the municipality of Srebrenica. In January 1995, the municipality stated that more than 43,000 people were in the enclave, whereas *Médecins Sans Frontières* suggested that the real figure was probably no more than 38,000.[173] Which figure was correct is difficult to establish after the fact, but that does not detract from the fact that the great majority of the inhabitants found in the town were Displaced Persons. There were more than 20,000 Displaced Persons in Srebrenica (the municipal authorities used a figure of 23,000) whereas the number of inhabitants who originated from the town was no more than a few hundred. In the countryside, the ratio of original inhabitants to Displaced Persons was much more even (of a total of almost 19,000 people, 8,500 were original inhabitants and somewhat more than 10,000 were Displaced Persons).[174]

The town had received a number of Displaced Persons as early as 1992, for the most part Muslims who had fled their villages in the municipalities of Bratunac, Srebrenica and Vlasenica as a result of ethnic cleansing. In September, a stream of Displaced Persons arrived from Zepa which had been attacked and shelled by the Yugoslavian army, the JNA. As a result of the Serb counteroffensive in the spring of 1993, the enclave was again inundated with Displaced Persons: a large number of Muslims were forced into the enclave after Serb troops had considerably pushed back the territory controlled by the Muslims. Many of them had been wandering around for some time. There were many people who had first been driven out of Zvornik, Vlasenica, Han Pijesak or Visegrad, and had ended up in the Muslim enclaves of Cerska or Konjevic Polje, and from there fled farther in the direction of Srebrenica, but also a large group of people who came from the more immediate environment, from Muslim villages in the municipality of Bratunac for example. In April 1993, there were about 9,000 Displaced Persons from the municipality of Bratunac in the enclave.[175]

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thematically and are analysed. The titles of these reports are: 1. *Swedish Rescue Services Agency, Swedish Shelter Project in Srebrenica, 01/03/94 – 11/07/95* (report date 9 September 2000); 2. *Médicins Sans Frontières. Humanitarian Aid Programme in Srebrenica, 4/12/92 – 21/7/95* (23 January 2001); 3. *Norsk Folkehjelp (Norwegian People's Aid), Humanitarian Aid Programmes in Srebrenica and Bratunac, 1993 – 1995* (12 April 2001); 4. *United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees* (15 July 2001). Reference to these reports will make use of the following acronyms (SRSA, MSF, NPA, and UNHCR).

171 Confidential information (74).

172 Interview J. Champagne 12/11/99. This suspicion was expressed by a number of other individuals who were interviewed for this report.

173 MSF, Brussel. MSF Srebrenica to MSF Belgrade (Eric, Graziella), 12/05/94; MSF Srebrenica, monthly report January 1995. Thorsen, *MSF*, p. 51.

174 Thorsen, *MSF*, p. 50.

175 Of the Muslim inhabitants from the municipality of Bratunac, another 9,000 people were forced to flea to Tuzla. More than 3,000 people remained as refugees in other countries. Masic, *Istina o Bratuncu*, p. 114.

Most of the Displaced Persons were embittered people who had lost all their worldly goods and often had missing family members or had seen them killed. One of them was someone called 'Semso', a former commander of a brigade in Konjevic Polje and Nova Kasaba, who later became Naser Oric's sub-commander. A DutchBat document describes him as follows: 'Hates Serbs because of the murder of his only child and parents. Would like most of all for UNPROFOR to turn over its weapons to him so that he can finish the job. Declares that he will spend his whole life chasing and killing off Serbs.'[176] Most of the Displaced Persons wanted more than anything to get out of the enclave but their exit was obstructed by the military and civil authorities who wanted to prevent the town from completely emptying. On 1 April 1993, Naser Oric and the civil authorities decided not to allow any more evacuations.[177]

The increase of large numbers of Displaced Persons resulted in an acute housing problem in a town that under normal circumstances had no more than 6,000 inhabitants. Consequently, the Displaced Persons lived in the most wretched circumstances. They were living on top of one another in the large buildings that were still sufficiently intact to temporarily house large groups of people. The original inhabitants of Srebrenica still lived in their own houses, whereas the first stream of Displaced Persons who arrived in the town in the course of 1992 (from the surrounding villages) had taken possession of the best of the empty houses and flats. The Displaced Persons who came after them, certainly by the spring of 1993, had almost no other choice than to move into the seven large buildings that were being used as Displaced Persons' Centres (two school buildings, a community building and a number of businesses) or in damaged houses (both lightly and heavily damaged), cellars, garages, or even containers and automobile wrecks.[178]

The conditions in which most of the Displaced Persons had to live were inhuman. They stayed in dark, dirty and often partially destroyed places that had no water, electricity or sanitary facilities. If there were windows in the rooms, they were generally broken as a result of the Serb artillery bombardments. About six or seven people lived in the same room on average, but it also occurred that small rooms of barely 16 $m^2$ offered shelter to more than 15 people. In many cases, one living space housed several families, and the complete lack of privacy was a continual problem. In the classrooms of the school that were used as housing, there were sometimes fifty to sixty people.

According to information from *Médecins Sans Frontières*, in June 1993 the Displaced Persons had an average of 1.5 $m^2$ per person at their disposal. There was no water or electricity; there were no mattresses, blankets, cooking utensils, not enough ovens or heating stoves; and there were no toilets or showers in the buildings, nor any soap or detergents. It was impossible to get or keep the buildings clean, with all of the disastrous results this entailed for hygiene.

The spaces in which the Displaced Persons stayed were mostly heated by provisional wooden stoves, which brought with them a great danger of fire and caused a serious smoke problem.[179] The *Médecins Sans Frontières* physician, Dr. René Caravielhe wrote: 'The heating and cooking systems used by the Displaced Persons, no matter how ingenious, are not secure neither economical. The rudimentary look of these installations leaves you to fear for the worst (suffocation/asphyxia, fire) for a ridiculous[ly] small amount of heating'.[180] Given the fact that there was no electricity in the enclave, generators were used and a large number of batteries were available from the battery factory in Potocari. These were recharged by numerous small water power stations that the inhabitants of the

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[176] NIOD, Coll MIDKL, *Dutchbat Srebrenica / Lukavac / Tuzla Milinfo*; July 1994 (MIDKL Dossier 1589); appendix '*BIH personages binnen enclave Srebrenica'*.

[177] Masic, *Srebrenica*, p. 136. Interview Thomas Geburt, 18/11/99.

[178] According to figures of MSF, 10% of the more than 1,700 homes in the town were destroyed, 20% damaged by grenades, 50% slightly damaged, and thus, only 10% of the houses intact. In the villages 70% were intact, 5% destroyed, and 25% slightly to heavily damaged. Thorsen, *MSF*, p. 103.

[179] On 14 March 1995, for example, fire broke out in the UNHCR food storage place 'Radnik', in one of the adjoining spaces where refugees were living. NIOD, Coll UNCIVPOL, Uncivpol incident report 14/03/95, incident no. BO5-95-35 (Sandvik)

[180] NIOD, Coll MSF, MSF Srebrenica, René Caravielhe, monthly sitrep, 22/08/93.

enclave had built in the river. They were used to light a lamp, to be able to listen to the radio or watch television or a video.[181]

There were great differences between the original inhabitants (which includes here the inhabitants of villages surrounding Srebrenica who arrived right after the start of the war) and the large group of Displaced Persons who were the last to arrive as a result of the Serb counteroffensive in 1993. The last group lacked proper housing, was dependent on the UNHCR for food, and did not have proper clothing or footwear for the winter. Nor did the Displaced Persons have any influence on the municipal authorities. Power was in the hands of the civil and military authorities who all came from the city or municipality of Srebrenica (primarily Potocari).

According to a UNHCR report of August 1993, the authorities in Srebrenica were not very concerned about the fate of the Displaced Persons, who were not represented in the local council: 'The atmosphere between the two populations is tense and the local authorities, organised in a war council [the Opstina] with no representatives of the Displaced Persons, are not paying attention to the most needed. In some respects I have a strong feeling that the authorities are not willing to work on the amelioration of the conditions of living environment. Maintaining the status quo seems to be their objective.'[182]

Displaced Persons ran into an unwillingness of the local population to help and, for example, to share the available food. In talks with *Médecins Sans Frontières* workers who were most concerned with their fate, the Displaced Persons complained about the lack of generosity among the population: they acted as if they had nothing or needed what they had for family members. When it came to health care, the Displaced Persons also fared worse than the original population. In the spring of 1993 *Médecins Sans Frontières* stated that the doctors in the hospital barely seemed to make an effort or to take responsibility for the treatment of Displaced Persons in the collective housing centres. A passage from an end of mission report of a Norwegian NGO worker, Katrine Ommang, who had worked in the enclave describes the situation well:

> 'The population in Srebrenica is mainly divided into two groups: the original inhabitants of the municipality, and the Displaced Persons. Among the 6,000 people who originally inhabited the town there are only 350 left. The original population takes pride in appearing clean and proper, and in trying to live a relatively 'normal' life. They despise the Displaced Persons who live from one day to the next, who do not wash, who steal, who have suddenly become highly religious, etc. Part of the conflict is also caused by the fact that Muslim Displaced Persons plundered and burnt Serb houses in Srebrenica, only to later find themselves without a place to live. The original population has an unfailing belief in 'Srebrenica after the war' and seeks to preserve and maintain everything, while the Displaced Persons are in transit and only wish to consume. Another reason for the conflict is that the Displaced Persons mainly come from small villages and have on average little education, marry early (14-15 years), have low hygienic standards, etc. There were big differences in the way of life between town and countryside even before the war, and the distance between the population groups has only been accentuated.'[183]

The greatest difference in the living conditions between the original inhabitants and the Displaced Persons was housing. The original inhabitants had houses, they had their own gardens, and they had more facilities than the Displaced Persons. The Displaced Persons worked sometimes for the original

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[181] Thorsen, *MSF*, p. 100
[182] NIOD, Coll MSF, UNHCR Belgrade (Ollier) to UNHCR Zagreb (Landgren), Srebrenica sitrep, 22/08/93.
[183] NIOD, Coll NPA, NPA (Ommang), end of mission report, 10/03/95.

inhabitants in exchange for food, and they were often exploited.[184] Most Displaced Persons lived on top of one another in the collective centres. *Médecins Sans Frontières* also remarked the overall lack of running water, usable toilets, showers and washing facilities. The situation was extremely critical in the eyes of that organization. Rubbish piled up everywhere in and around the buildings and people defecated in the hallways or on the stairways.[185] The overpopulation was a large problem and a continual source of concern for public health, even after the humanitarian aid arrived.

When *Médecins Sans Frontières* arrived in the enclave in the spring of 1993, it noted that the sanitary situation was disastrous everywhere. General hygiene had dropped to an alarmingly low level as a result of the overpopulation. The population was constantly plagued by scabies, lice, diarrhoea and skin infections because there was no soap, washing or cleaning products in the enclave. According to documentation of *Médecins Sans Frontières*, in the summer of 1993, 23% of the population had scabies and 20% lice. In the collective buildings that housed the Displaced Persons, these percentages were even higher. Lice was a particular problem when the weather became hot. There was also dysentery and hepatitis. At the beginning of March 1994 there was an explosion of hepatitis in the enclave; in a period of ten days the number of cases rose from 5 to 30. After heavy rainfall and flooding in May 1995, an intestinal infection broke out in Srebrenica, probably because the drinking water had become contaminated.[186]

In May 1994, *Médecins Sans Frontières* carried out a large-scale study on the hygiene situation among 1,000 families of the town, and the results were shocking. It seemed that 83% of the families lived in only one room, while half of these families were made up of between 4 and 11 people. Soap was distributed only once every two months; only 2% of the families had shampoo and 17% had laundry detergent. About 60% of the families were infected with lice or fleas, and a similar percentage complained of mice and rats in the places where they lived. Fortunately, the publicity around this study led in June 1994 to the arrival of products to improve hygiene.[187]

Many of the health problems were caused by bad diet, the lack of (clean) clothing (many people had only one set of clothes), insufficient and bad housing, and the great lack of even the most basic medicine. Good medical care was impossible. The hospital was full of patients and the hotels housed another several hundred sick and wounded. The beds were dirty; wounds were bandaged with sheets; and the seriously wounded died for lack of adequate treatment. There was a provisional operating theatre in which only one doctor functioned as surgeon, who had not been trained as such moreover. All that he could do was rough amputations, always without anaesthesia and making use of ordinary wood saws.[188]

The hospital was heated by wood until the beginning of 1995 when an oil central heating system was installed. The smoke was a constant problem. Sterilization of medical instruments and bandages was almost impossible. The washing machines did not work and water had to be boiled in metal tins or barrels on wood fires. However, this was not sufficient to disinfect the sheets and blankets. There was not a proper mortuary and consequently all of the hospital rubbish (including amputated bodily parts) ended up in the smouldering containers near the hospital. Human body parts were freely available to homeless dogs, as the alarmed *Médecins Sans Frontières* told the world. Hygiene in the hospital also left

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184 NIOD, Coll MSF, MSF, Interview Dzema, aunt of Emira, 18/10/95.
185 Thorsen, *MSF*, p. 95.
186 Thorsen, *SRSA*, pp. 11 and 23. NIOD, Coll SRSA, SRSA Srebrenica (Svärd) to SRSA Karlstad/Belgrade, 10/03/94; SRSA Srebrenica (Andren) to SRSA Karlstad/Belgrade 11/06/95;SRSA Srebrenica (Svärd) to SRSA Karlstad/Belgrade, 24/08/94.
187 MSF, Brussel. MSF, press release 'Hygienic situation', May 1994; MSF Srebrenica, monthly report, June 1994.
188 See Hollingworth for a description of how the amputations were carried out in Zepa: male patients had to drink as much alcohol as possible beforehand, and women were advised to do that as well. That was not done with children and consequently they died earlier. During the amputations, which were performed with normal wood saws, a group of people would hold the patient down, and the patient was advised to pray hard or to scream. They tried to saw as quickly as possible. Hollingworth, *Merry Christmas,* pp. 140-41.

much to be desired. The hospital personnel was often seriously overworked and frustrated; there were too few doctors to deal with all the problems.[189]

One of the greatest problems in the enclave after the Safe Area was established was the lack of water. Srebrenica had a gravity-based water supply system: water was taken from the river Jadar and purified in a purification plant in Zeleni Jadar, eight kilometres south of the town before it was led into the town. Up until March 1993 there was sufficient water, but with the influx of large numbers of Displaced Persons from Cerska and Konjevic Polje, water became an acute problem. The water shortage became exceptionally acute after the water plant in Zeleni Jadar was taken by the Serbs and destroyed in April 1993.[190] As a result, the water supply to the town stopped completely. Afterwards, people got water from springs and small creeks that were not clean and consequently not all that suitable for drinking water. The water situation was less urgent in the villages since the population there had access to a large number of local springs and wells (which had often been the only source of water before the war as well). Water from the sources was not always drinkable, however, because of the metals in it. The water situation was one of the most urgent problems that the NGOs tried to do something about after they arrived in the enclave.

Finally, the food situation was a source of recurrent concern. By far the majority of the population was dependent upon the outside world for food. The situation was better in the villages because the farmers simply continued to till their land, were able to grow crops and raised various kinds of farm animals (cows, sheep and poultry). It seemed sometimes as if there was no war going on there. Still, working the land was not always without its dangers since the Serbs regularly shot at the farmers during the day. Consequently, the farmers could only work at night when they could not be seen. The Displaced Persons who stayed in the villages (and there were several thousand of them) lived under better circumstances generally than those in the town. They usually moved into houses with the local people and had sufficient water and food. In some villages they were allocated land to grow crops for the winter.[191]

Since there was sufficient food in the villages, Displaced Persons from the town sometimes went to the villages to find food, and that led to irritation among people in the countryside. There was little alternative to such forays, however, when little or no food was brought into the enclave. In the first thirteen months of the war (up until April 1993), only three UNHCR convoys arrived in the enclave (at the end of November, beginning of December and end of March). Many people walked to Zepa to try to smuggle food from there to Srebrenica. Due to the lack of vitamins, minerals and other nutrients, many women stopped menstruating, which was sometimes traumatic for them. Some of them thought they were pregnant and others thought that they would never be able to be pregnant again.[192]

The whole situation brought about other problems for the female population, in particular when it came to pregnancies and birth. There was a serious lack of contraceptives, which led to undesired pregnancies and all of the related dangers for the women in question. Unsafe sexual practices led to gynaecological infections and venereal disease. The high number of abortions and related complications were later a source of great concern for aid organizations such as *Médecins Sans Frontières*. At the end of 1993, an average of three to four abortions were performed a day. Given that many women did not have the money for this (an abortion cost 100 DM) they performed the abortions themselves, which again often led to complications. The killing of newborn babies also occurred, although it is not clear from the reports of *Médecins Sans Frontières* whether this happened regularly. In

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189 Thorsen, *MSF*, p. 63.

190 The water plant in Zeleni Jadar was also damaged by the Serbs in the beginning of the war, but the damage could be repaired during 1992. The water was no longer drinkable, however, but it could be used for cleaning and washing. Masic, *Istina o Bratuncu*, p. 119).

191 MSF, Brussel. MSF Srebrenica (Monique Pont, Miguel), medical report, 29/06/93.

192 Hollingworth, *Merry Christmas*, p. 137.

June 1994, *Médecins Sans Frontières* received 15,000 condoms which were distributed through the gynaecological department of the hospital and outpatient centres.[193]

A specific problem in the enclave was the lack of salt. The population lacked a natural source of iodine in their diet, which had always led in Srebrenica to thyroid dysfunctions (with the related physical and psychological consequences). The population of Srebrenica were often called the 'goitre people' because of the frequency of the affliction.[194] The Turkish traveller Evlija Celebi remarked on this problem already in the seventeenth century when he wrote that there was 'a river that flows through Srebrenica that contains a sort of cursed water that has its source by the silver mine; the inhabitants who drink this water suffer from goitre (...); it is the cause of many illnesses and physical disfigurations in both men and women'.[195]

The problem was also known during the First and Second World Wars, when people walked from Srebrenica to Tuzla to obtain salt. After the First World War, the Bosnian government carried out a special salt programme to provide the population in the districts of Srebrenica, Vlasenica and Zvornik with the desperately needed salt.[196] Between 1993 and 1995 many people in the enclave again slowly became ill due to the lack of iodized salt. This was known by the Serb besiegers who constantly tried to prevent salt from entering the enclave. It is thought that there was a JNA plan for biological warfare in Srebrenica, an important part of which was the withholding of salt from the inhabitants. The inhabitants used road salt instead of cooking salt.[197] The UNHCR reported in August 1993 that groups of Muslims crossed the ceasefire line and tried to go to Tuzla to acquire salt, or to steal salt from the Serbs. Some of these fell into a Serb ambush and were killed.[198]

The lack of food led to a flourishing black market which often operated on a barter basis. Although the German Mark was used as currency, the exchange value of foodstuffs and other products was generally given in cigarettes. Since there was a lot of smoking in the enclave, tobacco and cigarettes were worth gold. In March 1993, 1 kilo of tobacco cost 1,000 DM, and a package of cigarettes, 60 DM. In addition to tobacco and cigarettes, other products that were expensive were salt, sugar, cooking oil, wheat and flour, whereas meat, milk and alcohol were relatively inexpensive since they were in sufficient supply. Prices fluctuated greatly however.[199] Despite the tremendous restrictions in freedom of movement, there was a constant stream of goods, primarily between Srebrenica and Zepa where the Ukrainian battalion acted as the link in the trade between the Serbs outside and the Muslims inside the enclave. The food situation in the villages was generally better; UNHCR reported that farmers had a richer and more balance diet than the refugees in the town. One drawback was that the villages often were located too far away from Srebrenica, so that they were inaccessible in the winter. Consequently, food aid and medical care could not always be guaranteed for the villages.[200]

## 2. The activities of the UN aid organizations and the NGOs

Messages coming out of the enclave made it clear quite quickly that the Safe Area construct was no solution for the long term. The logistics and infrastructure problems were too great, and the social and economic difficulties in the enclave would only increase in the long run.[201] Even so, UN aid organizations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) tried to make the situation as bearable as possible for the population.

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193 Thorsen, *MSF*, pp. 80-82.
194 Sudetic, *Blood and Vengeance,* p. 139.
195 Celebi, *Putopis*, p. 99.
196 Beatovic, *Bratunac i okolina*, p. 59; Galic, *Veze narodnooslobodilackog pokreta*, p. 62.
197 Masic, *Srebrenica*, p. 23. Sudetic, *Blood and vengeance*, p. 243. Interviews with Ilijaz Pilav 22/10/97, Nedred Mujkanovic 10/03/99, Almira and Zahira Ramic 06-10/11/99, Jerry Champagne 12/11/99 and Mehmed Zilic, 04/11/99.
198 Confidential information (187).
199 Masic, *Istina o Bratuncu*, pp. 120-121. Interview with Dan MacIssac, 16/11/99.
200 Thorsen, *MSF*, p. 53.
201 Confidential information (153).

The two most important aid organizations were the UN Displaced Persons organization UNHCR which was concerned primarily with the supply of food aid, and the NGO Doctors without Borders (referred to by its original French name *Médecins Sans Frontières*) which was concerned with the health care in the enclave and everything related to health care. A number of other organizations were also active in the enclave with smaller but no less important projects, such as the Swedish Rescue Services Agency and the International Red Cross. And there were a number of organizations that tried to set up projects but were not very successful in their efforts, such as Norwegian People's Aid and the Spanish NGO, Movement for Peace, Disarmament and Freedom.

A significant amount of time in 1993 was devoted by the NGOs to preparations for the coming winter. Thousands of Displaced Persons had no roof over their heads, there was insufficient or no heating in most of the buildings, insufficient fuel, no electricity, no good drinking water, etc.

To be able to do their work, that is to say to gain permission from the Bosnian-Serb authorities to enter and leave the enclave, the NGOs were forced to help the Serbs as well. Thus, *Médecins Sans Frontières* for example, agreed to station a surgeon in Milici to help the Serb population in and around Bratunac. In May 1993, before the demilitarization accord was signed, *Médecins Sans Frontières* worker Hans Ulens provided the Serbs with medicine to make them receptive and to persuade them to let the convoys through.[202]

The Serbs treated the various NGOs differently: some received permission more easily than others, probably because the Serbs thought that a given organization did more for the Serb population than the others, or perhaps to drive a wedge between the organizations. The International Red Cross and the Swedish Rescue Services Agency were treated more generously than *Médecins Sans Frontières,* which was annoyed for example in September 1993 that the Swedes could move in and out of the enclave almost as tourists and could run frequent convoys, whereas *Médecins Sans Frontières* encountered much more resistance.[203]

*UNHCR*

Up until the establishment of the Safe Area, the UNHCR had done little for the Muslims in the enclave: during the first year of the war a total of only three UNHCR convoys arrived in Srebrenica. With the establishment of the Safe Area, however, the organization began immediately to play an important role. The UN Displaced Persons organization became the largest supplier of aid goods and also offered assistance to the other organizations. The UNHCR organized an average of two to three food convoys a week. Other goods were also occasionally supplied, such as seeds, shoes and other necessities. The goods were delivered to a warehouse in the town. CanBat assisted with this; one of CanBat's most important tasks was to make the humanitarian efforts possible and to protect and accompany the convoys. The UNHCR saw to the supply of fuel, which was always being siphoned from the tanks of the lorries.

Although the UNHCR provided large amounts of food and aid, it had no influence or control over local distribution which was left to the authorities in Srebrenica. The UNHCR had no personnel in the enclave most of the time, and consequently control was almost impossible. And even if the UNHCR had had more influence and control, the local authorities insisted on maintaining command of distribution. This often led to problems between the UNHCR and the council, but mostly the amounts of food requested by the authorities were provided by UNHCR without further verification.

It is probable that the authorities submitted inflated numbers for the Displaced Persons and inhabitants present to obtain more supplies from UNHCR. The foreign NGO workers and UNPROFOR personnel in the enclave had the suspicion that the amount of food was greater than the

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[202] MSF, Brussel. Srebrenica (Stefaan Maddens, Jos) to MSF Belgrade, 12/05/93.
[203] MSF, Brussels. MSF Srebrenica to MSF Belgrade, 07/12/93.

actual need and that the surplus was traded by the authorities on the black market.[204] Goods that went into the UNHCR Warehouse often went quickly out the back door. Part of the food went to Oric's troops and a recurrent Serb complaint - rightly or wrongly - was that the Muslims always started an attack within 24 hours after the arrival of a convoy.

*Médecins Sans Frontières*

This most active organization in the enclave itself was *Médecins Sans Frontières*. It concentrated on providing medical aid and on a series of preventive measures intended to improve the living environment and hygiene, in particular among the Displaced Persons. *Médecins Sans Frontières* was active in Srebrenica before the other NGOs had started to develop activities and it was also the last NGO to leave the enclave, in July 1995. Its first visit to the enclave was made together with the second UNHCR food convoy which took place on 4 December 1992, before the institution of the Safe Area. A Belgian *Médecins Sans Frontières* team provided first aid during the short stay. The team considered the situation at that moment as simply alarming.[205]

For that reason, the Belgian branch of *Médecins Sans Frontières* began to make preparations from its office in Belgrade for an extensive humanitarian programme concentrating on direct medical aid and improvement of the general health situation. The object was to create good hygiene and sanitary conditions for the population and the Displaced Persons, and to assist the local authorities in repairing the buildings that were being used as Displaced Persons' Centres. This programme was started in March 1993 when a second *Médecins Sans Frontières* team managed to reach the enclave together with Gen. Morillon, at the time that Srebrenica was still being shelled on a daily basis by the Serb forces. The first *Médecins Sans Frontières* surgeon, Dr. Thierry Ponthus, arrived on 21 March and began immediately to operate in the hospital of Srebrenica, until Morillon succeeded in leaving the enclave again; he left with Morillon. The Muslims did all they could to keep the UN, UNHCR and *Médecins Sans Frontières* personnel who entered the enclave as long as possible out of fear that the Serbs would start the assault of the town.[206]

The new *Médecins Sans Frontières* team, consisting of a surgeon, a GP, an anaesthesiologist and a hydraulic engineer, Hans Ulens, arrived in the enclave at the beginning of April 1993 during a brief ceasefire. The team worked hard in the following days to give the hospital a good cleaning and to put it in order, to restore the water supply, and to motivate the five local doctors to continue their work. They had to leave the enclave in the second week of April, however, due to the continual Serb bombardments. Ulens decided to stay behind to assist in the evacuation of the wounded. As it turned out, he remained until January 1994 and returned a few times in the following year. Along with Richard Svärd of the Swedish Rescue Services Agency, he was one of the few foreigners to spend so much time in the enclave.[207]

One of the first matters on which *Médecins Sans Frontières* and other aid organizations concentrated was the restoration of the town's water supply. There was a joint effort of *Médecins Sans Frontières* and the International Red Cross led by Ulens. Lorries and fire engines were used to transport water from clean sources, even if this was not a permanent solution because they threatened to dry up in the summer. *Médecins Sans Frontières* also built water reservoirs with a number of places to draw from the supply near a source in the hills close to the town, but the yield from this source declined steadily. On 26 May 1993, Ulens sounded the alarm in a fax to the headquarters of *Médecins Sans Frontières* in Brussels, Paris and Belgrade in which he said that a solution would have to be found to the water problem in a few days. The only real solution, he said, was for the Serbs to withdraw from the water

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[204] *Dutchbat Srebrenica / Lukavac / Tuzla Milinfo*; July 1994 (MIDKL Dossier 1589); chap. 1, par. F6. DIS/94/021/2424 - Supintrep Enclave Srebrenica, p. 26. Thorsen, *MSF*, p. 61.
[205] Thorsen, *MSF*, p. 8.
[206] Thorsen, *MSF*, p. 8.
[207] Interviews Abdulah Purkovic 04/02/98 and Hans Ulens 06/08/97.

purification plant in Zeleni Jadar. In another message of the same day he reported that the inhabitants currently had to walk three kilometres for a small amount of water, and that the chance of skirmishes were increasing by the day. 'Urgent action should be taken to guarantee access today or tomorrow. An international presence in Zeleni Jadar is more than necessary, if not we will have to organise convoys of water (…) or evacuate at least 20,000 persons'.[208]

The following day, Ulens, along with the CanBat commander, had a meeting with VRS colonel Vukovic, who was guarding the southern border of the enclave for the Bosnian Serbs.[209] Ulens asked for permission to put the water plant in Zeleni Jadar in order again. *Médecins Sans Frontières* and UNPROFOR had received a handwritten letter from the Bosnian-Serb general Milovanovic granting permission for this. However, Vukovic refused to allow them access to the plant and gave as his reason that the Muslims had not surrendered all of their weapons. When Vukovic heard that the first victims from the lack of water would be women and children, his only response was a digression about the Turkish domination of the Serbs.[210]

It was only several weeks later, with the conclusion of a ceasefire between the Bosnian-Serb and Muslim forces in the third week of June, that the UN was granted access to Zeleni Jadar. When a team of *Médecins Sans Frontières* under the escort of CanBat went to see whether the plant could be started up again, it turned out that the Bosnian Serbs had blown it up, destroying it beyond repair.[211] The only alternative now was to reinstate the old water purification plant at Pusmulici (four kilometres from the town), that had been shut down ten years earlier. The water from the Pusmulici stream was suitable as drinking water for the people in the enclave.

*Médecins Sans Frontières* and the International Red Cross worked closely together to put the Pusmulici plant back in working order. The old plant, which was located in the eastern part of the enclave had to be completely repaired. Many water pipes were broken or had disappeared, and the plant was polluted because Displaced Persons had used it as a toilet. The work would take at least two months. Ulsen gained the support of the council which made available dozens of workers. In the meantime, the International Red Cross came up with an emergency provision by leading water to the town from the Goranovac stream. That water was not drinkable; it could only be used for washing. *Médecins Sans Frontières* also provided an emergency solution by building a dam in the Kutlici stream. Despite the fact that the Serbian besiegers constantly hampered the transport of building materials, the Pusmulici plant was ready for use in October 1993.

The Opstina decided, however, against the wishes of *Médecins Sans Frontières*, that the water had to be conveyed to the houses through the normal water mains system. In the opinion of *Médecins Sans Frontières* much water would be lost if this were done due to the numerous leaks and the excessive use of water by the households connected to the system. The organization wanted special public water collection areas that could be used by everyone, but this proposal was not adopted by the council. As a consequence, only some parts of the town and a limited number of families had running water. The rest of the population had to continue to be supplied by the fire engines. In December 1993, the Pusmulici plant provided about 20-30 litres of drinkable water per person per day, which theoretically was more than enough if it were available to everyone, but that was not the case. The repair and continued functioning of the water supply in the town of Srebrenica was Ulens's greatest contribution.[212]

Another important activity of *Médecins Sans Frontières* was the provision of medical aid. The group saw to the organization of the hospital and pharmacy, the setting up of a psychiatric institution and some small health centres in the town and a number of villages (known as *ambulantas*).

*Médecins Sans Frontières* also protected the public health situation by carrying out regular epidemiological research to be able to recognize potential epidemics and other dangers as quickly as

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208 MSF, Brussels. MSF Srebrenica (Ulens) to MSF Brussels, MSF Paris, MSF Belgrade, 27/05/93.
209 MSF, Brussels. MSF Srebrenica (Ulens) to MSF Belgrade (Dachy), 26/05/93.
210 MSF, Brussels. UNHCR Srebrenica to UNHCR Belgrade Sitrep 27/05/93.
211 Interview Dan MacIssac 16/11/99.
212 Thorsen, *MSF*, p. 90-94.

possible. Another contribution of *Médecins Sans Frontières* was the training of medical and nursing personnel. To be able to carry out the whole medical programme, *Médecins Sans Frontières* always kept a few people in the enclave, among whom were a number of doctors in varying combinations (GPs, surgeons, obstetricians, gynaecologists, anaesthesiologists, dentists) and nurses. They rotated on a regular basis. In addition to the team of foreigners consisting of four or five people, *Médecins Sans Frontières* had a local staff of about 12 to 14 individuals (e.g. interpreters, chauffeurs, cleaners and cooks).

*Médecins Sans Frontières* reorganized the hospital which was originally overly full with approximately 200 beds occupied. After the evacuation in March and April 1993, the number of beds occupied was reduced to about 80; this was a structural reduction of the number of beds by *Médecins Sans Frontières. Médecins Sans Frontières* was responsible for the general management and for cooperation with the hospital director and pediatrician Avdo Hasanovic. This Hasanovic was not very capable in the eyes of *Médecins Sans Frontières* and the relationship between him and *Médecins Sans Frontières*, which had been difficult since the very start, became increasingly problematic. He opposed changes that *Médecins Sans Frontières* wanted to institute. Instead of concentrating on his specialty, paediatrics, he performed an increasing number of abortions, at a cost of 100 DM apiece. 'Dr. Abortion', as his nickname suggests, carried out many abortions, often in an unprofessional manner, for which he earned a great deal of money. *Médecins Sans Frontières* workers found that he was derelict in his real responsibility as doctor and hospital director.[213]

Hasanovic also spread rather tendentious information about the health situation in the enclave and the role of *Médecins Sans Frontières.* In September 1994 the relationship between Hasanovic and *Médecins Sans Frontières* had sunk to an all-time low, because he had made remarks to the outside about the 'tragic' health situation in the enclave to which, he maintained, *Médecins Sans Frontières* had not responded sufficiently.[214]

None the less, *Médecins Sans Frontières* had excellent relations with the five other doctors, Ilijaz Pilav, Ejub Alic, Dzevad Dzananovic and Branka Stanic, all junior physicians with one or two years experience.[215] Originally, there was also a surgeon working in the hospital, Nedred Mjukanovic, who was not from Srebrenica, but had been sent from Tuzla to the enclave to perform operations. Mujkanovic had to be flown out of the enclave by helicopter in the middle of April 1993 because he was completely drained.[216] Three weeks later a replacement was found, Mehdin Hadziselimovic, a surgeon working for the International Red Cross. The intention was for him to stay only a few days in Srebrenica, but as it turned out he remained several months because the Serbs would not allow him to leave the enclave. *Médecins Sans Frontières* praised Hadziselimovic profusely and called him a super surgeon who, for as long as he was in the enclave, led the hospital more or less alone instead of the director.[217] He was evacuated by helicopter finally in August 1993.

The repeated delaying of Hadziselimovic's departure made other doctors outside of Srebrenica reluctant to go to the enclave, out of fear that they too might not be allowed to leave. For that reason, Ilijaz Pilav was trained by *Médecins Sans Frontières* as a surgeon and two nurses were trained to administer anaesthesia. In May 1994, Pilav was able to carry out 80 to 90% of the surgical operations without assistance from *Médecins Sans Frontières.*[218]

Fatima Dautbasic took over as head of obstetrics which was opened in January 1994. Sixty births a month took place here on average. *Médecins Sans Frontières* gave the mothers small packages with

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213 MSF, Brussels. MSF Srebrenica, monthly report, April 1994. Interviews Hans Ulens 16/06/98, Emira Selimovic 21/10/97.
214 MSF, Brussels. MSF Srebrenica to MSF Belgrade, 25/09/94. Thorsen, *MSF*, p. 45.
215 In the first year of the war there was a sixth doctor also working in the enclave, Nijaz Dzanic, who was killed, however, in a Serbian bombardment in January 1994.
216 Interviews Nedred Mujkanovic 02/12/98 and Abdulah Purkovic 04/02/98.
217 MSF, Brussels. MSF Srebrenica (Maddens), Srebrenica sitrep, 18/05/93.
218 Thorsen, *MSF*, p. 79.

baby bottles, baby shampoo, baby soap and the like. Hospital personnel – there were more than 100 employees, mostly doctors and nursing staff - were sometimes rewarded in this way for the work that they performed by *Médecins Sans Frontières*, even though none of them was employed by *Médecins Sans Frontières*. Now and again they were also given shampoo, soap, toothpaste and razorblades, which was actually nothing more than a symbolic gesture.

Even so, *Médecins Sans Frontières* had a number of difficulties in its dealings with the local hospital staff, which can be explained to a certain extent as a conflict in medical cultures. The biggest problem, however, was that the staff was completely drained, both mentally and physically, and consequently it was almost impossible to motivate them. Many non-urgent operations were postponed with all kinds of excuses. In the eyes of *Médecins Sans Frontières*, the level of medical knowledge of the local doctors was sometimes insufficient, and the organization was also below par. Changing the existing 'Eastern European' routines was very difficult and frustrating for the *Médecins Sans Frontières* organizers. The local staff persisted with the same standards, routines, competencies and hierarchical structures that had existed before the war. Suggestions for change made by *Médecins Sans Frontières* were brushed away. The organization also disapproved of doctors asking for money for treatments, which meant that people who had no money would be helped later or not at all.[219]

Reorganizing the pharmacy turned out to be another frustrating assignment. Local doctors had the long-standing tradition of prescribing a great deal of medicine, so that the supplies were quickly exhausted and shortages were a recurrent problem.[220]

In the spring of 1993 six *ambulantas* (small health centres) were opened in the town; this was a combined effort of *Médecins Sans Frontières*, the International Red Cross and the local doctors. Six more *ambulantas* followed in the villages, first in Potocari and Suceska. They were staffed by untrained personnel, mostly members of the Women's Association who had been instructed by *Médecins Sans Frontières*. Each *ambulanta* was run by two women. They were given no salary; the municipality was expected to give them a meal every day, and such things as flour and sugar every month. *Médecins Sans Frontières* provided them with soap, shampoo and similar articles. The primary objectives of the *ambulantas* were to provide first aid, make preliminary diagnoses, offer information in the areas of hygiene and health, combat lice, scabies and diarrhoea, and treat minor infections and wounds. The *ambulantas* in the town evolved more and more into hygiene centres, concentrating particularly on combating lice and scabies.[221]

As soon as it entered the enclave, *Médecins Sans Frontières* ordered large amounts of anti-lice shampoo, disinfectants and insecticides. The organization tried to combat lice and scabies by means of regular disinfection campaigns, in particular in Displaced Persons' Centres. The success of these actions was limited, however, due to the lack of water, but also to the fact that the campaigns were limited in scope and actually not sufficiently stringent to really defeat the problems. There was also a permanent shortage of pesticides and cleaning products, because the Serbs held these back.[222] As a result of these limitations, people were continually reinfected. The *ambulantas,* however*,* played an increasingly important role in combating scabies and lice. They provided information about hygiene and were responsible for the distribution of soap and similar products when these came into the enclave. Teams from the *ambulantas* also assisted in the disinfection of the buildings. After the *ambulanta* system was established, the percentage of people suffering from scabies was reduced from 50% in April 1993 to 20% in August 1993.[223]

*Médecins Sans Frontières* also instituted large-scale cleaning campaigns to improve the sanitary conditions in the enclave and, in conjunction with the municipal authorities, organized the collection of rubbish. As far as the cleaning campaigns were concerned, the first priority was the Displaced Persons'

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[219] Thorsen, *MSF*, pp. 42-45.
[220] Thorsen, *MSF*, pp. 68-69.
[221] Thorsen, *MSF*, p.72.
[222] Thorsen, *MSF*, pp. 85-86.
[223] Thorsen, *MSF*, pp. 97-98.

Centres because the situation was by far the most critical there, through the lack of usable toilets, showers and washing facilities. As a consequence, many refugees in those buildings suffered from scabies or lice. The situation was the worst in the old school building, which is where *Médecins Sans Frontières* began to clean. A month later *Médecins Sans Frontières* was able to report that the situation had improved in the school building and that there were fewer cases of scabies and lice. The only remedy for scabies and lice, however, would have been to burn the blankets and mattresses, wash all of the clothing and move the population of Displaced Persons to a new location with new mattresses and blankets. That was impossible, and consequently the problems continued to arise.

The town itself was seriously polluted with mountains of rubbish everywhere in the streets and in the river, and there was no provision for dealing with the rubbish. It had not been collected for months. After the establishment of the Safe Area, Civil Defence carried out a three-day cleaning campaign which resulted in about 70% of the rubbish being collected.

Still, keeping the overpopulated town clean remained an enormous task. *Médecins Sans Frontières* and the council agreed to have the town cleaned regularly, for which the council would provide the workers and *Médecins Sans Frontières* the necessary fuel, equipment, protective clothing and boots for the people who would do the work. There was only one refuse lorry available. It was agreed that the rubbish would be collected every day under supervision of *Médecins Sans Frontières*. The refuse lorry broke down quite soon, however, and the rubbish started to pile up again almost immediately.[224] In May there was another large-scale cleaning campaign in which the council, *Médecins Sans Frontières*, CanBat, UNHCR and the International Red Cross all participated. Afterwards, the rubbish collecting teams used normal lorries and small tractors to pick up the refuse, whereupon the hygiene of the town was considerably improved.[225]

*Problems resulting from the central role of Médecins Sans Frontières*

In time, *Médecins Sans Frontières* found that the council was neglecting its duties. In March 1994 the aid organization remarked that the hygiene in the town depended too much on the goodwill of the authorities. *Médecins Sans Frontières* found that the authorities did not sufficiently meet their responsibilities in this matter and that they were very difficult to move. *Médecins Sans Frontières* placed constant pressure on them. The council continued to ask for diesel fuel, more than was really necessary to keep the collection going, at least in the eyes of *Médecins Sans Frontières*, whereupon the council in turn became irritated by the control *Médecins Sans Frontières* continually exercised over the use of fuel. During a clean-up campaign at the end of Ramadan in 1994, *Médecins Sans Frontières* discovered that the council had deposited the rubbish at a spot close to the town that had not been agreed upon, at which point *Médecins Sans Frontières* stopped the supply of diesel fuel until the council would keep its agreements. Ultimately, a committee was set up in which both *Médecins Sans Frontières* and the council had representatives to oversee the quality of the service and make proposals for improvements.[226]

The extreme overpopulation complicated and worsened the situation, in particular in the buildings housing the Displaced Persons. An attempt was made to keep the buildings as clean as possible, but there was a constant lack of water, soap and cleaning products. Personal hygiene also suffered from the great lack of water, soap, shampoo, toothpaste, toothbrushes, razor blades, sanitary towels and related articles. Such products did not make it into the enclave in sufficient quantities because the Serbs blocked them. Laundry washing was seriously complicated due to the lack of detergent, water and water tubs, and also by the fact that people simply did not have any other clothes to put on. *Médecins Sans Frontières* became frustrated by the fact that no other organization did anything about these problems, and found that UNHCR failed in its duty on this point.

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[224] MSF, Brussels. MSF Srebrenica (Maddens), Srebrenica sitrep 18/05/93.
[225] Thorsen, *MSF*, pp. 95-96.
[226] Thorsen, *MSF*, p. 96.

UNHCR was seen as the organization with primary responsibility for this, but it was sometimes months that it did not transport products to improve the sanitary conditions and personal hygiene. *Médecins Sans Frontières* became frustrated because it had the feeling that it constantly had to put pressure on other organizations and the local authorities to meet their obligations.[227]

One of the activities of *Médecins Sans Frontières,* which it felt was not really its responsibility, was the repair of the buildings in which the Displaced Persons were housed. Since the need was great and other humanitarian organizations had done nothing about these problems, *Médecins Sans Frontières* began to assist in this area. However, it found that the UN aid organizations were again neglecting their duty. *Médecins Sans Frontières* found that it carried an unreasonable burden on its shoulders, which could have been better shared. Furthermore, the various UN organizations present in the enclave (UNHCR, UnCivPol, UNMOs) often used *Médecins Sans Frontières* materials and facilities (such as stoves, blankets, the capsat, as it was called, a device for sending messages by satellite) rather than seeing to their own needs. This resulted in a certain amount of bad blood, which led one *Médecins Sans Frontières* worker to say that it was not the mandate of *Médecins Sans Frontières* to make up for all of the deficiencies of the UN.[228]

Although many of the activities of *Médecins Sans Frontières* in the enclave were financed by UNHCR, the *Médecins Sans Frontières* personnel was of the opinion that what it actually came down to was that the UN Displaced Persons organization had shunted its tasks into the lap of *Médecins Sans Frontières*. Some of the workers felt that *Médecins Sans Frontières* should have kept a greater distance from UNHCR and that pressure should have been exercised at a high level to have all the various organizations share the aid tasks in Srebrenica.[229]

Some *Médecins Sans Frontières* workers also had objections to the way in which UNHCR carried out some of the jobs it did take upon itself. In July 1993 a *Médecins Sans Frontières* worker wrote that the aid that UNHCR brought into the enclave was inadequate in both quantity and quality (too much flour), that the aid was badly planned (no calculations for the needed calories and proteins) and that it was badly distributed.[230]

*Médecins Sans Frontières* was sometimes dissatisfied with the collaboration with CanBat as well. CanBat refused, for example, to help with moving the sick within the enclave. Hans Ulens wrote an indignant letter about this to Col. Almström at Bosnia-Hercegovina Command in Kiseljak. He vented all his frustrations in this letter, among them that the Canadians refused to turn over fuel for the hospital generator and the water pump, whereas *Médecins Sans Frontières* provided the Canadian battalion with water and collected their rubbish. There was a serious imbalance in what the groups did for one another, Ulens wrote, and added that something would have to change soon. At the end of the month, the balance was somewhat improved.[231]

*The Swedish Rescue Services Agency and the Swedish Shelter Project*

The only other aid organization that made a substantial contribution to solving the housing problems in the enclave was the Swedish Rescue Services Agency, a Swedish NGO with its main office in Karlstad in Sweden and subsidized by the Swedish government. This NGO arrived in the enclave in November 1993 to set up a housing project for the Displaced Persons in the enclave, which was known as the Swedish Shelter Project. The objective of this organization was to offer a roof over the heads of as many Displaced Persons as possible; it intended to do this by setting up new, prefabricated wooden

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227 Thorsen, *MSF*, pp. 89-90.
228 MSF, Brussles. MSF Srebrenica (Godain) to MSF-B (Tocker), MSF-F (Laoubbia, Salignon, Genevier), activity report (mission report), 25/03/93.
229 MSF, Brussels. MSF Srebrenica, monthly report, April 1994.
230 MSF, Brussels. MSF, Srebrenica sitrep 7.
231 MSF, Brussels. MSF Srebrenica (Ulens) to Colonel Almstrom, BH Command Kiseljak, letter cc. cooperation from CanBat, 05/10/93.

houses and by repairing existing houses and buildings that had been damaged by the combat. The activities of the Swedish Rescue Services Agency were coordinated from Belgrade where the organization had an office. The first and most important project was the construction of a large Displaced Persons' village in the southern part of the enclave, in Slapovici near Zeleni Jadar, which was given the name Novi Svedskigrad (New Swedish Town).

The project involved the building of 288 prefab houses as well as the construction of a primary infrastructure (roads and other public facilities, water pipes and sewers) and sanitary facilities (24 service units, 24 shower units and 3 toilet units). The houses were completely furnished with beds, furniture, stoves and ovens. Water was provided by means of pipes from sources in the hills above the village. The Swedish Rescue Services Agency had the use of good tools and heavier equipment such as lorries, but they also worked with horses. Much of the building materials came from Sweden. Normally, a convoy of this organization came to Srebrenica from Belgrade once a week, always dependent upon whether or not the Serbs would give them clearance. Later, materials were increasingly obtained from inside the enclave due to the continuing logistical problems.

The building of the Displaced Persons' village near Zeleni Jadar began in December 1993. Originally about 30 Swedish workers of Swedish Rescue Services Agency were involved and 80 local labourers. Later the number of Swedish workers was reduced to about seven.

The local workers were provided by the authorities. They were transported every morning from Srebrenica to the construction site. Medo Murathodzic, a construction engineer and director of the local construction company Radnik, coordinated the cooperation for the municipal authorities and saw to the local workers. The Swedish Rescue Services Agency paid no salaries, but promised to prepare one nutritious meal a day, and gave the workers bonuses now and then, in the form of rubber boots for example. The village was completed in the middle of June 1994 and the keys to the houses were officially handed over to the local authorities. Refugees moved into the houses immediately; there was a local municipal coordinator who assigned the houses and turned over the keys. In all probability, it was the local workers who were assigned the houses first. The Swedish Rescue Services Agency had no role in assigning the houses, and no mention is made in their daily reports about the manner in which the houses were assigned.[232]

The people who moved in were very happy with the new houses which, in the light of circumstances in the enclave, were most luxurious. One problem was that the village was located quite far from the town and close to the confrontation line. That meant that up until the fall of Srebrenica, the inhabitants regularly had to flee, to return later; this matter is treated in chapter 6 of vol. III. During the construction of the houses there were also security risks: at the beginning of March 1994 there were shooting incidents which resulted in the local work forces refusing to go to the location.[233]

When the project was finished in June 1994, the Swedish Rescue Services Agency continued its activities in Srebrenica. The Swedish Rescue Services Agency team moved to Hotel Domavia in the town. There it concentrated on the repair of schools and other public buildings that served as Displaced Persons' Centres, and with the reconstruction of private homes. For most of the time that the Swedish Rescue Services Agency was in the enclave, Richard Svärd was project leader, a positive and hard-working Swede, who got along well with the local workers. He remained in the enclave more than a year. He allowed the local workers to decide on their working hours themselves and made Friday a day of rest, in keeping with Islam. He encouraged the men and succeeded in achieving a high work tempo from them; in his situation reports he spoke of them in terms of appreciation and even admiration.[234] The financial means of the Swedish Rescue Services Agency, which were provided by the Swedish government, were many times greater than those of *Médecins Sans Frontières*, which led

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[232] Thorsen, *SRSA*, p. 13.
[233] NIOD, Coll SRSA, SRSA Srebrenica (Svärd) to SRSA Karlstad/Belgrade, 06/03/94.
[234] Thorsen, *SRSA*, p. 10. See also the Interview Svärd in Ljiljan (Becirovic, 'Zivjet cu').

sometimes to incomprehension among the authorities; they could not understand why *Médecins Sans Frontières* did not have the same means.[235]

*The International Red Cross*

A third organization that was active in the enclave was the International Red Cross, which played an important role in the beginning with the repair of the water supply, but which slowly but surely withdrew from the enclave and restricted itself to the reuniting of families and the setting up of a postal system between family members inside the enclave and those outside. International Red Cross workers arrived in Srebrenica for the first time on 18 April 1993 to assist with the evacuation of 650 wounded to the hospital in Tuzla. *Médecins Sans Frontières* had been in control of the hospital since March of that year, which left nothing for the International Red Cross to do there. Originally there were four workers of this organization in the enclave, including an engineer who helped to repair the water supply, but that number was quickly reduced to one, and in May 1994 he was called back as well.[236] From that moment there were travelling representatives of the International Red Cross who entered the enclave now and again; otherwise, developments inside the enclave were reported by a local representative of the organization.[237]

The organization had about twenty local people working for it, concentrating primarily on the postal service. They received almost no remuneration for their work, although Hatidza Hren, who was head of the local office of the International Red Cross, discovered after the fall of the enclave in Tuzla that her local employees had the right to a salary. The postal service of the International Red Cross in Srebrenica processed approximately 25,000 letters a month, the majority of which went to family members in Tuzla.[238] The family reunifications amounted to only a small number of people (35 individuals), among them a number of Serbs who were still in the enclave. The International Red Cross sometimes provided emergency aid in the form of blankets, shoes, clothing, mattresses, stoves, salt and detergents. In such cases, *Médecins Sans Frontières* was generally asked to take care of distribution. In 1994 and 1995 the International Red Cross also brought in seeds so that people could grow potatoes and vegetables, and agricultural plastic to cover the ground. This was a joint project with UNHCR and the world food organization FAO.

The International Red Cross played no significant role on the medical front; *Médecins Sans Frontières* was critical about the lack of cooperation from the International Red Cross in the medical evacuations out of the enclave.[239]

*Smaller organizations in the enclave*

Finally in this survey, two other NGOs need to be named that were only active in the enclave to a limited extent: the Norwegian People's Aid and the Spanish organization Movement for Peace, Disarmament and Freedom. As early as April 1993 the representative of Norwegian People's Aid, Marianne Øen, visited the enclave by helicopter. That was on invitation of UNHCR because Norwegian People's Aid had experience with the construction of prefabricated houses. She came back to the enclave at the end of August 1993 when all the humanitarian organizations were having a joint meeting to coordinate the preparations for the winter. Norwegian People's Aid decided to expand its activities from elsewhere in Bosnia to Srebrenica, and started to work on an aid programme that

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235 Thorsen, *MSF*, pp. 26-27.
236 This concerned a certain Dominique who had regular contact with the OPS officer of the B-Co. and a valuable source of information for DutchBat during the Gorazde crisis in April 1994. *Dutchbat Srebrenica / Lukavac / Tuzla Milinfo*; July 1994 (MIDKL Dossier 1589); chapter 6.
237 Thorsen, *MSF*, pp. 24-25. Interview Hatidza Hren 18/06/98.
238 Interviews Hatidza Hren 02/02/98 and 18/06/98.
239 Thorsen, *MSF*, pp. 25-26. *Dutchbat Srebrenica / Lukavac / Tuzla Milinfo*; July 1994 (MIDKL Dossier 1589); chap. 1, paragraph F6.

included the construction of a Displaced Persons' village (with prefabricated houses) for 1,500 people, and the setting up of social and community activities, in particular for the most vulnerable groups in the enclave, women, the elderly, traumatized individuals, children and ex-prisoners.[240]

The Norwegian organization encountered continual problems in obtaining permission from the Bosnian-Serb authorities to let through the convoys with building materials. The houses were stored in Belgrade, and the whole idea of building a village of prefab houses in Srebrenica was taken over by the Swedish Rescue Services Agency. During talks with the Bosnian-Serb authorities in Pale at the beginning of February 1994, it became clear that the Serbs were of the opinion that Norwegian People's Aid concentrated too much on the Muslim population in Bosnia; it would seem that the Swedes were more measured in their approach. It became quickly clear that the only solution was to first develop a project on the Serb side before there could be any thought of aid to Srebrenica. In May 1994, Norwegian People's Aid, along with UNHCR, decided to place the prefabricated houses in Kravica, partially because the Swedish Rescue Services Agency had made great strides in the meantime with the Swedish Shelter Project.[241]

The psycho-social and community activities that Norwegian People's Aid wanted to set up for extremely vulnerable individuals did not get off the ground because the local authorities did not see the real point to it. In fact, they saw it as a sort of provocation that a humanitarian organization wanted to work on something like this before providing for the primary necessities of life of the population.[242] Ultimately, Norwegian People's Aid agreed with the authorities to set up a child care centre in the town, which became the principle concern of Norwegian People's Aid as of the beginning of 1995. The organization focused primarily on aid to young children between the ages of 3 and 7. Officially, there were 5,000 children in this age group in the enclave; orphans and traumatized children were given highest priority.[243]

In January 1995, in collaboration with DutchBat, Norwegian People's Aid started an information class for young people to increase their understanding of hygiene. The organization also gave English lessons to adults of the Displaced Person population.

The Spanish organization Movement for Peace, Disarmament and Freedom arrived in the enclave only in the spring of 1995 to start educational programmes in the schools, but did not succeed in getting the necessary materials into the enclave. The workers of this NGO played games with the children in the meantime and, on 15 June 1995, left the enclave when the necessary materials still had not arrived. The organization worked under the umbrella of UNHCR.

## 3. NGOs and their relationship with the Opstina

Most of the NGOs had regular contacts with the local authorities. *Médecins Sans Frontières* had to continually coordinate its activities with the various municipal functionaries who were responsible for such matters as health care, cleaning of the town, etc. In the period that the Canadian battalion was in the enclave, all of the NGOs and the UN organizations present at the time coordinated their activities with the council in weekly meetings; in the spring of 1994 this was reduced to once a month. The relations between the authorities and the NGOs were generally riddled with problems.[244] The council's priority was to keep control of the enclave and the population in its hands in as much as possible, and that sometimes clashed with the interests of the refugees and the aid organizations. Differences in mentality and conceptions caused numerous complications and crises in the relations on both sides, which sometimes endangered the whole aid programme. Chapter 7 will deal with this question in greater depth.

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240 Thorsen, *NPA*, p. 6.
241 Thorsen, *NPA*, p. 5. Interview Marianne Øen, 22/09/00.
242 NIOD, Coll NPA, NPA (Ommang) to NPA, end of mission report, 10/03/95.
243 Thorsen, *NPA*, pp. 6, 8-9.
244 Thorsen, *MSF*, pp. 29-36. Interview Yvan Bouchard, 15/11/99.

The increasing political tensions outside or around the enclave sometimes affected the relationship between the NGOs and the authorities. In the summer and autumn of 1993, for example, the Serb blockade caused continual delays in the NGOs' humanitarian preparations for the winter. The authorities took out their fear and frustration on the international organizations; they accused the aid organizations and the international community of doing too little to improve the situation in Srebrenica.[245] The population and the Displaced Persons who were dependent upon the international aid organizations also took out their frustrations and anger on the organizations. This was reinforced by the fact that the authorities frequently pointed the finger at the NGOs if something went wrong - partially to deflect criticism of their own failings. It was clear that in periods of tension and shortages, the NGOs had to take into account hostile reactions of the population or the authorities.

The civil authorities tried to grasp as much power as possible, which meant that they were not afraid of conflicts with the NGOs if they thought that their power position was being undermined. They were clearly under the influence of the political hardliners and the military authorities, in the last instance, Naser Oric of course. In October 1993, *Médecins Sans Frontières* reported that the local authorities in Srebrenica 'installed and controlled by the local military commander' were involved in an intimidation campaign against anyone who dared oppose their power position. NGO workers, both local and foreign workers, were intimidated and accused of all sorts of evils, as part of the attempts to have themselves replaced by people who - in their eyes - were loyal to the authorities. Oric went so far sometimes as to come to blows with NGO workers, the UNHCR worker Pierre Ollier for example. He supposedly was beaten up by Oric and threatened with murder after he protested that Oric had stolen all of the jogging suits from an aid shipment.[246]

The NGOs were of the opinion that the local authorities were constantly inventing problems and obstacles that slowed the progress of the aid projects. *Médecins Sans Frontières* in particular had difficulties with this because that organization did by far the most in the areas of water supply, sanitary conditions, health care and housing repair. Consequently, it had the most influence in the enclave which meant it was a threat to the authorities. One of the points of contention was that the authorities tried to monopolize the selection of local workers for the NGOs and UNPROFOR, which often resulted in favouritism. People who had obtained work from the municipality generally turned over a percentage of their salary to the municipality. The authorities sometimes put great pressure on international organizations that hired people without going through the municipality, which resulted sometimes in the sacking of the person in question. A Serb woman, for example, who was in the enclave and started working for DutchBat was sacked after three days because the municipality protested. She later went to work for *Médecins Sans Frontières*.[247]

*Médecins Sans Frontières* in particular refused to yield to the pressure of the Opstina, whereas most of the other organizations more or less put up with it. The constant tug-of-war between the authorities and *Médecins Sans Frontières* came to a peak in October 1993 when the local police confiscated a vehicle of *Médecins Sans Frontières* in an attempt to underline its authority. The reason that was given was that the vehicle supposedly had been driven too fast. The international organizations responded with a joint action: they ceased all activities. The hospital personnel joined them. This put the authorities in a difficult situation. Given the fact that they were concerned about reactions from outside, they gave the vehicle back. *Médecins Sans Frontières* then had a long talk with the mayor and the chief of police. *Médecins Sans Frontières* and UNHCR warned that in the future such actions would have consequences for carrying out the local programmes.[248]

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[245] MSF, Brussels. MSF Belgrade to MSF Srebrenica (Ulens), Srebrenica sitrep, 27/06/93.
[246] Confidential information (154).
[247] Interview Dana Ristanovic 22/09/98.
[248] MSF, Brussels. MSF Srebrenica (Ulens) to MSF Brussels (Devaux), Srebrenica sitrep, 29/10/93. Interview Hans Ulens 16/06/98.

Still, the NGOs remained critical of the interaction with the council. Both *Médecins Sans Frontières* and UNHCR had difficulties with the inflexible attitude of the authorities. According to *Médecins Sans Frontières*, this had to do with internal politics.

CanBat officers as well were not always all that positive about the efforts of the Opstina. Sometimes CanBat had to hire people for work that the municipality actually should have done.

ABiH soldiers did not help either;[249] in September 1993 a *Médecins Sans Frontières* worker listed a number of factors that influenced the fact that the authorities were not very cooperative when it came to carrying out aid programmes. These were: the legacy of a heavily bureaucratized system in which everything is delegated; the lack of people who are willing to take responsibility; and the rift between the original inhabitants and the Displaced Persons, which was intensified by the Displaced Persons' being shut out completely from municipal power. The Displaced Persons had a very weak and vulnerable position and could do nothing against the power block of municipality, army and police. According to this worker, the local authorities profited from the large Displaced Person population to put pressure on the international aid organizations for more aid, of which they could then appropriate a larger amount.[250]

It was above all the distribution of aid goods that frequently led to problems with the local council, which demanded complete control of this. *Médecins Sans Frontières* kept careful track of the goods it delivered, because it was assumed that otherwise the goods would end up in the wrong hands. It did not want to give the authorities a chance to pinch anything. UNHCR, on the other hand, left the distribution of aid goods to the local authorities, giving them a handle to exercise influence on the implementation of aid programmes, which caused so many problems for *Médecins Sans Frontières*.[251] *Médecins Sans Frontières* was partially dependent upon the mayor who had the authority for the distribution of goods provided by UNHCR, and that also included goods actually intended for *Médecins Sans Frontières*. The mayor often worked against UNHCR; that was frequently simply a matter of political obstruction to obtain something from the UN. Another matter in which the local authorities tried to exercise influence was the evacuation of the wounded and civilians, as became clear in April 1993. In general, the authorities wanted to keep these types of evacuations to a minimum.[252]

Time and again, *Médecins Sans Frontières* came to the conclusion that the interests of the local authorities were not compatible with the goal of *Médecins Sans Frontières* to reach all of the population. The authority over the aid goods became an important component of the exercise of political power in the enclave. Ulens wrote an angry letter to UNHCR headquarters in Belgrade in December 1993 saying that the authorities showed less and less respect for the humanitarian activities and the NGO personnel. In the beginning, *Médecins Sans Frontières* discussed its programmes with the authorities to try to achieve optimum cooperation, but recently, Ulens wrote, the Opstina refused to do this. The meetings with the authorities often ended in false accusations and insults of the NGO and international agency workers. There were constant points of contention which threatened to worsen the relations more and more. The authorities refused, for example, to provide shoes to the local workers of *Médecins Sans Frontières* who were rebuilding the hospital. UNHCR had provided the shoes for this purpose, but the authorities resisted because they had not been able to appoint or approve these employees. The workers went on strike and the construction stopped.

Ulens wrote that the initial good cooperation between NGOs and the authorities had been replaced by 'continuous sabotage of all relief activity which is not completely under their control'. He continued:

> 'The local authorities do not seem to accept that humanitarian organisations are recruiting their own personnel and they want to force them always to pass

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[249] Interview Dan MacIssac, 16/11/99.
[250] MSF, Brussels. MSF Srebrenica (Caravielhe), 02/09/93.
[251] Thorsen, *MSF*, p. 23.
[252] Thorsen, *MSF*, pp. 29-30.

> through their channels. They want all relief goods which arrive in Srebrenica to be exclusively distributed by people appointed by themselves (…) We have the impression that the humanitarian aid is becoming increasingly the subject of an internal political power struggle and its real objectives are of secondary importance to it. [sic]'[253]

Relations improved somewhat at the beginning of 1994, after the Christmas and New Year's festivities which had a good influence and led to a sort of reconciliation. The authorities even organized a Christmas party for the foreign workers, to which the NGO workers responded with similar gestures. That improved the atmosphere considerably.

Still, the struggle over authority continued, although *Médecins Sans Frontières* found a way for dealing with it. As *Médecins Sans Frontières* worker Graziella Godain wrote in her mission report at the end of March 1993:

> *'Médecins Sans Frontières'* position in the enclave must remain independent from the power Opstina attempts to take within the programmes we run. The fact that we intervene in numerous domains seems to be felt as a threat for the municipality. They have difficulty accepting the role as collaborators and want to control and regulate our activities (…) Every day we receive several demands for construction materials, tools, etc. (…) The diplomacy thus consists in the capacity to make them believe that they are the ones who make the decisions while in fact *Médecins Sans Frontières* keeps the control. This 'diplomatic game' is exhausting but necessary.'[254]

## 4. Conclusion: mood

The authorities continued to have very high expectations of what the NGOs could do and overwhelmed them with requests for aid goods, materials, tools and the like, which the NGOs could not always meet. When the foreign workers of the International Red Cross and UNHCR had left the enclave, the *Médecins Sans Frontières* workers were the ones to suffer most from this. This organization was the primary contact for the authorities when it came to things that they needed (such as fuel), but *Médecins Sans Frontières* could do little to satisfy their needs.[255]

Although conditions in Srebrenica improved considerably after the arrival of the NGOs, the situation remained extremely problematic. *Médecins Sans Frontières* reports spoke of a 'UN-safe hell'. Jan Maddens, a Belgian doctor, wrote at the end of June 1993 that 'Srebrenica as an enclave remains a disgrace to humanity. People live there in circumstances worse than our animals. It is heart breaking, distressing and unjust to be unable to end this imprisonment'.[256]

The winter of 1993-94 was again very hard for the majority of the population. The NGOs' planned winter programme encountered considerable difficulty from the Serb blockade, and some of its components only started in the middle of the winter. The arrival of DutchBat in the spring of 1994 made the situation bearable again. People were more active, worked the land, for example, and planted seeds. Building and reconstruction work on the houses and buildings could be restarted, as well as cleaning the town.

Life had more pleasant sides for some people. One of the *Médecins Sans Frontières* workers wrote in his mission report that he was having a good time with picnics, horseback riding and trout fishing. He added to his curious account the following:

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[253] MSF, Brussels. MSF Srebrenica to HCR Belgrade, 17/12/93.
[254] MSF, Brussels. MSF Srebrenica (Godain) to MSF-B (Tocker), MSF-F (Laoubbia, Salignon, Genevier), 25/03/94.
[255] Thorsen, *MSF*, p. 33.
[256] MSF, Brussels. MSF-B (Maddens), mission report, 28/06/93.

> 'Not to forget the abundance of the local Bosnian food with gaimac and cir, kebabcis and other delicious food with too difficult names to remember; we had a gastronomic invitation at least twice a week and from time to time the slivovic (…) got us in a real dancing mood. And there is plenty of opportunity to dance in Srebrenica: if *Médecins Sans Frontières* isn't organising a party, then there is the local disco twice a week which serves a splendid mix of traditional Bosnian dances (…)and techno and hip-hop dance music. Of course this is the place to be to see the beautiful women of Srebrenica, although there's plenty of occasions to admire them when you stroll down the main street. If you're looking for a chess sparring partner, every man in Srebrenica knows how to play chess and there are some geniuses among them. What else can I say to convince you that Srebrenica is THE holiday place to be of this summer? There's only one way to find out what it is really like and to have a superb holiday, and that is to contact the only tour operator who currently has a Srebrenica package: *Médecins Sans Frontières.*'[257]

For the majority of the population, the enclave was far from a holiday resort. Srebrenica was experienced as one large prison, or one large concentration camp which no one could leave. The complete isolation from the outside world resulted in feelings of powerlessness, dependency and apathy. A large number of people had psychological problems as a result of the hopelessness, the feeling of insecurity and the constant stress of the war situation.

People had very little control over their lives: there was no work, they wandered around as if at an ordinary street market and tried to kill time. They cut wood for the winter and stood in line for food. Walking around was the primary activity of men, children and young people, only broken when a convoy entered the enclave or the International Red Cross brought the post. Women were often the only ones working and trying to keep the housekeeping going.

The enormous hopelessness and boredom were a big problem. The humanitarian organizations made frequent reference to the apathy, the mental fatigue and wearing down, and the lack of solidarity that had taken over the population. The fact that the Opstina and the population attempted so little to try to make something out of the situation was sometimes a source of great irritation to the NGOs and UNPROFOR. The same Jan Maddens wrote:

> 'The main characteristic is apathy, mental weariness. Each individual is prepared to work for his own sake (collecting wood for cooking, clean own house). But there is little interest for community services (clean roads and ditches, public buildings, reconstruction of the town, water supply, etc.). Most Displaced Persons hope and believe to be gone before winter. Why should they make this effort after such a war winter? The native population doesn't want to work for those 18,000 Displaced Persons. And so, human energy is restricted to a minimum. People stroll around on the streets, aimlessly gaping at others. Luckily there are exceptions. These people help to make a better life in town.'[258]

There was a great deal of smoking, even among young and very young children, to deaden the stress and hunger. A great deal of alcohol was also consumed, primarily the home-brewed sljivovica. In spite of everything, some sort of social activities were organized, sport competitions, horse races and discos and folk dancing for the young people. Small cafes and private movie theatres opened everywhere,

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[257] NIOD, Coll MSF, MSF-B (Vandelotte), mission report, 23/06/94.

[258] MSF, Brussels. MSF-B (Maddens), mission report, 28/06/93. Interviews Omer Subasic 17/06/98, Peer Everts 05/04/01. See also the speech of DutchBat 2 commander Lt. Col. Everts on his stay in Srebrenica, printed in the *Militaire spectator* appendix *Mars in cathedra*, 1995, pp. 2970-2977.

where the population could watch video films in exchange for cigarettes or money. A group of very active women who had banded together in the Women's Association tried to organize special activities for women and children, but the activities often could not be realized because of the great lack of materials.[259]

In August 1993 a number of primary schools were reopened, in the town of Srebrenica, in Potocari, and the *Swedish Shelter Project*. To be able to teach children in the ages of 7 to 15 (approximately 3,600 in the enclave in all) in the limited space and with the limited number of teachers, classes were held in three shifts. However, the schools closed down again in bad weather because the Displaced Persons had to be able to sit inside. For this reason there were no classes in the winter. The lessons only started up again in April 1994. It seemed to do the children good, although *Médecins Sans Frontières* was concerned about the older children who received no instruction. It was about that group in particular that there were concerns about increasing criminality.[260]

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[259] Interviews Omer Subasic 17/06/98, Hans Ulens 16/06/98. Thorsen, *MSF*, p. 54.
[260] Thorsen, *MSF*, p. 58; Thorsen, *NPA*, pp. 12-13.

# Chapter 5
# The preparation and dispatch of Dutchbat

## 1. Introduction

The Dutch government's decision to contribute a combat unit to the international peacekeeping force in the former Yugoslavia and its acceptance of the Safe Area of Srebrenica as the operational zone formed the preface to a battery of measures that were needed to prepare the unit for dispatch. These preparations were delegated to the Royal Netherlands Army, which then decided that the battalion would be provided by the Airmobile Brigade, which was still being formed at that time (see Part I, Chapter 13). In order to fully comprehend the actions of Dutchbat – as the battalion came to be known – and the problems it encountered it is necessary to obtain a clear insight into the preparation and training of these troops. This was not a routine operation: the last time that Dutch 'combat units' had participated in a peacekeeping operation was in the 1980s as part of the UN peacekeeping force in Lebanon (UNIFIL). Moreover, there was very little time: a mere seven months lay between the issue of the 'warning order' on 22 June 1993 and the target deployment date of 1 January 1994.

The actual preparations began with the warning order issued by the Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army on 22 June 1993. Though the political responsibility lay with the Minister of Defence and the military responsibility with the Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army, the preparations were undertaken at the level of the Airmobile Brigade. This practice of decentralized implementation was part and parcel of the new operating procedure of the reorganized Netherlands Army.[261]

Any description and analysis of these preparations must include an examination of the perception of the various parties of their future task, the information they received on the nature of the mission, the mandate, the rules of engagement and conditions on the ground. It is equally important to tackle the question of whether they tried to utilize the experience gained by others in the former Yugoslavia in order to optimize the preparations; which resources they thought were needed and whether these were made available; and which type of training was considered necessary and whether it was realized. These questions will form the central theme of this chapter, which will address the dispatch of Dutchbat, its subsequent deployment in Srebrenica and the training it received beforehand.

## 2. The planning for the dispatch of the Airmobile Brigade

This was not the first Dutch contribution to the international peacekeeping force in the former Yugoslavia. Dutch forces had been participating in the peacekeeping operations there on a lesser scale since the summer of 1991. Individual soldiers had been sent out in a civilian capacity to join the ECMM (the European Community Monitor Mission). Since 1992 the Royal Netherlands Army had been making officers and NCOs available for the United Nations Military Observers (UNMO). A signals battalion of the Royal Netherlands Army had been participating in UNPROFOR since April 1992 and a Dutch-Belgian transport battalion had been transporting aid for the UNHCR in Bosnia since November 1992. The Royal Netherlands Navy assisted with the enforcement of the UN embargo in the Adriatic, while F-16s of the Dutch Air Force helped to enforce the no-fly zone above Bosnia in Operation Deny Flight.[262]

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[261] Interview H. Couzy, 04/10/01.
[262] Klep & Van Gils, *Van Korea tot Kosovo* (From Korea to Kosovo), pp. 103-104 and 288-296; W. Lutgert & De Winter, *Check the Horizon*, pp. 221-330.

The dispatch a Dutch combat unit to the former Yugoslavia was first considered at the start of 1993. It arose within a NATO context during the preparations for the implementation of the Vance-Owen Plan (see Part I, Chapter 9). The NATO planning was based on a concept styled on 'go in heavy', 'robustness', 'massive self-defence' and 'excellent self-protection measures' for the infantry and engineering units. A total implementation force of between 55,000 and 75,000 troops would include between 34,000 and 54,000 combatants. The infantry units – the cornerstone of the implementation force – had to be able to operate independently with access to adequate protection and fire power. Military actions would be performed mainly in companies; there was no place in this concept for light infantry without armoured vehicles. The Royal Netherlands Army took these criteria on board to determine how it could contribute to this implementation force. The circumstances were not auspicious, as the Royal Netherlands Army was currently in the throes of a reorganization programme, the result of the Defence White Paper of 1993 (see the appendix on the Ministry of Defence). The scope for participating in the NATO implementation force was circumscribed by the limited possibilities of sending out conscripts, the suspension of national military service and the changeover to a volunteer army.

The Chief of Defence Staff, A. van der Vlis, concluded that, in theory, either an existing armoured infantry battalion or a battalion of the Airmobile Brigade, equipped with armoured vehicles, could be eligible for this mission. But there were drawbacks to both options. Van der Vlis felt, for various reasons, that the option of an existing armoured infantry battalion was non-viable as intensive efforts were already underway to recruit conscripts for the transport and signals contingent in the former Yugoslavia. He believed that only strong financial incentives could win over more conscripts. But this would, effectively, cancel out the distinction between conscripts and regulars. He also strongly advised against the second option, the deployment of a battalion of the Airmobile Brigade with armoured vehicles, as this would interrupt the systematic formation of this new unit. In his estimation, '"inappropriate" deployment' would send out the wrong signals and undermine the credibility of the efforts to recruit professional personnel for the Army.[263]

Van der Vlis' conclusion was not put to the political test because the Bosnian Serbs renounced the Vance-Owen Plan at the start of May 1993. This effectively meant that a NATO implementation force would not be deployed. However, the debate on potential deployment in the former Yugoslavia continued in the Netherlands and acquired a momentum all of its own. As explained in Part 1, Chapter 11, political pressure continued to mount for the dispatch of an infantry unit. This was apparent in, amongst others, the adoption of the Van Traa-Van Vlijmen motion (25 May 1993) at the end of the parliamentary debate on the Defence White Paper. The pressure intensified further with the three Security Council resolutions on Safe Areas in Bosnia in April/June 1993.[264] Despite the objections of the Chief of Defence Staff, this merely increased the likelihood that a Dutch battalion would be deployed. However, as the Army could no longer form and dispatch an armoured infantry battalion of conscripts, an infantry battalion for Bosnia would have to consist of regulars. At that time the Airmobile Brigade was the only unit that fitted the bill.

The 11th Airmobile Brigade was trained according to an infantry concept which was new to the Netherlands. Now that the Cold War was at an end, participation in the 'static defence of a limited area' against Warsaw Pact troops was no longer the main task of the Army. The new approach was flexible deployment for crisis management in unprepared situations. According to the 1991 Defence White Paper, the distinguishing feature of this concept of 'mobile contra-concentration' was a 'far more dynamic presence in a much wider area'. This envisaged deployment in crisis management and peace operations as well as under NATO. When this concept was introduced the Royal Netherlands Army

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263 SG. Memorandum SN93/216/1624, CDS to Minister, 15/03/93; SG. Memorandum PD 93/0112, Director of National Service to Minister, 06/04/93.

264 TK, Parliamentary Session 1992-1993, 22 975, no. 22 and SCR 819, SCR 824 and SCR 836.

fell into step with the developments in other NATO countries.[265] A separate airmobile brigade would be formed to implement the concept.

The first step was to convert the 11th Armoured Infantry Brigade of the 1st Army Corps into the 11th Airmobile Brigade, a unit of rigorously trained infantry troops which would be transported by helicopter. The three battalions of the new brigade had to be able to operate independently as an infantry unit if they were to attain the desired level of flexibility. They would be flown in their own helicopters to their operational zone, where they would move around without armoured vehicles and, if necessary, have access to special support units and their own logistical systems.[266]

The airmobile concept marked a radical change in two respects. The classic armoured infantry model was shelved and the ranks consisted entirely of volunteer serving professionals, i.e. 'short-term professionals' (STPs) instead of conscripts, while the NCOs and officers consisted of 'long-term professionals' (LTPs). The Airmobile Brigade had to be deployable within two weeks. It derived its flexibility and mobility primarily from a new organizational model, which prescribed leaner personnel, material and logistical support than in the existing infantry battalions. Each of the three infantry battalions consisted of 475 men; (parts of) a mortar company, an engineering company and a logistical unit could be called in at brigade level as reinforcements. The brigade would get its tactical mobility from transport- and fighter-helicopters.[267]

Not everyone in the Royal Netherlands Army endorsed the airmobile concept. Some of the staff officers saw it as a relic of the Cold War, because it seemed to be unilaterally geared to a large-scale strategic battle. After the fall of the Berlin Wall, what was really needed were units with multi-purpose training which could be used in crisis situations and peace operations.[268]

The high standards of the airmobile concept meant that, from the very start, the Airmobile Brigade would be an elite unit, distinguished by classic symbol of the red beret. The elite character was further accentuated by the continuation of the traditions of the *Garde Grenadiers* and the *Garde Jagers* – which had always been seen as elite infantry troops – by the 11th and 12th battalion respectively. The 13th battalion (Dutchbat III) continued the tradition of the Storm Trooper Regiment, which was formed during WW II.

At the start of 1993 the concept for an Airmobile Brigade had only been roughly drafted. Parts of the programme were developed and fleshed out according to a dynamic model during the training, which allowed plenty of scope for improvisation and experimentation. The attainment of the red beret was a precondition for every position in the Airmobile Brigade. The staff of the Airmobile Brigade and the 11th battalion was gradually manned. The basic red-beret training for the first group of regulars was held in January 1993 at the Training Battalion. A start was then made on forming the sections of the first airmobile battalion in April 1993.

The 11th airmobile battalion under the command of Lieutenant Colonel C.H.P. Vermeulen was the first Royal Netherlands Army battalion in the changeover to a volunteer (professional) army. The privates and corporals were all volunteers (STPs) and most of the NCOs and officers (LTPs) came from the 'old' Royal Netherlands Army. Vermeulen and his personally-appointed staff invested considerable energy in training and instruction. In the early months Vermeulen was also commander of the Training Battalion and in charge of the individual basic training. One of the officers described the start phase of the brigade as a 'circus' with people of all ranks who were 'highly motivated' and rediscovering the challenge in their work. The mentality, being different and harder than that of other Army units, led to a certain degree of isolation.[269]

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265 *Defence White Paper 1991. Herstructurering en Verkleining. De Nederlandse krijgsmacht in een veranderende wereld.* (Restructuring and Downsizing, the Dutch armed forces in a changing world.) TK, Parliamentary Session 1990-1991, 21 991 nos. 2-3, p.111.
266 Interview J-W. Brinkman, 11/10/99.
267 Jellema, *First-in*, pp. 15-17.
268 Interviews J. Lemmen, 17/10/01 and H. Couzy, 04/10/01.
269 Interviews J. Lemmen, 17/10/01 and M. van der Tweel, 27/04/01.

The deployment of the Airmobile Brigade in peace operations became a discussion topic in April 1993, when the Brigade received a warning order from the Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army. This order described a possible mission in the near future and gave concrete instructions for the preparations. The Airmobile Brigade had to gear up for a possible peace mission in Cambodia where it would relieve the Marine Corps on 1 December 1993, if the mandate of the UN peace force in Cambodia was renewed.[270]

The Van Traa-Van Vlijmen motion of 25 May 1993 also brought the possibility of deployment in the former Yugoslavia into view. At first, the Minister of Defence, Ter Beek, was less than enthusiastic about the prospect of the Airmobile Brigade as armoured infantry, but he nonetheless went along with a proposal from the Chief of Defence Staff and the Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army at the end of June to equip the airmobile brigade with armoured vehicles if it was to be sent to the former Yugoslavia.[271]

In the meantime, the Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army, General H.A. Couzy, had started the preparations for the dispatch. A planning order sent by Couzy to the commander of the 1st Army Corps prompted Brigade Commander J.W. Brinkman to issue a warning order to his sub-commanders on 22 June. This document repeated the possibility of deployment in Cambodia but it also mentioned the former Yugoslavia as an option. Within a few days Cambodia was off the agenda because the peace mission was running so well there that there were no plans to continue it after November 1993.[272] This left the deployment of an airmobile infantry battalion with armoured vehicles in Bosnia, as part of UNPROFOR, after 1 January 1994. This was an indication that the first operational deployment of this brigade would not take the form of light airmobile infantry.

The fact that Bosnia was a real option was reflected in the guidelines for the implementation of the warning order. These gave a rough indication of the training programme and a timescale. The main activities in the combat-training curriculum were fire practice with all weapons, tending the wounded in the field, protection against nuclear, chemical and biological weapons, physical fitness, mine-awareness, including mine-clearance operations, and operations in inhabited areas. A platoon of heavy (120 mm.) mortars and a platoon of medics would also be involved in the battalion preparations. The armoured vehicles (APC 675s) would form a separate unit for the time being and would be seconded to the battalion at a later date, preferably 1 October 1993. A stringent timetable was drawn up for the implementation: the draft exercise programme had to be on the brigade commander's desk by 25 June, the organizational proposal by 2 July and the logistical plan by 9 July. After the sections of the 11th battalion were formed on 4 October 1993, the specific training for deployment in Bosnia would follow in the next two months. To make more time for the training the battalion would be exempt from barracks duty and other commitments.[273]

Though the political decision to send an airmobile battalion to Bosnia would not be taken until November 1993, the planning order from the Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army to the Army Corps and the warning order from the brigade commander to the battalion heralded the start of the preparations for the dispatch. The warning order was not accompanied by instructions on who would be responsible for steering and implementing the preparations. Obviously, ultimate responsibility for the preparations lay with the Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army but, under the Army's decentralized management concept, the 1st Army Corps played a key role in coordinating the personnel, logistics and training.[274]

The Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff, part of the Army Commander's staff, also played a coordinating role in this process, while the staff of the Airmobile Brigade, being the link between the

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270 AC. 1459th Army Council, no. 21/4/93, agenda point B 1.
271 CRST. no. S/93/007/1945. 21st meeting Committee CDS/Commanders, 24/05/93. SG. Departmental meeting 25/05/93. *Ibidem*: Departmental meeting 23/06/93.
272 TCBU, *Vertrekpunt,* (Departure Point) pp. 70-71.
273 NIOD, Coll. Vermeulen. Warning Order Cdt 11 LMB to AA8, 22/06/93.
274 Interview H. Couzy, 04/10/01.

battalion, the Army Corps and the Army Crisis Staff, had to fulfil an important initiating and intermediary function. Later, Brigade Commander Brinkman said that the situation regarding the preparations for the dispatch became obscure, because the brigade staff was bypassed on all sides by senior staffs, and direct contact with the battalion was not exceptional.[275] The importance of optimal coordination in the efforts to prepare for the dispatch would become clear several months later. The staff of the Airmobile Brigade concentrated first of all on fleshing out the warning order.

Brigadier General J.W. Brinkman presented the results of the planning of his staff to the commander of the 1st Army Corps on 29 July. The aim of his plan was to deploy an infantry battalion with support units (infantry battalion combat group) equipped with APC armoured vehicles in Bosnia after 1 January 1994. He made no distinction between operating as part of a peace plan implementation force and operating within UNPROFOR. The battalion's mission would consist of three parts: first to secure the operational zone against breaches of the ceasefire (violent and otherwise); second, to provide the population with limited humanitarian aid; and third, to take action in the event of aggression by one of the warring factions. Brinkman worked out the details for each part. The security task consisted of six activities: setting up observation posts, establishing static road blocks, the use of mobile roadblocks, foot patrols, (armoured) vehicle patrols, and finally the formation of a mobile reinforced reserve. The limited humanitarian assistance consisted of medical (outpatient) facilities for the local population, help with food distribution, infrastructural repairs and improvements, and escorting aid convoys.

Brinkman specified four types of action as an instrument against aggression by the hostile parties: clearing buildings and open terrain, eliminating artillery and mortar installations, anti-sniper operations and small-scale infantry offensives. The execution of this operation required, in addition to an airmobile battalion, support units from the Airmobile Brigade itself and from the 1st Army Corps. The Brigade itself would deploy an engineering platoon, a heavy-mortar platoon, a signals detachment and a helicopter detachment from the Dutch Royal Airforce. Brinkman asked the Army Corps for a platoon of the 108th Commando Company of the Commando Corps, because the airmobile reconnaissance platoon was still undermanned.[276] A repair platoon, a reinforced supply platoon and a medical platoon would complete the logistical requirements, while a detachment from, amongst others, the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee and the Explosive Ordnance Disposal Unit plus mortar-locating radar systems were advisable.

The Army Corps would also have to provide 52 APCs and act as guarantor for 85% of the materiel. The drivers and gunners would come from the ranks of the battalion. The brigade would be responsible for supplying the logistics. The Brigade Commander considered the multi-faceted infantry capacity (including the airmobile capacity), the good support and the armoured protection to be the strengths of this 800-strong unit. The weaknesses were the lack of experience of the drivers of the armoured vehicles and the absence of the option to act as a Quick Reaction Force.[277]

Brinkman's concept for an independently operating unit fitted in with NATO's vision of the structure of an implementation force. It also corresponded with the airmobile concept, which was clearly in evidence in many parts of his operational plan. This is most clearly exemplified in the addition of a helicopter detachment, but it is also reflected in the emphasis on the multi-faceted capacity of the infantry. There was no well-defined vision of the consequences of operating with armoured protection. Brinkman appeared to have distanced himself from the armoured infantry. The battalion would use the armoured vehicles for transport, as a sort of 'battlefield taxi'; further operations would take place only on foot with support from the guns. The Brigade Commander was not particularly specific about the implications of this operational concept for the training programme. He added a proposal for a final exercise in the American high-tech training facility in Hohenfels to the special combat-training points that he had already listed in the warning order.

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275 Interview J.W. Brinkman, 11/10/99.

276 When the brigade was formed it was the intention to man this platoon with contract renewers who had demonstrated their suitability for this unit. Interview J.W. Brinkman, 11/10/99.

277 NIOD, Coll. Vermeulen. C-11 Lumblbrig, Operational Concept, undated. *Ibidem:* message Vermeulen, 16/07/93.

Brinkman concentrated mainly on the bottlenecks in the training programme. These related, first of all, to the training of the drivers of the APCs and the trucks and the experience required of the drivers of the recovery, command and casualty evacuation vehicles. Finally, training was needed for artillery observers and forward air controllers for the purposes of air-power deployment. For the longer term he stressed the need to prepare the 12th and 13th battalion for the take-over of the duties of the 11th in the peace mission. This meant that officers and NCOs had to be assigned as soon as possible to these battalions. Other training obstacles were, in his opinion, the reservation of exercise terrains such as Hohenfels, Sennelager and the Infantry Shooting Camp in Harskamp and the purchase of the Miles system for shooting practice.

Brinkman also drew attention to the general personnel problems. First, the personnel of the 11th battalion needed to be stabilized. To ensure that everyone concentrated collectively on the new mission, transfers, individual secondments, career courses and competitions had to be put on hold. He also ascertained problems regarding the materiel, such as modifications to helicopters, the availability of armoured vehicles and other essentials including night-vision and telecommunications equipment, shrapnel-proof vests and helmets. According to Brinkman, the Commander in Chief – as well as the Army Corps – was responsible for sorting out these personnel and materiel problems. On the basis of these problems he made suggestions on the distribution of the APCs and the drivers' training programme and the realization of the preconditions. At the end of his presentation he discussed a timetable and pinpointed a series of decision-making moments regarding the preparations for the dispatch of a reconnaissance party in September 1993 and the start of the preparatory programme in mid-September.[278]

Brigade Commander Brinkman clearly showed in his operational concept that a lot of work was needed to get the 11th battalion ready for dispatch. When he presented his plan he spoke only of 'green' military-operational aspects and did not relate these at all to the future peace mission in Bosnia. He also did not address the political-military situation in Bosnia or the implications of the 'blue' peace mission for the preparation and training. Brinkman said that September and October would be needed for re-training the battalion and the attached units. He saw two immediate problems here: the hitherto inadequate availability of exercise equipment and facilities, and the lack of clarity about the future mission. The Army Corps and the Commander in Chief did their utmost to solve the bottlenecks, but time was perhaps the scarcest commodity of all.

## 3. The planning order for the dispatch of Dutchbat

After the Commander of the Airmobile Brigade had presented his operational concept, the 1st Army Corps went to work. On 24 August it produced a planning order called Safe Lion, which described how the preparations for the dispatch would be organized. This sizeable document explained the Army Corps' vision of the dispatch and assigned specific tasks to various sections for the execution of this operation. Safe Lion aimed to make the obstacles and decision-making moments visible. Hence, it was not a formal order for dispatch preparations. Within this broad framework the Army Corps – and the Airmobile Brigade – assumed that the troops would be deployed within UNPROFOR with the aim of implementing UN Resolution 836 on the Safe Areas. This assumption was premature, because no decision had yet been taken on this when Minister Ter Beek offered the battalion to the UN several weeks later.

The Army Corps also took on board the vision of Brigade Commander Brinkman, namely, to maximally utilize the airmobile character of the battalion by focusing on operations on foot and the use of armoured vehicles such as armoured personnel carriers (APCs; YPRs in Dutch). This intention was reflected in the name of the battalion: '11 Infbat (APC)'.

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[278] NIOD, Coll. Vermeulen. C-11 Lumblbrig, Operationeel Concept, undated. *Ibidem*: message Vermeulen, 16/06/93.

The Army Corps Commander, Lieutenant General M. Schouten, did not adopt all the aspects of Brinkman's proposal. Instead of one infantry combat group, Safe Lion ordered the formation of a unit with two chief components: a reinforced infantry battalion (11 Infbat (APC)) with an operational task, and an Operational Support Command with a logistical task. Together they formed Dutchbat and fell under the commander of the infantry battalion. This construction made Dutchbat an independently-operating unit with its own logistical support.

11 Infbat (APC) would consist of a Staff and Support Company (SSC) and three infantry companies. In addition to its own staff the SSC would consist of the battalion staff and a range of support units, namely, a logistical component (a supply, recovery, and medical platoon), a signals platoon, a reconnaissance platoon (the previously mentioned 108th Commando Company), an engineering platoon, and an infantry platoon. No decision was yet taken on the assignment of a helicopter detachment, as the limited deployment possibilities had prompted serious doubts as to its use. The platoon of heavy mortars and the mortar-locating radar were shelved as they had no place in a peace operation.

The other main component of Dutchbat, Operational Support Command, would be responsible for all logistical elements that were not normally performed at battalion level. These involved four main tasks: first, the supply of food, post, spare parts, clothing, fuel, ammunition and medical items; second, the maintenance of materiel and the storage and management of a reserve stock of vehicles; third, medical facilities; and fourth, the building of observation posts, shelters and other infrastructure and the maintenance and renovation of buildings by the engineers.[279]

The plan for this separate logistical centre – a combination of a supply, repair and medical unit – had already been developed at the Army Corps at the start of 1993. It was one of the products of the Defence White Paper, which was based on the premise that in the near future the army would participate more in *ad hoc* crisis management and peace operations.[280] A start was now made on developing the concept further for the dispatch of Dutchbat. In the spring of 1993 Brinkman was still opposed to the idea of a separate logistical unit alongside the airmobile brigade as he believed that this would restrict flexibility and hamper rapid deployment. He had stuck to this vision in his operational concept, but Safe Lion abided by the general vision of the Army Corps. The structure of Operational Support Command was based on the UNPROFOR *Aide Memoire* for the deployment of infantry battalions and on the timescales it set for the presence of supplies at the operational unit.

A second factor in the logistical planning was the deployment of the 11th Infantry Battalion in Central Bosnia and logistical support from the Netherlands. As long as there was no certainty about the future operational zone, the planners at the Army Corps Logistical Centre assumed a hypothetical distance of 200 km between the port of Split and the future base of Operational Support Command and a distance of some 75 km to the operational zone of Dutchbat. It followed the UNPROFOR guidelines for the level of supply. This Logistical Centre would be responsible for transporting equipment from Split (the reception port for goods arriving in the former Yugoslavia) via the Operational Support Command complex to Dutchbat, and also for the maintenance of materiel and medical facilities above battalion level. A detachment of the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee and an expert from the Explosive Ordnance Disposal Service would also be stationed at Operational Support Command. As the APCs required intensive maintenance, Operational Support Command would consist of 400 men. If UNPROFOR were to assume responsibility for part of the supply, then 300 would be enough. An engineering detachment would be added to Operational Support Command for three months to build the infrastructure (accommodation and shelters) and assist in the construction of combat positions.

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279 W. van Dullemen, 'Opzet, inrichten en "Lessons Learned" van het Support Command' (Structure, Lay-out and 'Lessons Learned' from Support Command). Lecture for the Army Service Corps In-Service Day 1994, p. 4.
280 Interview F.G. van der Hooft, 17/12/01.

Safe Lion was therefore based on a split between operational and support tasks. This model was also chosen because it was the intention to use Operational Support Command as a logistical centre for other Dutch units in Bosnia as well. It would not be certain whether this was feasible until a decision had been taken on the operational zone for Dutchbat.[281] The announcement at the start of December 1993 that Dutchbat would be sent to Srebrenica and Zepa did not lead to significant changes in the organization.

Some parts of Operational Support Command, namely, the casualty station and the engineering platoon, were detached to Dutchbat because of the distance between the Operational Support Command base in Lukavac and Srebrenica. The consequences of the assignment of Srebrenica as the operational zone will be discussed in detail later. It is, however, relevant to point out here that the calculated transport capacity proved totally inadequate because the distance between Operational Support Command and Dutchbat turned out to be twice as great as was anticipated and would create serious problems during the deployment.[282]

The Army Corps delegated the execution of this planning order to the Airmobile Brigade and the Army Corps Logistical Centre and assigned support tasks to the 11th Infantry Battalion, the Commando Corps, the Fighter Helicopter Group and the 101st Combat Engineer Group. The planning, preparation and training of Operational Support Command were placed in the hands of the Army Corps Logistical Centre and developed into an independent operation, of which even Commander in Chief Couzy was not aware.[283] The Brigade had to draw up the task-based organization chart and authorization list (describing the required personnel and resources) and to define a task-based operational concept and a related exercise programme for the 11th Infantry Battalion. The brigade staff would use these documents to compile a list of decision-making moments and obstacles, and would themselves solve any problems as far as possible. The organization chart and the authorization list formed the parent document for the whole planning operation. These included all the information on the personnel composition for each unit, the job requirements and the assigned materiel. It was, in a sense, the DNA strand of the unit. The allocation of personnel and materiel within the Royal Netherlands Army was based on this document.

The brigade staff faced a complicated task when making the preparations. It had to delineate profiles of all the tasks and jobs for the separate sections and officials according to the specifications for a mechanized-infantry-battalion in the UN *Aide Mémoire* for UNPROFOR. It also had to determine which specific equipment would be needed for each of the constituent parts and the members of the personnel. If the organization chart and the authorization list were not professionally drawn up, this could reverberate on the quality of the personnel and the operational deployability.

The brigade staff took the existing organization chart and the authorization list as a departure point. It removed the 'green' elements (which were relevant only to airmobile operations) and added new elements which it considered necessary for the 'blue' peace operation. Most of these changes concerned the main lines, such as communications and the tasks of the participating units. The organization chart and the authorization list ran through a series of concepts, but the drafting turned out to be a task too complicated for the brigade. On 1 January 1994, the day that Dutchbat had to be ready for departure, there was still no final organization chart or authorization list.[284]

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281 DCBC, no number. Planning order *Safe Lion* dispatch 11 Infbat (APC) + OSC (Order no. 001 from C-1AC) 24/08/93; CDPO/GNKD. LLC Chief of Staff to C-1AC, no. 9322, 07/09/93; appendix: 'Safe Areas' OSC Lumblbat (YPR.50) Bosnia Hercegovina. Interview F.G. van der Hooft, 17/12/01.

282 DS. Operation order no. 24 from BLS, appendix to no. OZ/7767, 7 February 1994, Director of Royal Netherlands Army Operations to dispatch list. Interview F.G. van der Hooft, 17/12/01.

283 Interview F.G. van der Hooft, 17/12/01. During a visit to the barracks in Grave in December 1993 Couzy remarked that personnel were walking around wearing blue berets. When he asked about this he was told that this was personnel of the OSC. Couzy was under the impression that all the Dutchbat personnel were being trained in Schaarsbergen.

284 CRST. Planning Order 'Safe Lion' dispatch 11 Infbat (APC) + OSC (Order no 001 from C-1AC, appendix B), 24/08/93. See LL. no.28206 09/02/94, RNLA National Logistic Command to Royal Netherlands Army MC DMKL Sc-Matd.

This did not mean that the entire process had gone haywire. Dispatch preparations were already underway at various levels before the 1st Army Corps issued the planning order on 24 August. However, the delegation of responsibility to both the Airmobile Brigade and the Army Corps Logistical Centre led to inadequate coordination. As already mentioned, this delegation of responsibility fitted in with the new army management model which Couzy had introduced as part of the reorganization programme. This was not a successful formula when it came to the preparations for the Dutchbat dispatch. Agreements were not honoured, and some elements deviated from the original intention or were duplicated. The Commander's Crisis Staff quickly intervened to smooth out the process, because the clock was ticking mercilessly. Every week, starting from 17 September 1993, the Crisis Staff held a work meeting on the preparations for Dutchbat at the Airmobile Brigade Headquarters in Schaarsbergen.

Permanent participants in this weekly meeting were the Chief of Staff of the Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff, a representative of the Airmobile Brigade, Commander Vermeulen of Dutchbat, the Chief of Staff of the Army Corps Logistical Centre and the prospective commander of Operational Support Command, Colonel F.G. van der Hooft, as well as the chairpersons of various working parties. An action list was drawn up, stating who was required to act before which date. The actions remained on the list until they had been carried out. On 25 March 1994, 80 actions had been completed. The meetings were chaired by the Chief of Staff of the Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff, Lieutenant Colonel F. van Bouwdijk Bastiaanse. His deputy, Major Scheffer, acted as project coordinator. Working parties were formed for various aspects such as armoured vehicles, ammunition transport and helicopter detachment.[285]

It was possible to form a rough estimate of the required personnel and materiel on the basis of the available knowledge of the climate, the terrain, the existing infrastructure, the war damage, the warring factions and the UNPROFOR mandate. Brinkman had spoken of these requirements in his presentation on 29 July. The specific details regarding, say, minimum supply levels and one-off material needed for building accommodation could only be determined when the operational zone was known. But the bulk of the preparations did not need to wait for this information. The work for the logistical preparations was based mainly on the general needs of the unit and current knowledge of the conditions in the deployment zone of Bosnia. This took place largely on the basis of rational considerations and took account of the experience of, amongst others, the Netherlands Signals and Transport Battalions. It was not until early December 1993, after the battalion had been assigned to Srebrenica and the Dutch had sent out reconnaissance missions in November/December 1993 and January 1994, that it became possible to determine the specific requirements of the operational zone.

## 4. The Dutchbat Equipment

The brigade and battalion staffs and the higher echelons of the Royal Netherlands Army (Army Corps, the Royal Netherlands Army Materiel and Personnel Commands, the Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff and the National Logistics Centre) invested huge amounts of energy in the materiel preparations. This was the first dispatch of an infantry battalion and all the materiel would have to be ready for shipment in five months time. First of all, decisions had to be made on the quantities and composition of the package. Second, these decisions had to be implemented (delivery from Royal Netherlands Army stocks, new orders and delivery guarantees). Next, shipment had to be arranged; and finally, the personnel had to be taught to use the materiel. Dutchbat was completely re-equipped, right down to personal weapons. According to Brigade Commander Brinkman, it was a 'brand new show' because the

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[285] Interviews F. van Bouwdijk Bastiaanse, 28/08/00; H. Couzy 04/10/01; F.G. van der Hooft, 17/12/01. CRST. Action list materiel for. Infbat (APC) and OSC, 20/09/93. The action lists are stored in various archives; many are in CRST. no.28206, 09/02/94 Commander NLC to DMKL Sc-Matd; appendix: 'Lessons Learned' preparing Dutchbat for deployment.

senior staffs apparently wanted to avoid all possible risks.[286] An 'exercise set' was needed for training Dutchbat. This too created all sorts of problems, such as where to get 52 of the right type of armoured vehicles in a hurry, whether the competence and training of the troops in the use of new materiel was up to standard and how to organize any additional training.

The armoured vehicles formed one of the core problems during the preparations. The Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army, Couzy, had already decided at an early stage that Dutchbat would be equipped with APCs bearing only one .50 machine gun. The choice of weapon and the discussions about it are addressed in Part I, Chapter 15.

The efforts to implement Couzy's decision ran into three problems. First, it was necessary to determine the right type and quantities and to find out whether they were available. Second, the specifications for the materiel (personnel transport, medical evacuation, supply and command) had to be worked out on the basis of how they would be used. Finally, maintenance was needed during the mission itself. On 12 August the Vehicle Section of the Royal Netherlands Army Materiel Command held its first meeting on the APCs. The aim was to draw up an inventory of the operational requirements, to ascertain the possibilities of realizing them and to compile a timetable. The first problem was that the APCs with .50 machine guns of the armoured infantry were no longer in use at the RNLA. The required type and quantity could still, however, be supplied from the remaining stock. After a prototype had been assembled with the standard modifications a loading test would be carried out.

While he was calculating the required quantity, the Head of the Operational Section of the Airmobile Brigade, Major P.J.M. van Uhm, assumed that the APCs would be used for transportation and not as combat vehicles. This meant that they would be supplied to the infantry companies and the direct support units: the Service and Support Company would not get APCs but trucks. Ten APCs were needed for each infantry company: six for the platoons, two for the commander and his deputy, one for the transportation of military materiel and one for the transportation of casualties. Hence, 30 APCs were needed for the three companies in the battalion. At the same time, he worked out that 22 APCs were needed for the battalion staff and the staff company, and ten were needed in reserve. As all the Dutchbat materiel would remain in Bosnia throughout the mission, another 52 sets were needed for exercises and at least 16 for driving lessons. Short-term delivery of this last group was the least of the problems as they did not require any modifications. They were therefore directly available from stock. The driving courses at the Royal Netherlands Army Driving School started on 30 August; 66 drivers were trained in two batches between this date and the end of November.

The modifications to the armoured vehicles presented a tougher problem. All the APCs – apart from two recovery vehicles – would be routinely fitted out with racks for sleeping bags, a large jerrycan holder, jump leads, snow blocks on the treads and a short-range anti-tank weapon. Except for the medical transport vehicles, all the APCs would have a dome with a .50 calibre machine gun and a gun shield (a metal plate to protect the gunner). The gun shield would – so it appeared initially – form a stumbling block as the delivery time was six months. No real problems were created by other parts of the preparation programme such as spraying the vehicles the white UN colour, replacing the drive shaft, preventive maintenance and a TNO test (Netherlands Organization for Applied Scientific Research) to ascertain whether the underplate was mine-resistant. A decision on the installation of the communication equipment would follow later after the requirements had been drafted for the Dutchbat communication plan.

The Royal Netherlands Army Materiel Command feared that problems would crop up during all these activities. Stagnation in the modifications threatened to create an extra bottleneck because some of the APCs still had to go through the whole preparation process between 26 November and 20 December before they could be dispatched. The Materiel Command anticipated no maintenance problems in Bosnia. Dutchbat would, in principle, take care of this. Difficulties might arise when the

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[286] Interview J.W. Brinkman,11/10/99.

drive shaft needed to be replaced after 1,000 miles, but these would be sorted out at Operational Support Command.[287] Despite the extremely tight deadline, the operation ran fairly smoothly. On 24 December the last APCs had been fitted with a gun shield and the communication equipment had been installed by the start of January 1994.[288]

As far as the rest was concerned, the logistical services concentrated on the purchase of new equipment. The brigade had submitted a long list of special equipment with varying degrees of availability. An extra canteen and a shrapnel-proof vest were easily solved. The night-vision devices prompted more discussion. In addition to thermal-imaging equipment in the vehicles the battalion wanted portable devices and unattended ground sensors. The Royal Netherlands Army was negotiating the purchase of both types of equipment and had no intention of scuppering this process for the sake of Dutchbat. The fact that the Planning Bureau wanted to treat thermal-imaging systems and ground sensors as a single entity was, in Vermeulen's opinion, 'horse trading', as it was not a question of a choice between the two. Dutchbat needed both.

The battalion commander was even more put out by the questions raised by the Intelligence & Security Section of the Royal Netherlands Army Intelligence Service regarding the purchase of a portable wire-cutting system and mine-detection equipment because – they said – there were no reports of the presence of wire obstacles or mines. The 'not necessary' from the Army Corps staff in response to a request for fleece jackets for protection against sub-zero temperatures and the 'not deemed necessary' to the request for multi-purpose knives were also greeted with indignation. The decision by the Intelligence & Security Section that the reconnaissance platoon could take along extra communication materiel but no special equipment such as sniper rifles or laser devices was more a question of principle: the argument was that, as this was a UN operation, it did not call for intelligence activities.[289]

The additions to the standard equipment came at the end of September after the Head of Logistics at the battalion had taken up contact with his counterpart at the first Transport Battalion which had been sent to Bosnia. The Transport Battalion drafted a list of practical recommendations, ranging from reserve combat rations for at least forty days (in case the supply lines ran into problems) to food-storage containers to supplement the equipment of the catering group. During a peace mission the canteen shop had to be able to sell camera films, toiletries and batteries for a wide array of personal electrical appliances. The Transport Battalion would bring in water for the compounds (the Dutchbat bases) in tank lorries. This water had to be boiled whenever it was used for preparing food. The 'wet prefabs' with showers and lavatories would be connected to the local water pipes or a tank lorry.

The list also contained advice on improving the accommodation by replacing tents with prefabricated units, on problems with tent heaters, the use of aggregates, the use of barbed-wire and tripwire fitted with a light signal, the use of winter diesel and the risks of insufficient engine maintenance, the minimum diesel stock and siphoning procedures, ammunition storage, and the strain on drivers due to manoeuvres in very heavy terrain. To maintain high levels of morale, considerable attention needed to be paid to sport and recreation: in addition to TVs, satellite dishes and decoders for Filmnet and RTL-4, each compound needed micro-waves for individual use, games, videos with tapes and a well-equipped gym.[290]

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[287] NIOD, Coll. Vermeulen. Memorandum Van Uhm, 13/08/93. *Ibidem*: Internal memorandum Royal Netherlands Army Planning Bureau to BVC, 11 August 1993 'Decision moments for 11 Infbat (APC)'. *Ibidem*, tab 7 YPRs: memorandum S3 from Uhm to C-11 LMBrig, 7 July 1993. *Ibidem,* MCRNLA/ARB/Sie Rvtgn to ST-11 Lumblbrig Maj. M. van Uhm, no. Rups Fax 93/3039B undated: Main points *ad hoc* meeting YPR 11 Infbat Lumbl. KDEF, CSKL, wnd CS Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff to OCRNA, 23 July 1993. Internal Memorandum 'Decision Sheet'.

[288] CRST. Scheffer to dispatch list working meeting on the formation of Dutchbat, 22/02/94, appendix Completed actions etc. 22/02/94, sub 14.

[289] NIOD, Coll. Vermeulen. Internal memorandum Royal Netherlands Army, Planning Bureau to BVC, 11/08/93 Decision moments for. 11 Infbat (APC) appendix Materiel Requirements C-11 Lumblbrig.

[290] NIOD, Coll. Vermeulen. Bottlenecks: memo Sie S4, 27/09/93.

A lot of attention was therefore paid to fitting out Dutchbat. It was important in this respect for the cooperation between Dutchbat Commander Vermeulen and the Commander of Operational Support Command, Van der Hooft, to be frank and amicable. As Chief of Staff at the Logistics Department of the Army Corps, Van der Hooft had his own network, which would be valuable for the logistical preparations of Dutchbat.[291] These non-operational elements were rated as highly important for gaining an optimal performance from the individual soldier and maintaining group morale. However, the first priority in the preparations was the operational deployment and the resources that were required to achieve this. Consensus grew on this point, despite the inevitable differences of opinion and irritations. Further specification of the materiel requirements could only take place after the deployment zone had been reconnoitred in the period between December 1993 and January 1994. No serious problems arose, but opinions continued to diverge on one point, namely, the deployment of a helicopter detachment.

According to the Safe Lion planning order of August 1993, the detachment of four helicopters to Dutchbat was dependent on the future operational zone. This standpoint stemmed from the 'Decision Moment Memorandum' of 11 August 1993 from the Royal Netherlands Army Planning Bureau. Only when the operational zone was officially announced, could a decision be taken on whether a helicopter detachment would be needed for the Dutchbat command, the operations of Forward Air Controllers and medical evacuations. The Planning Bureau saw advantages, especially in the long-term, for the teamwork between the Airmobile Brigade and the RNLAF Helicopter Group, which would later be transferred to the Army. One drawback was the huge financial and logistical efforts that were involved. These considerations resulted in a 'provisional planning order'.[292] There was also a strong desire in the battalion to take along the helicopter detachment. After a reconnaissance in early December 1993, Vermeulen suggested that the helicopters could carry out logistical transport and liaison flights in addition to the three already-mentioned tasks.

The preparations began in October, but were subject to certain provisions. As the Airmobile Brigade did not have its own helicopters, the Army struck a deal with the Dutch Royal Air Force whereby it would borrow five *Bölkows*, complete with crew and maintenance personnel, from the 229th Squadron in Deelen. The actual preparations were delegated to a special working party. The meetings paid special attention to logistical questions such as bullet-proof plating, extra protection for the crew, improvements to the navigation facilities, and a responsible maintenance programme. At the end of November, the dispatch of a helicopter detachment was more or less certain. It would only be abandoned if the current reconnaissance concluded that helicopters would be 'totally unusable'. No decision had yet been taken on where they would be stationed.

Totally in line with the ideas of the Royal Netherlands Army on the future operational zone, the working party assumed in November that Dutchbat would be deployed in the vicinity of Zenica. This changed to Srebrenica/Zepa, after these areas were definitively allocated by Bosnia-Hercegovina Command on 1 December 1993. On these grounds an Dutch Royal Air Force reconnaissance party advised in January 1994 that the helicopters be stationed in Srebrenica. On 17 February 1994 the helicopter detachment was formally transferred to the Army.[293] Up till then, everything had been arranged quickly and effectively. However, the intended deployment was destined to come adrift due to resistance from the Bosnian-Serb Army.

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[291] Interview F.G. van der Hooft, 17/12/01.

[292] CRST. Planning Order 'Safe Lion' dispatch 11 Infbat (APC) + OSC (Order no. 001 from C-1AC) sub 3rd, 24/08/93. CRST. Internal Memorandum from Royal Netherlands Army Planning Bureau to BVC, 11/08/93: 'Decision Moments' for. 11 Infbat (APC), sub 2b.

[293] Lutgert & De Winter, *Check the Horizon*, p. 331-333. DOPKLu. DOPKL Reitsma to DOPKLu, no.OZ/7136, 26/10/93. *Ibidem*: decision lists of the heli-element working party 19/11/93, 30/11/93, 17/12/93 and 24/01/94. BDL. no. 94016366/229, 17 February 1994 Operational instruction BDL 94/002. CRST. C-11 Infbat (APC) to BLS, no.001, 12/12/93: 'Reconnaissance Report on Srebrenica and Zepa.'

Despite the heavy time pressure, by 1 January 1994, the Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff, the Army Corps, the Materiel Command of the Army and the Airmobile Brigade had managed to more or less equip Dutchbat for dispatch to Bosnia. Dutchbat and Operational Support Command left as little as possible to chance. They tried to ensure that everything that was needed for the start and the execution of the operation was taken along right away. Dutchbat and the Brigade had worked closely together to make sure that they were optimally equipped and ready for any eventuality. Ultimately, both commanders managed to overcome bureaucratic opposition by taking up direct contact with the commander of the Army Corps.[294] Nothing was left to chance as far as the materiel was concerned. However, optimal preparation proved less easy to realize when it came to the personnel.

## 5. The Dutchbat personnel

Building up the Dutchbat personnel proved a complicated task. In mid-1993 the Airmobile Brigade and its first battalion, the 11th airmobile battalion, were still being formed. The three infantry companies had their full complement of staff and officers and most of the ranks had been filled, but there were still vacancies in the SSC. These positions had to be filled as soon as possible so that Dutchbat could be dispatched on 1 January 1994. This was easier said than done because, as this was a peace operation, the personnel needed to have special skills. Two types of problem emerged. First, as it was not always possible to find personnel with the right professional qualifications; national service conscripts were the only solution. Second, it took so much time to find suitable professional personnel and provide them with any extra training, that they were not available at the start of the UN training programme for Dutchbat on 4 October. The same problems arose in units detached to the airmobile battalion.

However, the appointment of national service conscripts to the SSC posed a fundamental problem. General Couzy, the Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army, had decided in June 1993 that professional personnel with a short-term contract (STPs – usually ranks and NCOs) would be accorded priority in manning the units for crisis management operations. He prohibited any mix of STPs with conscripts. Couzy maintained that it was better to postpone the deployment of a unit for two months to ensure that all the positions would be filled with the next group of STPs. He argued that a mixed unit constituted a risk for deployability: for, conscripts could always change their minds up to the moment of dispatch. Moreover, sending out conscripts would not project 'the new panache that was needed for a better image'.[295]

In theory, these instructions would not present a problem for the 11th airmobile battalion. Nevertheless, they formed an insuperable stumbling block for Dutchbat four months later: it was easy enough to build up three infantry companies according to the Commander's guidelines but it proved impossible in the case of the SSC. However, waiting for the next contingent of professionals – according to the letter of Couzy's instructions – was out of the question as the warning order explicitly specified a dispatch on 1 January 1994. The problem was a shortage of personnel. A total of 29 positions needed to be filled: 9 in the supply group, 11 in the medical platoon and 9 in the signals platoon. The shortage was due mainly to a high turnover of professional personnel and insufficient training or experience in the available contingent. The army conscripts could provide enough candidates of quality for the peace mission in Bosnia.

Although this solved the problem in practical terms, the Army Corps did its very best to present the allocation of conscripts as a temporary measure, which would be sorted out in the operational zone by an exchange of positions between the SSC and the logistical Operational Support Command or by sending out professional personnel which became available at a later date.[296] The main objection to this plan was not so much the formal allocation of the 29 conscripts to SSC but their actual detachment to

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294 Interview J.W. Brinkman, 11/10/99.
295 LR: nr. 22/4/93: report of the 1460th meeting of the Army Council, 29/06/93.
296 CRST. Internal Memorandum no.3759, Head of G1 1 AC to CS Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff, 15/10/93.

an infantry company. This kind of 'mixing' of conscripts and STPs on the ground was 'not in the spirit' of Couzy's instructions, and the Army Corps did not want to go against these orders. But there was no alternative. In any case, if the – by now – specially trained conscripts were replaced by regulars this would seriously disrupt the Dutchbat training programme.[297] It was therefore only logical that the problem be solved by deploying conscripts. The same problem arose to an increasing degree during the formation of the SSC company of Dutchbat II and III. Here too, conscripts seemed to be the only solution.

## 6. The Dutchbat training

This was not the only personnel and training problem that emerged in connection with the dispatch of Dutchbat. Every soldier who went on a peace mission had to follow a basic course in peace operations beforehand. This course was part of the basic training programme for new personnel and, needless to say, Dutchbat personnel were no exception. But many of the regulars were still to take this course. Those who formed part of the SSC followed it at the Training Battalion of the Airmobile Brigade. The personnel of the detached units went to the Centre for Peace Operations in Ossendrecht. There were, however, waiting lists for Ossendrecht as the Centre trained small groups and had only limited capacity.

There was yet another training problem. Personnel who had been recently allocated to Dutchbat and who needed job-related training at the military training centres had to be fitted into the current rosters. It was not always possible for them to complete this extra training before the start of Dutchbat's own preparations. This extra training – known as the 'work-up phase' in military jargon – began for Dutchbat I on 4 October 1993. But the formation of Dutchbat was not yet complete on this date. This meant that individual members of the personnel were trained elsewhere outside the Dutchbat programme, also after this date.

As a result, not everyone was able to follow the full programme of his own unit or the general training programme and some could not participate in other exercises because they still had to follow the training. No further details are known about the numbers involved and the missed parts of the programme. Though it seems logical to expect that Dutchbat II and Dutchbat III would be less affected by this problem, as they had more time to prepare and could organize additional training earlier, this was not the case. There were more latecomers at Dutchbat II than at Dutchbat I and more at Dutchbat III than at Dutchbat II. It speaks for itself that this could reverberate on team-building and collective action.

In his Safe Lion planning order of 24 August the commander of the 1st Army Corps had instructed the Airmobile Brigade to draw up a 'task-based operational concept' and a training and exercise programme.[298] The brigade had already revealed some elements of its vision in the internal warning order of 22 June 1993. After the completion of the routine combat training in platoons, companies and battalions and a final exercise based on the airmobile concept in September 1993, the battalion in the 'work-up' phase would give priority to exercises in operating the APC with the .50 calibre machine gun and actualize the peace-mission training set out in the basic programme.[299] This was, in effect, nothing more than a general reference to the special work-up phase. Brigade Commander Brinkman had adopted this principle in its entirety when he presented his operational plan on 29 July. He had not specified how the brigade would tackle the preparations for the peace mission in Bosnia.

Operating as airmobile infantry took central place in the completion of the last part of the routine training in the period up to the end of September. To the outsider, this appeared, at first glance, to include very few components that could have any real meaning for peace operations.

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[297] CRST. Fax OCRNLA to DS/OZ Vandeweijer, 15/11/93: appendix: Internal Memorandum acting CS-Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff to CS *et al.*, 20/10/93.
[298] CRST. Planning Order 'Safe Lion' for the dispatch of 11 Infbat (APC) + OSC (Order no 001 from C-1AC) 24/08/93.
[299] NIOD, Coll. Vermeulen. Warning Order Cdt 11 LMB to AA8, 22/06/93.

This was a serious problem: the personnel of the brigade and the 11th airmobile battalion did not experience the dispatch to the former Yugoslavia as a mission which had aims that deviated significantly from the general aim of the airmobile training. They were more of the opinion that the airmobile training offered an excellent preparation for the forthcoming peace mission.[300]

Later, the Commander of Dutchbat I, Vermeulen, said that thorough military training was essential in order to act successfully as a peacekeeper. During the training the soldiers assimilated a 'certain military posture' which gave them an 'aura of discipline and professionalism', which enabled them to command the respect of the warring factions.[301]

Apparently, it was from this same perspective that Brigade Commander Brinkman issued orders that the exercise programme in final phase of the airmobile training for a possible dispatch to the Balkans include elements such as combat in villages and urban areas. However, there was scarcely any further differentiation in the exercise objectives from mid-1993. This was not possible, because there were still no concrete ideas at the start of October on deployment in peace operations, let alone converting these into an exercise programme. 'Everyone was working hard on this' at the battalion and the brigade, but the ideas on peace operations at senior levels of the Army Corps and the Army Staff still followed the 'classic' concept, which was based on monitoring a ceasefire which had been agreed between the warring factions. Judging from the daily reports in the media, anyone could conclude that this did not apply in the former Yugoslavia because the conflict was waging. So, neither the Army Corps or the Army Staff adapted their ideas on peace operations to fit in with the current circumstances; in other words, operating as part of a peace force in a volatile and violent conflict. In addition, the brigade and the battalion kept a tight rein on the training and sought hardly any information from the Army or UNPROFOR.

*The 'work-up programme' in theory*

The operational section of the brigade had compiled a training programme for the 'work-up' phase, which amounted to no more than a description of eleven main components. Basic combat training was described as 'the theory of convoy security, anti-ambush drills etc'; the communications training concentrated on knowledge of the relevant connections (FM 4600, UHF, handheld receiver and line communications) and the use of English as the *lingua franca*. Not a word was said on how these lessons were to be given.

Jellema, the Commander of the Bravo Company of Dutchbat I, went in search of information himself and drew up a list of teaching goals for his men. This programme consisted to two main elements. First, they had to learn how to operate the APCs. The aim of this course was to facilitate the transition from airmobile operations to limited armoured infantry operations. The second element was geared to the practical aspects of the peace mission in Yugoslavia and, to some extent, to the situations which the company might encounter in Bosnia. Close attention was paid to personal safety and the safety of the unit (from group to battalion level) and, of course, to the execution of the tasks of a peacekeeping force. This programme could be realized in the three infantry companies,[302] but the sticking point was the training of the SSC and other additional support units.

The question that now needs to be answered is where the staff of the Airmobile Brigade and the battalion got their information for the training and instruction. Contact with the Centre for Peace Operations (CVV) in Ossendrecht, which had played a key role in the preparations for the dispatch of the Transport and Signals Battalion, went no further than information-sharing. Vermeulen felt that the CVV concentrated principally on preparing individuals and had no experience with units. Dutchbat I

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300 Interviews M. van den Tweel, 27/04/01; E. Wieffer, 07/05/01; J. Lemmen, 17/10/01.
301 Vermeulen, 'Humanitair optreden als militaire missie' (Humanitarian Operations as a Military Mission) in Baarda & Schoeman, *Werelden apart?* (Worlds Apart), p. 87.
302 Jellema, *First In*, pp. 41-42. Sie LL. Manuscript Lessons Learned from Commander B Company Dutchbat, Chapter 'Voorbereiden op uitzending' (Preparing for Dispatch), pp. 13-16.

did, however, use the CVV draft syllabus entitled *Dreiging* (Threats). They also consulted returned Dutch UN military observers and officials from the Transport Battalion. The brigade staff had contacted the Royal Netherlands Marine Corps (RNLMC) and adopted its 'buddy' system for the development of the airmobile concept.[303]

As far as the rest was concerned, they tried to find their own solutions by consulting what were mainly British and US publications on Low Intensity Conflicts. When drawing up a syllabus for the peace-mission training the Head of the Operations Section of the battalion, Major H. Peek, worked closely with his counterpart at the Airmobile Brigade, Major M. van Uhm. As a young officer Peek had participated in the UN peace mission in Lebanon. The brigade and battalion also received occasional End of Mission Reports (evaluation reports) of foreign UNPROFOR battalions from the Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff and the Army Operations Section. Finally, the information from the first reconnaissance mission of the battalion staff in November/December 1993 was integrated in the syllabus.[304]

Brigade Commander Brinkman had based his operational concept of July 1993 on airmobile operations. This is reflected in the explicit definition of armoured vehicles as 'battlefield taxis' and in the option to act as a Quick Reaction Force for UNPROFOR and to retain a Dutch Quick Reaction Force. Little thought had been given to the actual content of the peace mission. Chapter 8 of this part of the report explores in detail the preparations which did and did not take place for this task. The reports in the media and the information from returned Dutch soldiers suggested an area at war rather than a generally respected ceasefire. The airmobile training could be useful in this kind of environment. Nonetheless, given the military characteristics, the mission had to be executed mainly in an environment that was vastly different from a military-strategic deployment. It concerned an essentially different objective with specific requirements which had very little to do with purely military operations. This hybrid objective and the lack of systematic reflection would continue to impact on the Dutch peace mission in Bosnia.

From 4 October 1993 – which marked the beginning of the 'start-up' phase – all the added units were under the command of battalion commander Lieutenant Colonel C. Vermeulen. The discussions on the training for the peace mission centred primarily on the infantry companies, because they would perform the core tasks. The training would focus on four main elements: first, the security of the operational zone; second, provision of limited humanitarian aid and concrete actions against aggressive groups; and finally, training in the use of materiel and weapons for the peace operation. The training theory was based on the *Handboek voor de diensten bij Vredesmachten in Internationaal Verband* (Service Manual for International Peace Operations)[305] After a short introductory chapter on peacekeeping this manual contains five chapters on the military aspects of UN peace operations. The basic skills cover orientation in the terrain, different types of patrol (including preparation and implementation), the lay-out and use of observation posts, blocking positions, roadblocks, guarding and securing objects, sealing and searching buildings, disarming and frisking, and directing mortar fire. The chapter on protection deals with general rules of safety, setting up field reinforcements in the form of obstacles and cover, and sustainable fortifications. The passages on stress prevention, first aid in the field, personal hygiene and preventive medicine, communications, and weapons were less exhaustive.

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303 NIOD, Coll. Vermeulen. Thuisfront: 'Heel blijven bij alle veranderingen tijdens en rond de uitzending' (Home front: 'Staying in one piece during and around the dispatch').
304 Jellema, *First-In*, 42. Interviews C.Vermeulen, 09/06/99; J.W. Brinkman, 11/10/99. DAB. LMB aftercare preparations, no. NLO 93/950/340, 29/10/93.
305 Royal Netherlands Army, VS 2-1393 (2nd edition *Handboek voor de Diensten bij Vredesmachten in Internationaal Verband* (Service Manual for International Peace Operations)

*The 'work-up' programme in practice*

The manual translated the four main tasks into eleven training priorities. The approach was no different from that of the airmobile training programme, which amounted to very little theory and plenty of practical exercises to transfer knowledge and skills.[306] The main emphasis of the training was on group and platoon work. The combat training focused specifically on the differences between the mission of a UN soldier and normal military action.

The main difference was that the UN soldier had to carry out his mission as visibly as possible. This was totally at odds with conventional military operations where the whole point is to conceal action from the enemy. A peace mission was all about making intentions clear to the warring factions by acting openly and thereby helping to stabilize the situation.

The need for transparency during a peace mission did not mean, however, that other elements of military action no longer applied. Naturally, personal safety was still high on the agenda. The identification of non-military factors that could affect how the mission was conducted, was a third element that was specific to peace operations.

For example, the absence of civilians on a normally busy road could imply a possible risk or a potentially tense situation. This equally applied to avoidance of contact by the population or other behavioural signs that would not normally be relevant to military action. This new type of operation called for a totally different approach and formed, as it were, the main thread of the work-up phase. It had a bearing on elements such as movements (on foot or in vehicles), patrols (on foot or in vehicles), hazardous areas, field survival, attacks with limited targets, stalking and acting against ambushes, observation-post duty, and operating as the Quick Reaction Force of the company or the battalion.

During observation-post duty it was important for the group of nine soldiers led by the group commander to work according to a fixed procedure, to record their observations in a logbook and on a map of the immediate vicinity and to pass these on to the company. This meant that the next group could work according to the same procedure and that there would be a consistent flow of observations. The Quick Reaction Force was a unit (for a company consisting of two groups) which could be deployed to support other parts of the company in threatening situations; for example, when clearing landmines or if a patrol were to come under fire. Finally, map reading and the use of the Global Positioning System (a system for determining the coordinates of a location with the aid of satellites) were also important for the combat training.

The firearms training concentrated on handling personal weapons (pistols, FAL rifles and Uzis) and group weapons such as the Mag machine gun, the .50 calibre machine gun on the APC, the M-136 anti-tank missiles, the anti-tank weapons (Dragon and TOW) and mortars.

Contrary to standard practice, cross training would be introduced to teach the members of the battalion to use all the weapons so that the personnel could be flexibly deployed. The mine-awareness classes included general information on mines and explosives plus instructions on minefield operations and the detection and marking of landmines. The curriculum also covered protection against and combating chemical weapons. In the interests of personal health and the well-being of the immediate environment detailed attention was not only paid to standard first aid in the field, but also to hygiene and medical evacuations. Finally, it addressed the use of communications, which is vitally important in military operations. The troops had to be able to use different types of communication equipment and direct line connections and learn English radio-telephony procedures. To maintain high levels of physical fitness the training programme set aside time for team sports and condition training. It also taught man-to-man armed and unarmed combat.

In addition to these general elements, specific training was needed for people occupying new positions at the airmobile companies. Top of the list was the six-week training course for sixty APC

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[306] Interview M. van den Tweel, 27/07/01.

drivers and operators of the .50 calibre machine gun. There was also a course for infantry sappers and another in emergency first aid and general nursing.

All these elements were standard in that they were needed for every peace mission. An important part of the training focused on the smooth execution of drills in certain situations. In some essential cases this was more a question of 'unlearning' than 'learning'. The peacekeeper had to temporarily forget military tenets such as secrecy, the element of surprise and escalation dominance and learn to act openly, predictably and with minimum use of force.[307] This training slotted in as far as possible with the assumed situation in Bosnia. The starting point was knowledge of UNPROFOR's mission and mandate in the former Yugoslavia, but the UNPROFOR rules of engagement (rules governing the use of force by UNPROFOR) were vitally important in individual actions. These rules have been discussed in Chapter 1 of this part of the report.

*Other (non-military) aspects of the 'work-up' programme*

Each Dutchbat soldier was issued with an instruction card setting out the Rules of Engagement. More detailed instructions on how these worked in practice were issued to the group commanders and senior officials.[308] These rules of engagement and other subjects (mentioned below) formed part of the general work-up phase for all the members of Dutchbat. They consisted first of all of a brief history of the country and a description of the background and development of the conflict and the warring factions. In addition, they contained instructions related to humanitarian law in wartime (treatment of the civilians, war crimes, crimes against humanity, genocide etc.). The climate and the landscape were also addressed with a view to individual operations. The officers followed a course in negotiating techniques so that they could deal effectively with the warring factions. The last part of the training covered personal information on legal matters and finance, the care for and contact with family and partners, media contact, stress management and finally, the ban on the use of drugs.[309]

The training discussed in this chapter pertains to the preparations for the operational aspects. However, it must be stressed that Dutchbat I, under Lieutenant Colonel C. Vermeulen, did not hear from UNPROFOR until 1 December 1993 (after the completion of the work-up phase) that its future operational zones would be the Safe Areas of Srebrenica and Zepa. It would be fair to assume that this had a negative effect on the preparations of Dutchbat I. Until then Dutchbat I and the senior army staff had assumed that the troops would be deployed around Zenica in central Bosnia. On the basis of the opinions of Vermeulen and Jellema, this effect should not be overestimated; two weeks after the handover in Srebrenica they concluded that – apart from the section on hostage-taking – all the incidents they encountered in practice correlated with the final exercise.[310] This exercise had been successful. It appears therefore that the battalion started the peace mission well-prepared.

In the work-up phase Dutchbat geared up for the final exercise. Dutchbat I – and its successors – followed a three-phase plan. In de first phase, attention centred on the skills, the actions of the groups within the unit and ways of combining the various skills. For example, during a patrol an infantry group would practise mine-awareness and, after encountering an undetected anti-personnel mine, would have to perform emergency first aid in the field, possibly calling in the company medics. During the same patrol a group might run into hostile members from one of the warring factions. Then it had to decide which response was allowed under the Rules of Engagement. The first phase ended with a company-led platoon exercise.

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307 Vermeulen, 'Humanitair optreden als militaire missie' (Humanitarian Operations as a Military Mission), in: Baarda & Schoeman, *Werelden apart?* (Worlds Apart), p. 88.
308 The Instruction Card is included in *Handboek Voormalig Joegoslavië* (Manual for Former Yugoslavia) a publication of the Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff.
309 Sie LL. Manuscript Lessons Learned by the commander of B Company Dutchbat, Chapter 'Voorbereiden op uitzending' pp. 13-16.
310 Jellema, *First-in*, p. 48.

The second phase concentrated on team-building in the company. From that moment a part of the battalion's Support and Services Company was attached to the company. This consisted of a casualty station, a signals group, a catering group, an engineering group and extra maintenance personnel. Most of the 26 men that made up this group were national service conscripts. This phase focused on integrated action by the platoons, the casualty station, the catering group and the engineering group; for instance, it determined whether the medical evacuation transport could reach a roadblock fast enough to collect the wounded; whether the radio messages that a group commander sent about a roadblock were clear enough to enable the engineers to take a decision on the use of clearance equipment; and the type of concrete threat posed by some noisy by lightly-armed civilians or para-militaries and whether the group that had encountered them could solve the situation under the Rules of Engagement or needed assistance from the strong arm of the company, the Quick Reaction Force.

The participants in the exercise were also confronted with extremely tense scenarios to test their competence; these included threatened executions at the compound gate, mine incidents and nocturnal medical evacuations. Junior leadership was stimulated among the platoon and group commanders; they had to learn to take their own decisions in unforeseen situations. Even if they had time to consult their superior, he would often be unable to accurately assess the situation. Efficient use of communications and reports according to a standard model was essential. The first phase laid the foundation for all of this; in the second phase communication was practised with the other units. *Blue Falcon*, the exercise at the end of the second phase, was the last stage in the process to build up company unity. It also led to the further standardization of reports, tighter procedures and instructions and a clearly defined task for the company's Quick Reaction Force. The final Dutchbat exercise – a week after the company exercise – had two aims: to show whether the units were capable of independent action and whether the battalion commander and his staff could cope with different situations at the same time. This was the first real practical exercise for the battalion staff: a test case for which the infantry company had prepared itself step by step.[311]

All things considered, the operational training for dispatch of Dutchbat to Bosnia was a rush job. It was a double operation in renewal: both the training of the airmobile battalion and the preparations for its dispatch as a part of UNPROFOR were experiments. In theory, it was a handicap for the battalion that, as a unit with no operational experience and, in some respects, a hastily completed training, it had no time to do more work on group cohesion. The peace mission was so urgent that it had to move on immediately to the next stage of the training.

With hindsight it is somewhat surprising that the dispatch of Dutchbat was seen as a purely military operation and did not address what the battalion would actually encounter in Srebrenica and how to deal with it. It should be noted here that the previous airmobile training did not run according to a ready-made scenario either. However, there was a certain basis to build upon. Some of the battalion officers had UNIFIL experience in Lebanon. The general information on peace operations offered plenty of openings for organizing the training in October and November 1993. It was undoubtedly a plus-point that the battalion itself did not see the dispatch as a disruption, but rather as a logical sequel to the airmobile training.

It would not become clear whether the re-training had been successful until the troops were actually stationed in the operational zone. The question of whether there was too much of a preponderance of military aspects in the preparations can also be asked in reverse: which elements could have been left out? At the end of the day, Dutchbat would have to operate in a truly dangerous situation in Bosnia, where the execution of military tasks was vital. The infantry could, to some extent, build on their airmobile experience, but they had to learn many other skills as well, such as working

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311 Sie LL. Manuscript Lessons Learned van commandant B-Coy Dutchbat, Chapter 'Voorbereiden op uitzending', pp. 16-27 *passim*. Jellema, *First-in*, pp. 46-53 gives an account of the exercise that concluded the second phase and the final exercise in Hohenfels.

with armoured vehicles, manning observation posts and escorting convoys. These were what mattered most. Judging from the favourable assessment of the final Dutchbat exercise in Hohenfels, the re-training fulfilled the objective which had been set for the military-operational action. Generally speaking, the unit that left for Bosnia was well trained militarily, despite a few individual shortcomings. Was it a disadvantage that the future operational zone was not yet known when Dutchbat I completed its training? This was certainly so with regard to the psychological preparations. In December 1993, the troops had very little time to form an idea of life and work in the enclave. It is unlikely that the training would have been significantly different if more time had been available. Issues regarding the extent to which the training and preparations equipped them for the non-military peace tasks will be discussed in Chapter 8.

## 7. The formation and training of Dutchbat III

The work-up programme followed later by Dutchbat II and III was more or less identical to that of Dutchbat I. However, several details should be mentioned about the training of Dutchbat III.

On 31 August 1993 the Army Council had decided to form the third airmobile battalion by reorganizing the 43rd armoured infantry battalion. This decision marked the third and last phase of the formation of the Airmobile Brigade, together with the formation of a third mortar and engineering platoon. It would take place between March 1994 and December 1995. Every two months, starting from January 1994, the ranks (privates and corporals) for a platoon would come to the Training Battalion for training so that a prepared company could flow in after a period of ten months. The reorganization would be complete on 1 January 1996. Officers and NCOs would, in principle, flow from the old to the new unit and, of course, follow the red-beret training.[312]

It is surprising that this reorganization plan took no account of the planning order of June 1993 for the dispatch of the Airmobile Brigade to the former Yugoslavia. This order, in effect, meant that the third battalion had to be formed a year earlier. As the dispatch was scheduled for the start of 1995, the Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army took steps to speed up the process, but this process was not without difficulties. It was hard to find professionals to fill the positions. As it was impossible to fill all the key positions with officers and NCOs from the old 43rd armoured infantry battalion, the disbanded 45th armoured infantry battalion from Steenwijk, and the Storm Troopers from Assen also provided personnel. In actual fact, the Dutchbat NCOs were assigned. The average age was higher than normal and people over the age of forty were hard pushed to obtain the red beret. Eventually, almost everyone did.[313]

Battalion Commander Karremans and his staff became increasingly irritated by all the problems surrounding the manning and training of Dutchbat III. Their vexation was not only caused by the problems as such, it was also connected with the stationing of Dutchbat III (in Assen) and the specific character of the battalion. As Assen was far away from the headquarters of the Airmobile Brigade in Schaarsbergen, the contact between Dutchbat III and the Airmobile Brigade was less direct than in the case of Dutchbat I and II, which were also stationed in Schaarsbergen. Karremans and his staff saw the contact with the brigade as mainly one-way traffic: Brigade Commander Brinkman never or seldom showed up in Assen and his staff appeared on very few occasions.

This changed in August 1994 with a weekly visit from the acting Brigade Commander, Colonel J. Lemmen, but it is doubtful whether this did much to assuage the feeling at Dutchbat III that they were being neglected.[314] The staff of Dutchbat III felt that they had been left to their own devices and had to solve the problems mainly in collaboration with the Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff. These 'relational problems' between Dutchbat III and the Airmobile Brigade were also tied up with questions

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312 LR. PO-HKL Boonstra to BLS, no. HKL/93-1345, 07/07/93, 31/08/93.
313 Interview Th.J.P. Karremans, 24/06/98.
314 Interview J. Lemmen, 17/10/01.

of self-image. The 13th airmobile battalion (Dutchbat III) saw itself as a battalion of straightforward, no-nonsense northerners.[315] This created a tendency towards isolation. In addition, the staff of the Airmobile Brigade felt that the staff in Assen always thought that they knew best; according to Schaarsbergen, they complained and whinged about other people's mistakes instead of getting on with the job of solving the problems and, if necessary, calling the brigade staff direct.[316]

There were problems in abundance. They were, to some extent, the same as those encountered during the 'work-up' phase of the preceding battalions, but on a larger scale. An extra complication was that, during the work-up phase of Dutchbat III, the barracks in Assen were under renovation. As a result, only a limited number of buildings were available and the facilities for teaching large groups were far from ideal. Requests for special audio-visual equipment to compensate for this handicap were not fulfilled.[317] Another general problem at the start of the work-up phase was that Dutchbat's exercise set had been lent out to the *Cooperative Spirit* exercise of the Partnership for Peace until 27 October, and the specific training of the personnel could not run according to plan in the first three weeks.[318]

The greatest problem was personnel. This was nothing new: it had also confronted Dutchbat I and II. But it was extra complicated in the case of Dutchbat III. To begin with, manning the 13th airmobile battalion proved a more laborious process. Despite an acceleration of the training programme, the last infantry company did not reach full strength until the end of August. In September 1994, five months before the dispatch, it transpired that, because of incontinuity in the training, 48 soldiers were still at the Training Battalion and would not join Dutchbat III until mid-November. Moreover, there were still 31 vacancies in supplementary detachment of 120. Candidates were sought primarily among conscripts. The search was expected to be complete by mid-December. Both factors caused interruptions in the training programme for the peace operation. Dutchbat III itself would organize a repeat programme for the first group but no solution had yet been found for the second group consisting of drivers (trucks and APCs), radio-telephonists, cooks and mechanics.

The evaluation of the dispatch of Dutchbat I concluded that some of the personnel recruitment problems were structural and could not be solved in the short term. As the Army Corps was unable to provide suitable candidates, personnel had to be found in other sections of the Army. A delaying factor was the absence of a good central overview of the training level of all Royal Netherlands Army personnel; hence, the need for additional training only became clear during the recruitment procedure.[319]

Dutchbat III was hard hit by these problems. Seventy positions were still vacant at the start of the work-up programme on 10 October 1994. Various circumstances had prevented some of the current personnel from receiving specific job-related training. They had been absent for short or longer periods in order to follow a course and could not participate in the work-up programme. All the stops had to be pulled out to ensure that everyone could still complete his training.

This problem cropped up in another form among key members of the battalion. They and other NCOs provided numerous lessons, some of which aimed to teach the personnel skills that were not exactly part of their job but which could still be useful in Srebrenica. This applied to such skills as cross-training in weaponry. Everyone was taught how to use the .50 calibre machine gun on the APC. The infantry groups were taught how to operate the 81 mm. mortars and the TOW anti-tank missiles so that they could take over the tasks of the personnel of the mortar and artillery groups stationed at observation posts. The troops in each company were given lessons in how to operate the radio connections. Practice sessions were held on rescuing casualties from armoured vehicles and evacuating

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315 Interviews J.R. Groen, 05/07/99; E.G.B. Wieffer, 07/05/01; Th.J.P. Karremans, 24/06/98.
316 Interview J. Lemmen, 17/10/01.
317 Interview E.G.B. Wieffer, 07/05/01.
318 CRST. Internal Memorandum no. CRST/896, Brantz to BLS, OCRNLA and SC-O, 07/09/94.
319 CRST. Fax Sie S3 11 Airmobile Brigade to G3 Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff, 28/04/94; fax G3 OPN Army Corps to DO Royal Netherlands Army/Crisis Staff, 26/04/94; fax Sie S3 Airmobile Brigade to Scheffer Royal Netherlands Army Crisis staff, 9/05/94.

the wounded by helicopter during the day and at night. The APC drivers were given extra hours to practise driving on rough terrain.

Some of the NCOs also played a management role in the work-up programme and, as a result, followed 'none or only parts' of it.[320] Finally, there was not enough information from Dutchbat II on how the programme should be realized. The contacts with Srebrenica and Simin Han, where parts of the battalion were stationed, were not effectively organized. Other contacts did, however, exist at working level; also, personnel of Dutchbat II who were on leave were asked to come to Assen to talk about their personal experiences.[321]

All these circumstances made the preparations look permanently hectic and confused. At the end of the work-up phase Karremans, the battalion commander, presented the Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff with a list of what he believed had gone wrong. He concluded the list with some recommendations which were virtually self-evident. The battalion had to be at full strength at the start of the work-up programme and the personnel should have completed their job-specific training. Contact should be established at an early stage between the incumbent and the relief battalion to facilitate exchange of information. The development and supervision of the work-up phase should not be delegated to heads of personnel and operations at the battalion, and personnel from the units destined for dispatch should not teach classes.[322] Karremans' recommendations more or less tallied with the evaluation of the training and dispatch of Dutchbat I; it appears therefore that the problems he diagnosed had not yet been solved. The fact that these problems lay primarily with personnel and were – as already mentioned – of a structural nature explains why they emerged again in the case of Dutchbat III. The consequences of this were a shortage of skills in the use of personal weapons and in first aid in the field.

As was remarked earlier, the problems were greater in the case of Dutchbat III and, in the opinion of the battalion staff, seriously disrupted the training of the unit. Even so, it is still difficult to gauge the influence of these problems on the actual training on the basis of the available information. They certainly slowed down the team-building process. But it would be going too far to describe these difficulties – which arose especially in the organizational domain and in the various parts of the battalion – as insuperable. It appears from Karremans' list that steps were taken in the different units of Dutchbat III to ensure that certain groups could follow as many elements of the training as possible. Karremans believed that, all things considered, he left for Srebrenica with a well-trained battalion.[323]

The acid test was the final exercise, *Noble Falcon,* on the German exercise terrain of Vogelsang between 2 and 4 December 1994. The Airmobile Brigade led this exercise and bore responsibility for it. The programme was compiled on the basis of the Dutchbat I programme on the US exercise terrain of Hohenfels. The distribution over the various locations in Bosnia was simulated as far as possible. In addition to a central compound, Dutchbat III set up a compound for Bravo Company on the terrain; Alpha Company simulated its own camp in Simin Han on the vast Belgian exercise terrain in Elsenborn. Needless to say, the companies also set up observation posts and casualty stations. Sandbags were filled to protect the compounds and the observation posts. Members of Dutchbat I acted as the exercise party; in other words, they assumed the role of the local military and civil authorities, the ABiH, the local population, the VRS, et cetera.

The exercise was led by Major Van Uhm of the Operations Section of the brigade. A member of the brigade staff had been chosen on purpose, because the whole point of the final exercise of Dutchbat III was to simulate reality and confront the commanders – also at lower levels – with their

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320 CRST. Fax 13Infbat Lumbl to Crisis Staff, appendix 'Opleidingsverstoringen/extra lessen mbt het opwerkprogramma Dutchbat III'(Training disruptions/extra lessons for the work-up programme of Dutchbat III)
321 Interview R. Rutten, 01/12/99 and 13/09/01.
322 Royal Netherlands Army, Internal Memorandum Col. C.L. Brantz to BLS, OCRNLA, SC-O, no. CRST/896, 7 September 1994. KLCS 1994: fax 13 infbat Lumbl to Crisis Staff. Appendix: 'Opleidingsverstoringen/extra lessen mbt het opwerkprogramma Dutchbat-III' Interview Th.J.P. Karremans, 24/06/98.
323 Interview Th.J.P. Karremans, 30/11/00.

style of command and action. These confrontations took place at the daily evaluation meetings with the aid of video recordings.[324] Though the intention was to simulate reality as far as possible, the final exercise was pushed for time and the programme was overloaded with an average of thirty incidents a day. This created additional stress and fatigue and detracted from the envisaged reality. One advantage was, of course, that the stress-resistance of the commanders was put to the test.

The attempts to simulate the actual situation in the enclave – which, as Chapter 8 will show, were based on completely stereotyped ideas – were not limited to acting out the roles of 'beggars and traffickers from the local population' who tried to get their hands on food and other articles at the gate and by climbing over the fence. During the exercise people became increasingly annoyed by the behaviour of the 'locals' and one person even wondered if this was really how things were in Srebrenica or whether 'the guys [of the 11th Airmobile Battalion] were themselves looking for a bit more action'.[325]

At one point the bunker alarm sounded and everyone took cover in the shelter with their kit and personal weapon while the whole procedure for roll call, building checks and reporting to the Ops Room was carried out according to the book. Red alerts were practised: this meant that those who were resting had to lie fully dressed in bed with their shrapnel vest and helmet within arm's reach while those on active duty had to wear their vests and helmets and ensure that their personal weapon was loaded. Leave convoys also left 'Srebrenica' and casualty transportation was carried out. The locals were provided with medical assistance. As in Srebrenica, the use of vehicles and oil heaters was rationed because of fuel shortages. Needless to say, incidents occurred with casualties so that the medics could come into action.[326] If the quartermaster's vehicle broke down the food could not be delivered, so there was nothing to eat.[327]

The liaison team negotiated with the local authorities and the VRS liaison officers. In keeping with the reality in Srebrenica Karremans occasionally engaged in negotiations. He became involved in negotiations with an imitation Oric (from the ABiH, the army of the Bosnian Muslims) and an imitation Vukovic (from the VRS, the Bosnian-Serb army). Some tough discussions took place between Karremans and the exercise leader. The battalion commander had difficulty with the criticism that Van Uhm and the brigade staff levelled at his style of command. He seemed unable to accept it and interpret it as constructive advice. He later admitted to the NIOD that he found it hard to take this kind of criticism from a fellow-officer who had absolutely no personal experience of peace operations, even though the leader of the exercise was, first and foremost the spokesman for the brigade in such matters.[328]

Despite this clash the final exercise was a success. For the first time, the whole machinery of Dutchbat III, from group to battalion level, had worked in a situation that aimed to simulate reality in Srebrenica. Considering the limitations of the exercise terrain, this had been successful. It was still, of course, a simulation: there were no real Displaced Persons, the geographical conditions were different and there was no actual confrontation with the warring factions. But this did, at least, figure in the background because, at the start of the final exercise of Dutchbat III, the hijack of a Dutchbat II leave convoy had still not been resolved. Generals Couzy and Brinkman (who was on leave from his UNPROFOR task in Bosnia) seemed very pleased with the progress of *Noble Falcon* during their visit to Vogelsang.[329] Dutchbat III could start its mission.

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[324] Interview J. Lemmen, 17/10/01.
[325] NIOD, Coll. Koremans. Diary Koremans, pp. 9-4.
[326] NIOD, Coll. Koremans. Diary Koremans, pp.9-4 – 9-7.
[327] Interview J. Lemmen, 17/10/01.
[328] Interviews Th.J.P. Karremans, 30/11/00 and J. Lemmen, 17/10/01.
[329] NIOD, Coll. Koremans. Diary Koremans, pp. 9-5 – 9-7.

## 8. How Dutchbat came to be in Srebrenica

In principle, any military operation must be preceded by the collection of information. Sending a unit at random to a new operational zone is fraught with risks. This process of information gathering should consist of several steps. First, general geographical, political and military information needs to be collected on the area. This is followed by information on the operational situation and the organizational embedment.

Dutchbat did not have to gather its information from scratch. It could make use of the information on the former Yugoslavia that was available within the Royal Netherlands Army. The secondment of personnel as observers for the EC (ECMM) and military observers for the UN (UNMO), as well as the dispatch of a signals detachment and a transport battalion had very recently presented opportunities for building up an information position.

However, very little use was made of the knowledge of personnel who had recently returned from the former Yugoslavia. There were no systematic debriefings at the end of a mission. Knowledge was usually passed on through individuals and not through official channels.[330] In addition, the Military Intelligence Service of the Central Organization and the Royal Netherlands Army (see, for example, the intelligence Appendix to this report for information on the relationship between these two agencies) had compiled informative reports on the developments and international intervention in the conflict.

Local reconnaissance is absolutely essential in building up an adequate information position. In his planning order of 24 August 1993 the commander of the Army Corps had also issued an order for 'preliminary orientation' in the future operational zone in the short term. A delegation consisting of five key officials (from Operations, Logistics, Engineering, and Operational Support Command) was instructed to visit an UNPROFOR battalion in a 'calm' region and in a 'tense' region.[331] The first mission had to collect information on the future operational zone and the logistical preconditions for the deployment in dialogue with the UNPROFOR command in Bosnia (Bosnia-Hercegovina Command). More detailed logistical and operational information could not be collected until the operational zone was assigned. Hence, a second reconnaissance mission led by the acting brigade commander, Colonel Lemmen, and the Dutchbat commander Lieutenant Colonel C. Vermeulen, would visit Bosnia in November and December 1993 for this purpose. As Srebrenica/Zepa was still closed due to Bosnian-Serb obstruction, a third reconnaissance mission would not be sent to the future operational zone until February 1994.

The first reconnaissance mission in Bosnia took place between 14 and 19 September 1993. It consisted of the Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff, Lieutenant Colonel F.E.V.M. van Bouwdijk Bastiaanse, the Dutchbat commander Vermeulen, the Head of Operations at Operational Support Command, Lieutenant Colonel W. van Hunnik, and the representative of the 101st engineering combat group, Major E.R. Sinnighe. They concentrated on gathering general information on the UNPROFOR working procedures. The mission visited Zenica and Jablanica as well as the headquarters of Bosnia-Hercegovina Command in Kiseljak, and familiarized itself with the state of affairs at the Canadian battalion (Canbat) in Visoko.[332] It collected information on the deployment requirements for an infantry unit, the different types of operations, the problems surrounding the first deployment and possible assistance from Bosnia-Hercegovina Command. Finally, the mission tried to get a clear picture of the actual nature of Dutchbat's future task.

The mission concluded on the basis of its reconnaissance that a hygiene specialist and a dentist needed to be added to the Dutchbat staff and that the liaison units needed reinforcement. The liaison units consisted of a group of officers who had to maintain contact with the local civil authorities. UNPROFOR would organize interpreters. The first reconnaissance mission also heard that the unit

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330 Interviews E.A. Rave, 13 and 14/12/00 and 24/01/01; P. Everts, 12/02/97, 20 and 21/05/97 and 05/04/01.
331 CRST. Planning Order 'Safe Lion' dispatch 11 Infbat (APC) + OSC (Order no. 001 from C-1AC), 24/08/93. Appendix B, item 9.
332 Interview F. van Bouwdijk Bastiaanse, 28/08/00.

commanders would have to follow a course in negotiating techniques to enhance the effectiveness of their actions. UNPROFOR also explicitly stressed the importance of bringing along plenty of materiel, especially transport for their own logistical needs. As UNPROFOR could provide no logistical assistance at all, Dutchbat had to be self-supporting. It could cooperate with UNPROFOR battalions from other countries on an incidental basis. This meant that Dutchbat would need a sizeable engineering capacity, especially at the start.

Bosnia-Hercegovina Command had 'emphatically' pointed out to the reconnaissance mission that an engineering capacity was crucial both for construction activities for the benefit of Dutchbat and for carrying out UNPROFOR tasks (keeping routes open and road maintenance). The Canadian battalion in Srebrenica and the British battalion in Gorazde had an engineering company of some 250 persons for these activities. Moreover, the engineering unit had to arrive before the main Dutchbat force in order to install the most urgent facilities. At this point the reconnaissance mission identified the first problem: the materials that were needed for building the accommodation, the washing facilities, and the protective installations could only be at the location in five months. This would call for improvisation. The greatest short-term logistical problem would be the fuel supply. They could probably cooperate with other battalions as far as medical facilities were concerned.

Besides the logistical aspects, the question of Dutchbat's future operational zone was raised at Bosnia-Hercegovina Command. Four deployment options were discussed during meetings with the Chief of Staff of Bosnia-Hercegovina Command, Brigadier V. Hayes, (Bosnia-Hercegovina Commander F. Briquemont was unable to be present owing to a full agenda). The most likely operational zones were the area of Zenica in Central Bosnia or the Safe Areas of Srebrenica and Zepa in Eastern Bosnia.

On 18 September Bosnia-Hercegovina Command informed the mission verbally through the Dutch Head of Operations, Colonel Bevers, that Sarajevo would ask the Dutch Government via UNPROFOR in Zagreb to deploy one Dutchbat company in Srebrenica on 1 November or 1 December to replace the Canadian battalion that was currently stationed there.

The reconnaissance mission did not interpret this message as the announcement of a probable deployment in Srebrenica and Zepa, though, according to its report, it was at least aware during the visit that 'the emphasis was focusing more and more on the first two options.'[333] This does not square with the later statement of Van Bouwdijk Bastiaanse that the talks at Bosnia-Hercegovina Command had led the mission to regard Srebrenica and Zepa as a 'non-option'. The reconnaissance mission had inferred from the discussions that Bosnia-Hercegovina Command would not take a final decision on the operational zone for Dutchbat until a month later. However, it underestimated the speed of the decision-making process at Bosnia-Hercegovina Command during that period. On 9 September the Operations Department had compiled a list of five deployment options for Dutchbat: Zenica, or one of the Safe Areas of Bihac, Srebrenica or Gorazde were still options 4 and 5 respectively at this juncture. However, by 17 September Zenica and Srebrenica had moved to the top of this list.[334]

The official request of 18 September for the deployment of one company in Srebrenica therefore emanated from the fact that Srebrenica and Zepa had become a serious option at Bosnia-Hercegovina Command within the space of one week. The Dutch mission had not fully realized this. Their misconceptions had not escaped the notice of UNPROFOR: the Dutch reconnaissance team had expressed a preference for Zenica or Jablanica/Tarcin as opposed to the preference of Bosnia-Hercegovina Command for Srebrenica and Zepa. According to UNPROFOR, the mission had agreed to respond promptly to the proposal to station a company in Srebrenica. UNPROFOR said that definitive decision on the Dutchbat operational zone would be taken by mid-October at the latest.[335]

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[333] CRST. First impression report preliminary visit UNPROFOR, 21/09/93.
[334] NIOD, Coll. Vermeulen. Verkenningsreis (Reconnaissance Trip) *ibidem:* HQ BH Comd: file G3 Plans/080993 and G3 Plans/110993. (In the Netherlands this document was only found in NIOD, collection Vermeulen. It is therefore assumed that the mission was aware of its contents.)
[335] UNNY, DPKO UNPROFOR coded cables, Cot to Annan, Z-1175, 21/09/93.

There is no record of these details in the mission report. The report does, however, point out that these two options involved two completely different types of operation: in Zenica the troops would have to secure the area and escort UNHCR humanitarian aid convoys; in Srebrenica they would have to safeguard a demilitarized zone by setting up observation posts, securing a weapon and ammunition collection point, carrying out patrols and, to some extent, escorting convoys. It concluded that, given the differences in the type of deployment, the efforts to prepare Dutchbat for its future task could come under pressure due to lack of time.[336]

The reconnaissance mission did, however, take explicit account of deployment in Zenica or Srebrenica in the further materiel and practical preparations for the dispatch. The troops had to be trained for two different tasks: controlling areas and escorting convoys.[337] On 27 September Major Sinninghe presented a proposal which addressed the implications of the reconnaissance report for the deployment of the engineers. He suggested that an engineering platoon with heavier materiel and its own staff be added to Dutchbat's own engineering capacity (a platoon). Sinninghe reckoned that an 80-strong engineering detachment for a period of three months would suffice provided that part of the engineering capacity of the Transport Battalion would also be deployed. Sinninghe suggested that the 115th Construction Company of the 11th Armoured Engineers Battalion form the basis for the engineering detachment. His idea was adopted by the 1st Army Corps.[338]

The second reconnaissance mission took place after the final exercise of Dutchbat I in the second half of November 1993. The mission was late because Bosnia-Hercegovina Command was still to announce its decision on the operational zone. UNPROFOR and Bosnia-Hercegovina Command had needed a lot of time to formulate a sound deployment plan for new battalions.

*Destinations other than Srebrenica*

Srebrenica had still not been officially assigned to Dutchbat, but, on 1 December 1993, the definitive decision to assign Dutchbat to Srebrenica and Zepa was communicated in Zagreb to a Dutch mission headed by the Deputy Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army, Major General Reitsma. This seemed to come as a surprise to Reitsma. But there were signs – also after 18 September – (as will emerge later in this section) that UNPROFOR was considering Srebrenica as a serious option, while the military authorities in the Netherlands continued to assume that the operational zone would be Zenica.

This is, however, at variance with the statement of Commander Couzy, who said: 'I wasn't at all surprised. I saw it merely as a confirmation'.[339] In his opinion, the Army had feared since the summer of 1993 that a Dutch battalion would end up in Srebrenica; he thought that some officers tried to avoid this by speeding up the dispatch. According to Couzy, this accounts for the fixation with Zenica in Central Bosnia and the failure to pay serious attention to indications that Bosnia-Hercegovina Command had other priorities.

According to a later statement by Van Bouwdijk Bastiaanse, during a subsequent visit to Bosnia-Hercegovina Command early November 1993, it again appeared that 'Srebrenica was not on the cards.'[340] This too is remarkable, because an official message had come from New York on 26 October stating that Dutchbat was scheduled for deployment in Srebrenica, Zepa and Gorazde on 1 January

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336 CRST. First impression report preliminary visit UNPROFOR, 21/09/93. *Ibidem*, 101 Engineering Combat Group: Internal Memorandum no. 10929, 27/09/93. NIOD, Coll. Vermeulen. Document file 1, tab 20: Reconnaissance Trip *ibidem*: HQ BH Comd: file G3 Plans/080993 and G3 Plans/110993.

337 Interview F. van Bouwdijk Bastiaanse, 28/08/00.

338 CRST. Fax Sinninghe to Deputy G3 1 LK Kamphuis, 27/09/93 appendix: no.10929 Engineering deployment for 11 (NL) Infbat Lumbl YPR.50 and OSC, 27/09/93. CRST. *Genieondersteuning Dutchbat. Lessons Learned,* (Engineering Support Dutchbat. Lessons Learned) pp. I-2 – I-3.

339 Interview H. Couzy, 04/10/01.

340 Interview F. van Bouwdijk Bastiaanse, 28/08/00.

1994.[341] According to Couzy, the fear that Dutchbat might end up in Srebrenica could explain Reitsma's surprise on 1 December, a response that was shared by Minister Ter Beek.[342] It was, at any rate, known in The Hague that Bosnia-Hercegovina Command would announce the decision on 1 December.

The Army Corps and General Reitsma assumed two deployment options: either Zenica – Kakanj – Vares – Olovo or Zenica – Kakanj and the 'Safe Area of Srebrenica'.[343] The senior staff at the Royal Netherlands Army and Dutchbat thought that the ultimate choice would be Zenica. This was reflected in the orders issued to the second Dutchbat reconnaissance mission, which was headed by the acting Brigade Commander, Colonel Lemmen, and the Dutchbat commander, Lieutenant Colonel Vermeulen.

*Srebrenica and Zepa?*

The departure date of the reconnaissance mission, 29 November, seemed, at any rate, to be well-timed, because Lemmen, Vermeulen and the other members could now directly reconnoitre the operational zone that had been assigned to the Netherlands. But they returned home twenty days later without even having set foot in the enclaves of Srebrenica or Zepa: the VRS had categorically refused them permission to use the road.[344] Nevertheless the logistical and operational reconnaissance was not entirely non-productive. At the location the team had to determine with the greatest possible accuracy how the mission was to be executed.

The Dutchbat commander specified five sub-tasks: observation and patrols, the availability of a Quick Reaction Force, the occupation of key points in the enclaves, deterrence through military presence, negotiations, and convoy escorts. The task of the reconnaissance mission was to supply information with a view to fine-tuning the organization, the training, the preparations, and the allocation of materiel and personnel within Dutchbat.

The key questions were: was the deployment plan feasible; were the logistical support and the coordination with UNPROFOR realizable; how could the organization and equipment of Dutchbat be more tailored to the mission; which organizational, materiel and personnel adjustments were needed to move from a 'worst-case' to a 'tailor-made' organization; had any contracts been signed – or could they be signed – for the infrastructure and the delivery of building materials, water, food and fuel; and finally, was any additional training needed.[345]

The reconnaissance party flew to Split on 29 November. On 1 December, while they were at the Transport Battalion in Busovaca, they received a telephone call from General Reitsma in Zagreb, informing them that the destination was Srebrenica and Zepa. This came as a disappointment to Dutchbat, as it would clearly have preferred Zenica. Captain Jellema described the destination as 'the no-go option!'[346] The mission changed its reconnaissance plan. Lemmen and Vermeulen decided to contact the Canadian battalion in Visoko (which was responsible for Srebrenica) and the Ukrainian battalion in Sarajevo (which was responsible for Zepa). The members of Support Command would go to the Scandinavian battalion, Norbat, to find a suitable location for Operational Support Command.[347] During the briefings and discussions at the headquarters of these three battalions the reconnaissance team gathered information on the future operational zone with the aid of a questionnaire.

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341 DCBC, 1654. Coded message NYVI1283 (Biegman 1283), 26/10/93.
342 Interview H. Couzy, 04/10/01.
343 BLS. Director of Royal Netherlands Army Operations to dispatch list, undated: appendix: 'Taakstelling Verkenningsparty Dutchbat Unprofor' (Tasks of the Reconnaissance Party Dutchbat UNPROFOR) (p.2, item 3a), 25/11/93.
344 On 29 November 1993 the ABiH, the VRS and UNPROFOR signed an agreement in Geneva on restoration of *Freedom of Movement*. This document had little practical effect.
345 BLS. Royal Netherlands Army Director of Operations to dispatch list, undated: appendix: 'Taakstelling Verkenningsparty Dutchbat UNPROFOR' (p. 3, item 3b), 25/11/93.
346 Jellema, *First-In*, p. 57.
347 Jellema, *First-In*, p. 57.

*What will it be like in the enclaves?*

This is when the Dutch mission experienced UNPROFOR bureaucracy for the first time. It derived little encouragement from the cooperation of Bosnia-Hercegovina Command. Vermeulen summed up his negative experiences in his reconnaissance report under the heading: 'Currently identified facts and assumptions'. It transpired that the Chief of Staff at Bosnia-Hercegovina Command in Kiseljak did not yet know on 2 December that Srebrenica and Zepa had been assigned to Dutchbat; but this was put to rights on the same day. The commander of the Ukrainian battalion was under the impression that his battalion would soon be assigned to the three eastern enclaves of Gorazde, Zepa and Srebrenica. There were no written instructions for Dutchbat in the form of so-called 'Commander's Guidance'.

Bosnia-Hercegovina Command had also neglected to inform the VRS that the two enclaves had been assigned to Dutchbat. According to General Milovanovic, the VRS Chief of Staff, Bosnia-Hercegovina Command could not take this decision alone but needed political approval from Republika Srpska for stationing Dutchbat in Srebrenica and Zepa and for gaining access for the reconnaissance mission. In short, according to Vermeulen, there was no question of any guidance at all or any further development of the decision by Bosnia-Hercegovina Command to deploy Dutchbat in Srebrenica and Zepa.[348]

This also came to light in other ways. Bosnia-Hercegovina Command did not have any guidelines, either for operations in Safe Areas in general or for Srebrenica/Zepa in particular: each unit was expected to devise its own plan of action on the basis of the Security Council resolutions on the Safe Areas, the Standing Orders of UNPROFOR and Bosnia-Hercegovina Command, and the Rules of Engagement. Vermeulen again stated emphatically that his report was based solely on contacts with the Canadian and the Ukrainian battalion because the VRS refused permission for on-the-spot reconnaissance.

The conclusion of this limited reconnaissance mission led by Van Lemmen and Vermeulen at the start of December was that each battalion operated independently within Bosnia-Hercegovina Command. Therefore, each battalion had its own problems: logistics formed the main problem for the Scandinavian battalion, which was still working all-out on its logistical lines in the area around Tuzla. To the Dutch, this underscored the need for thorough logistical preparations: the Scandinavians still did not have their armoured vehicles and Leopard tanks at their disposal. They had also seriously compromised themselves by underestimating the fuel requirements by 100%. In view of the resistance by the warring factions the Scandinavians strongly advised Operational Support Command against setting up a base in the Serb area of Loznica. The stationing of a liaison officer was definitely needed in order to maintain effective cooperation with the headquarters of Bosnia-Hercegovina Command in Sarajevo, Kiseljak and Zagreb, while the temporary placement in Srebrenica of a representative of the UNPROFOR Civil Affairs Department was advisable for negotiating contracts with local parties.[349] Neither of these recommendations proved realizable. Only the former was acted on during the deployment period.

At the Canadian headquarters in Visoko, Lieutenant-Colonel Vermeulen and his team were extensively briefed on the situation in the enclave of Srebrenica, which would form Dutchbat's working environment. Vermeulen's notes suggest that there were three factions in the enclave: the mafia with its black market operations, the military faction (partly extremist), and the politicians. Srebrenica was officially demilitarized, but there was still illegal possession of weapons. As far as humanitarian aid was concerned, Dutchbat would have to respond to initiatives from the Displaced Persons; the Displaced Persons would not accept it if Dutchbat took the initiative itself. The people were not receiving enough food or salt because the VRS was cutting off the supplies. Dutchbat had to realize that supplies were

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348 CRST. Commandant 11 Infbat Lumbl GG (APC)/Dutchbat to BLS, attn: SC Crisis Staff, 12/12/93, sub 2.
349 Sie LL. Lessons Learned by the Commander of B Company of Dutchbat in Srebrenica, Chapter *Verkenningen in Bosnië*, (Reconnaissance in Bosnia) pp. 38-39.

needed at least twice a week if they were to retain their own deployability. With two companies in Srebrenica Dutchbat could man thirteen observations posts.

The Canadian commander in Srebrenica, Major Y. Bouchard, drew attention to the social consequences of working in Srebrenica. He warned against the risk of stress due to the absence of telephone contact with home, the lack of televisions, insufficient food (the Canadians in Srebrenica only ate combat rations out of solidarity with the people) and the absence of showers. He also advised that each soldier in the compound be allowed only two beers a day and that the OPs be alcohol-free.[350]

Jellema also learned from the Canadian commander that there were between 150 and 400 ceasefire violations a day. Supplies coming from Visoko were not transported along the shortest route via Sarajevo, but via Tuzla and Zvornik: the VRS refused permission for the Visoko route. Sometimes the VRS also refused to allow the evacuation of wounded soldiers for days.[351]

During its contact with the Dutch Transport Battalion in Busovaca the mission was introduced to all sorts of new and useful telecommunication systems. It saw for itself how the engineers could assist Dutchbat by constructing bunkers and installing security. It also met the local personnel in the compound and found out about the services for the Bosnian Muslims.[352]

In his reconnaissance report Vermeulen described the situation in the enclaves in greater detail. The access routes gave cause for great concern. There was one north-south connection from Tuzla to the enclave, measuring 100 kilometres, which was controlled by the Bosnian Serbs, who had to give permission for use. This permission was 'totally arbitrary'. It made the execution of the mission 'highly vulnerable' and could cause disruptions. Vermeulen reported that the information on the local and international organizations in Srebrenica was adequate (UnCivPol and UNHCR; interestingly, he did not mention *Médecins Sans Frontières).* In his opinion both sides to the conflict in and around Srebrenica had a good command structure. The ABiH in Srebrenica consisted of two lightly-armed brigades; the VRS was positioned around the enclave with three brigades and weapons ranging from AK-47 rifles to 155mm. artillery.

Food and fuel shortages, in particular, affected the mood and behaviour of the population, given the black market in these commodities. Vermeulen believed that, if the shortages continued, the large number of Displaced Persons could form a threat for Dutchbat. He reported that the warring parties did not respect either Security Council Resolution 824 or the demilitarization agreement of 8 May 1993. Due to a lack of personnel the Canadians had cut the number of observation posts from thirteen to eight. If Dutchbat was to perform its task effectively, it would have to restore the original thirteen as soon as possible. Under normal circumstances it would take 45 minutes to travel by armoured vehicle from the command post to the most remote observation post. Vermeulen observed that there was a wide gap between the red ceasefire line of UNPROFOR and the confrontation line of the VRS.

Briefly, Vermeulen identified four points that were important to Srebrenica: the manning of thirteen (instead of eight) observation posts; getting supplies to the observation posts and the required transport capacity; the throughput time for the evacuation of casualties and *last but not least* the border of the enclave.[353] His report on Zepa was less alarming, though the lack of a good road network could pose problems in terms of supplies. More observation posts would also be needed. Vermeulen's most important conclusion was, however, that according to the UNHCR, 70% more Displaced Persons were

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350 NIOD, Coll. Vermeulen. Verkenningsreis (Reconnaissance Trip) handwritten notes by Vermeulen on briefing Champagne, Cdr Cebrenica.

351 Sie LL. Lessons Learned by Commander of Dutchbat B company in Srebrenica, Chapter *Verkenningen in Bosnië*, p. 37.

352 NIOD, Coll. Vermeulen. Verkenningsreis: Staf 1AC to DO at Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff, no. G3OPN007, 23/11/93: handwritten notes by Vermeulen on briefing Champagne, Cdr Cebrenica.; *ibidem:* guidelines/action points Rec. Party Dutchbat, 24 November 1993. Jellema, *First-in*, pp. 55-73 *passim*. The commander of A Company, A. Jansen op de Haar, gave his own literary account of the reconnaissance mission in *De koning van Tuzla* (The King of Tuzla).

353 CRST. Commander 11 Infbat Lumbl GG (APC)/Dutchbat to BLS, attn: SC Crisis Staff, 12/12/93: Reconnaissance Report on Srebrenica and Zepa; sub sitrep Srebrenica

living in Zepa than were reported by the Ukrainian battalion and that therefore 'goods were being swindled on a large scale'.[354]

On the basis of the collected information Vermeulen drew the following conclusions in his provisional plan for the operational and logistical deployment of Dutchbat in the two East-Bosnian enclaves. The principal elements of the future mission were: to set up observation posts (13 in Srebrenica and 8 in Zepa), to secure the compounds (two or three in Srebrenica and one in Zepa) and a Weapon Collection Point in both enclaves, to have a Quick Reaction Force on permanent stand-by, to carry out patrols inside the enclave and along the ceasefire line, to improve the infrastructure and the roads, as well as internal logistics. He rated the threat greater in Srebrenica because of the larger number of Displaced Persons and the greater possibility of hostile behaviour from the civilian population. The two enclaves were only 15 kilometres apart as the crow flies, but the route designated by the VRS was 210 kilometres long. This necessitated bi-location of the staff, which meant building up an independent staff capacity with its own logistical and medical support.

The sting was in the report recommendations and conclusions. Vermeulen stated that the implementation of his 'unreconnoitred provisional plan' would depend on whether the senior political and military echelons of Republika Srpska allowed Dutchbat entry and did not 'seriously hamper' the logistical support during the build-up and the execution of the mission. The weather would have to favourable as well. As the road connection between Srebrenica and Zepa was so long, a shorter route would have to be found, or else an air corridor. However, military and political permission was required from the warring factions before helicopters could be flown between the two enclaves.

For the time being, the 'real-time' distance between the two parts of the operational zone still necessitated a split of the staff and the logistical capacity of Dutchbat and the detachment of a second surgical unit. As the distance between the observation posts and the compound was so great, the maximum time limit that the Netherlands set for medical treatment and transport to a casualty station (hospital) could not be guaranteed. Vermeulen concluded on the basis of this plan that Dutchbat could be deployed in four phases, as this would allow enough time for 'honing a few things in mid- or late January'.[355]

Although they did not exactly say so, Vermeulen's conclusions shaped the conditions for the execution of the mission. The main conditions were Freedom of Movement and the deployment of the helicopter detachment. He also pointed out that the personnel could not be provided with the required level of medical assistance. In a later statement to the NIOD Acting Brigade Commander Lemmen said that these conclusions were a signal to Bosnia-Hercegovina Command and the Dutch authorities that they should decide whether a dispatch was actually workable under the prevailing circumstances.[356]

Some key decisions were taken on the basis of Vermeulen's reconnaissance report. After consulting Bosnia-Hercegovina Command, Dutchbat chose Lukavac as the base for the logistics centre. The surgical unit – the casualty station – would be based in Srebrenica. The helicopter detachment would also be stationed in the enclave for air transport between Srebrenica and Zepa. Finally, acting on the advice of the Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army – but contrary to Vermeulen's proposal – the Minister of Defence decided to use the admission of the reconnaissance party to Srebrenica and Zepa as a test case. 'If the reconnaissance party is denied access to the areas, then the battalion will not leave!'[357] Clearly, neither Ter Beek nor Couzy wanted to run too many risks by ordering a deployment which had been inadequately reconnoitred.

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354 CRST. Commandant 11 Infbat Lumbl GG (APC)/Dutchbat to BLS, attn: SC Crisis Staff, 12/12/93: Reconnaissance report on Srebrenica and Zepa, sub sitrep Zepa.

355 CRST. Commander 11 Infbat Lumbl GG (APC)/Dutchbat to BLS, attn: SC Crisis Staff, 12/12/93: Reconnaissance Report on Srebrenica and Zepa, sub Conclusions/Recommendations. Detailed appendices were attached to the report on engineering matters and the medical facilities.

356 Interview J. Lemmen, 17/10/01.

357 CDPO/GNKD. Handwritten remark on a copy of the Reconnaissance Report in SCGD, no.7188/5784, 16/12/93.

## 9. The Canadians move out, the Dutch move in

For the time being, however, it did not look as if Dutchbat would leave for Bosnia. Though Dutchbat was ready to depart on 1 January 1994, a mounting crisis between UNPROFOR and the VRS hampered further reconnaissance and delayed the dispatch. As already mentioned, the VRS Chief of Staff, Brigadier General Milovanovic, had denied the Dutch reconnaissance party permission to visit the enclaves in December 1993. This was caused by a conflict between UNPROFOR and the VRS on the placement of UNPROFOR battalions and freedom of movement. Despite the agreements of 18 and 29 November 1993 on the restoration of freedom of movement, the VRS regularly rejected requests to allow the convoys to pass. Moreover, the convoys that were allowed through frequently came under fire. UNPROFOR positions were also frequent targets for machine-gun and mortar fire. The VRS also claimed the right to approve the replacement of UNPROFOR battalions. In the course of December the conflict on this question concentrated on Srebrenica. In order to derive a clear understanding of this situation the circumstances that preceded it need to be explained.

As explained in Chapter 3 of this part of the report, the Canadian battalion arrived by pure coincidence in Srebrenica in March 1993. However, it was the intention of the Canadian Government from the start to ensure that the tour of duty of the Canadian battalion was as short as possible. Initially, this was not obvious to the outside world; especially as the first company was reinforced by a second in May 1993. However, in October 1993, the Canadian strength in this enclave was again cut to one company. This came about through the replacement of an infantry battalion with a reconnaissance battalion (which is smaller), but a key role was also played by the overall reduction of the Canadian contribution to UNPROFOR.

Politically, the government in Ottawa was even considering pulling out of UNPROFOR altogether as it was not happy with, amongst others, the Safe Area concept. Ottawa felt that this was not helping to solve the conflict and that it only offered 'a respite from the terror', while new problems would arise in the long term. The experience on the ground in Srebrenica merely confirmed this vision, as the situation had, as a whole, not improved since the start of the stationing. The safety of the peace mission was not sufficiently guaranteed with the result that any further presence of the Canadian troops in the Safe Area of Srebrenica was considered too risky.[358] Besides, the living conditions were abysmal.[359]

The Canadian Government believed that the notion that the threat of air strikes could put pressure Bosnian Serbs was based on a miscalculation of the reaction of the Bosnian Serbs. According to Ottawa, the American vision did not take sufficient account of the risks that air power implied for the safety of the UNPROFOR troops on the ground, especially units in isolated areas like Srebrenica. Public threats by the Bosnian-Serb to take UNPROFOR personnel hostage proved that these risks were realistic.[360]

Although the Americans had promised to evacuate the Canadians from Srebrenica in the event of an emergency, Ottawa still decided to pull out its troops. Its arguments were tied in with more general political considerations. Canada's dissatisfaction about its limited involvement in the international decision-making on the former Yugoslavia strengthened the wish to withdraw from UNPROFOR. Besides, the Canadians were considering a structural revision of their defence tasks. After the election of 27 October 1993 the new, liberal Prime-Minister, Jean Chrétien, announced at the start of January 1994 the Canadian plan to withdraw from UNPROFOR.[361]

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[358] Interview A. Hywarren and Col T. Sparling, Ottawa 12/11/99. ABZ, Embassy Washington. Huitzing 103 to The Hague, 08/09/93. Briquemont, *Do Something General*, pp. 223-224. Interview B. Ashton, 30/05/2000. Confidential information (188).

[359] Interview T. Quiggin, 26/03/99.

[360] Confidential information (189).

[361] Confidential information (190). Interview Aaron Hywarren and Tim Sparling, 12/11/99. Taylor & Nolan, *Tested Mettle*, p.144. ABZ, Embassy Ottawa. Code Huitzing 001, 05/01/94.

Force Commander Cot and Bosnia-Hercegovina Commander Briquemont decided to respect the Canadian wish to leave Srebrenica by 1 December at the latest. Dutchbat would then be able to start building up a presence there on 1 January 1994. This would restore the UNPROFOR presence of at least two companies,[362] but there was a time lag between the departure of the Canadians and the arrival of the Dutch.

Sarajevo did not pursue its original intention to request that a Dutchbat company be stationed from 1 December 1993. This is why Briquemont, after consulting Cot on 12 October 1993, ordered the Scandinavian battalion to set up a company in Srebrenica.[363] The battalion commander refused to follow this order and sought support from his government (Sweden). Cot and Briquemont took this 'refusal to obey orders' seriously and apparently decided to pursue this slight on their competence to the bitter end. On 15 October they reported it to the Department of Peacekeeping Operations in New York. New York urged them to keep calm; there are no indications that Cot and Briquemont then reconsidered their original plan to deploy Dutchbat in Srebrenica; Sweden continued to refuse to send its troops there.

The furore settled down until the Commander of the Canadian battalion, Lieutenant Colonel Moore, announced that he and his company would be withdrawing from Srebrenica by 15 December at the latest. This was followed by telephone calls between Zagreb and New York. It is clear from the subsequent correspondence between Cot and Annan that Cot was counting on stationing Dutchbat in Srebrenica and was looking for political cooperation so that he could temporarily station a company of the Scandinavian battalion there.[364] The relevant governments were prepared to cooperate, albeit reluctantly, but only under the condition that the Scandinavian battalion was fully equipped. Presumably this could not be arranged at the drop of a hat. Meantime, the Chief of Staff at Bosnia-Hercegovina Command saw the replacement of the Canadian battalion as 'top priority'.[365] However, attempts to gently pressurize the Scandinavian battalion into deployment in Srebrenica proved unsuccessful.

Bosnia-Hercegovina Command also considered forming a multinational British-French-Canadian-Scandinavian unit of four platoons to bridge the gap in December. This plan likewise failed to get off the ground. Eventually, Bosnia-Hercegovina Commander Briquemont issued a formal command to the Scandinavian battalion on 11 December to deploy in Srebrenica. This triggered great irritation at the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and caused 'unnecessary embarrassment' to the three Scandinavian governments. Annan finally suggested that the British battalion in Gorazde be asked to temporarily assume the UNPROFOR mission in Srebrenica.[366] The British Government was prepared to cooperate but the VRS refused permission, saying that their weaponry was too heavy for the enclave.

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362 Interview J. Cot, 19/04/00. Interview Fr. Briquemont, 22/06/00. UNNY, DPKO, coded cables UNPROFOR: Z-1310, Cot to Annan, 15/10/93. Briquemont, *Do Something General*, 224.

363 UNGE, UNPROFOR, file 2.5 BH Command: Division of Civil Affairs, UNPF HQ. Fax no.115 from BHC Briquemont to Nordicbat 2, 12/10/93. UNNY, DPKO, coded cables UNPROFOR: Z-1310, Cot to Annan, 15/10/93. Briquemont, *Do Something General*, p. 224.

364 UNNY, DPKO, coded cables UNPROFOR: MSC2231, Annan to Stoltenberg, 19/11/93. *Ibidem*: Z-1480, Cot to Annan, 23/11/93. *Ibidem*: MSC-2248, Annan to Stoltenberg, 23/11/93.

365 UNGE, UNPROFOR, file BH Command 1 thru 13 Dec 93 (box 198): fax BH Command Main, 3/12/93 re: Minutes of the COS daily meeting – 03 Dec 93.

366 UNGE, UNPROFOR, file BH Command 1 thru 13 Dec 93 (box 198): fax Nordbat 2 to BH Command G 3 OPS, 5/12/93. *Ibidem*: fax 062240 Dec 93 from HQ BH Command Kiseljak to Nordbat 2, 6/12/93. *Ibidem*: fax 061145 Dec 93, HQ BH Command Kiseljak to HQ Unprofor Zagreb, 6/12/93. UNNY, DPKO, coded cables UNPROFOR: fax Nordbat S 2/3 to BHC G 3, 11/12/93. *Ibidem*: no.2381, Annan to Stoltenberg, 9/12/93. *Ibidem:* Z-1571, Cot to Annan, 12/12/93. *Ibidem*: MSC-2409, Annan to Stoltenberg (attn: Cot and Briquemont), 13/12/93 (also includes quote).

*The VRS obstructs replacement in Srebrenica*

The Bosnian-Serb resistance to the deployment of the heavy materiel of the Scandinavian battalion in its own area of operations around Tuzla was one of the core problems besetting UNPROFOR operations at the end of 1993. The VRS flouted the UN statement on Freedom of Movement issued in Geneva on 18/29 November[367] and constantly tried to obstruct the deployment of new battalions. It justified its position on the deployment of the Scandinavian battalion and Dutchbat by saying that no political decision had been taken by the Bosnian-Serb Government in Pale. The real aim of these actions was to get a say in the arming of the UNPROFOR battalions (specifically, the Leopard tanks of the Scandinavians) and their locations in Bosnia.

According to UNPROFOR, political motives may also have been involved. One possible factor was the new Franco-German peace initiative and the inevitable associated discussions on a partitioning of territory. The Bosnian Serbs again suggested exchanging Zepa and Srebrenica for parts of Sarajevo.[368] It is also conceivable that the VRS was trying to strengthen its own position by pulling out all the stops to impede the rotation of UNPROFOR battalions.

The VRS Chief of Staff explained why he had refused the Dutchbat reconnaissance by arguing that the government in Pale and Bosnia-Hercegovina Command first had to reach agreement on the task of the mission and on allowing it access. Later he claimed –wrongly – that the demilitarization agreement for Srebrenica and Zepa stated that only Canadian and Ukrainian troops would enter these enclaves. The VRS also blocked the replacement of the Canadians by the British with the – by now – well-known argument that the calibre of the British weapons was higher than those of the Canadians. The Canadians would be allowed to stay in Srebrenica, and only the Ukrainians would be allowed to deploy in the three eastern enclaves.[369] 'On the arguably wrong presumption that we will allow General Mladic to dictate what UNPROFOR forces can be deployed where' Bosnia-Hercegovina Command and the commander of the Ukrainian detachment in Bosnia drew up a plan for the deployment of the Ukrainian battalion in the three eastern enclaves and Sarajevo.[370]

Briquemont and Cot became increasingly annoyed by the VRS's attempts to obstruct the replacement of the Canadians in Srebrenica. They were afraid that the imminent departure of the Canadians would mean the end of the UN presence. This is why they were prepared to go to such lengths, even at the expense of inadvertently creating the impression that Mladic could dictate the deployment. Cot and Briquemont felt that Stoltenberg and the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations were leaving the tough jobs to them. Cot remonstrated with Stoltenberg, the Special Representative of the UN Secretary General, asking him what he himself had undertaken at the highest political level 'to help me to come out of this very difficult situation?'[371]

Stoltenberg told the Force Commander that he had not been idle: on 9 December, after receiving a memo from Cot, he had strongly urged Karadzic and Milosevic to cooperate. On 17 December he had again spelled out the situation to both men in no uncertain terms. Stoltenberg would continue his efforts to get Karadzic and Milosevic to cooperate but – he reminded Cot – ' there are no magic solutions available to any of us'. Cot was unconvinced and continued to believe that Stoltenberg should have done more than to impress upon Karadzic and Milosevic that 'at odd moments their

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367 Text of both statements in ABZ, DEU/ARA/05238. sec COREU to all COREU no.1432, 1/12/93.
368 UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 198, BH Command 01/12/93 – 13/12/93.Fax 170-199, Andreev to Thornberry, 1/12/93: weekly BH political assessment (no. 43).
369 UNNY, DPKO, coded cables UNPROFOR: no.2409, Annan to Stoltenberg, 13/12/93. CRST. Fax LO Dutchbat at BH Command G 3 Plans to Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff (Bouwdijk Bastiaanse), 9/12/93. UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 198, BH Command 11/12/93 – 16/12/93. Fax BH Command Kiseljak to HQ Unprofor Zagreb, 13/12/93. UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 59 file: Civil Affairs 2.5 BH Command. Cot to Annan, coded cable [no number], 17/12/93.
370 Confidential information (120).
371 UNNY, DPKO, coded cables UNPROFOR: Z-1602, Cot to Stoltenberg (infor Annan), 18/12/93.

behaviour was reprehensible'. 'Was that enough? Doesn't World Diplomacy have access to stronger deterrence?'[372]

Though Cot had vented his spleen, it had, of course, no effect at all on the situation. The issue was deadlocked for the time being. This view was shared by the Dutch Government, which then proceeded to draw its own conclusions. While the reconnaissance party was still in Bosnia, the Chief of Defence Staff, General Van der Vlis, had told Briquemont that Dutchbat could only be deployed after a reconnaissance of the operational zone. The Dutch Government persisted in this demand, despite the fact that Dutchbat Commander Vermeulen no longer found this additional reconnaissance necessary after his mission in early December.

*Who takes over from the Canadians? An impasse*

After the VRS demand for political approval, The Hague did not expect an initial reconnaissance of Srebrenica and Zepa to take place for the time being. The Dutch Government did not want to back down on its unconditional offer of the battalion to the United Nations, but it suggested on 17 December that Dutchbat be first allowed to do 'favoured deployment in central Bosnia-Hercegovina' with the option of transfer to the Safe Areas at a later stage.[373]

The question is whether The Hague was actually trying to tell the UN that it would rather that its troops did not go to Srebrenica. Cot derived the impression that the Dutch authorities were not interested in Srebrenica, which he considered to be 'the black sheep of the UNPROFOR locations'.[374] The action of the Dutch Government made very little impression on New York. Shortly afterwards, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations asked the military advisor of the Dutch Permanent Representative in New York for a reconnaissance schedule, which would be immediately followed by the dispatch of a quartermaster group and the main Dutchbat force.

Further action on the part of UNPROFOR was prompted by a visit from Force Commander Cot to Bosnia and Srebrenica on 23 December 1993. Cot concluded that reinforcement of the Canadian battalion with another unit was a 'priority' if UNPROFOR was to offer sufficient protection to the enclave. Cot's request to Paris to make a French company temporarily available was rejected; according to him, this is the only time that Paris refused a request for troops. Cot told Briquemont to explain this to Mladic. The replacement of the Canadians by the Dutch 'must firmly be presented as the only alternative'.[375] Briquemont then wrote to President Karadzic informing him that, like the Ukrainian battalion in Zepa, the Canadians would be leaving Srebrenica and that Dutchbat would take over the mission in both Safe Areas. A reconnaissance would take place in a few days.[376]

Karadzic replied that he had no objections and asked Briquemont to consult the VRS leaders to settle the details. However, a renewed appeal by Briquemont to the Bosnian-Serb President went unanswered when it appeared that Mladic and his Chief of Staff Milovanovic could not meet him before 10 January.[377] Mladic also wanted the supply convoys for Srebrenica and Zepa to come from Belgrade. This prompted the Chief of Staff at Bosnia-Hercegovina Command, Brigadier General A.I. Ramsay, to question whether 'the concept of safe or demilitarized areas is a viable one or not' given all the obstructions by the VRS in the eastern enclaves. All possibilities of winning cooperation from the

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372 UNNY, DPKO, coded cables UNPROFOR: fax CGZ 167, Stoltenberg to Cot, 20/12/93. Confidential information (118).
373 DS. Fax 647, DCBC to Col. Bokhoven, 9/12/93 appendix: Kolsteren to Briquement. ABZ, DPV/ARA/00209. Coded cable Kooijmans 540, 15/12/94. UNNY, DPKO, coded cables UNPROFOR: MSC-2449, Annan to Stoltenberg, 17/12/93.
374 Interview J. Cot, 19/04/00.
375 UNGE, UNPROFOR, file Office of the FC, DFC and COS 4 Oct 93 – 26 Mar 94:fax ZAY-269, Cot to Briquemont, 27/12/93 (Summary FC's visit to BH Cmd 22-25 December 1993). Interview J. Cot, 19/04/00.
376 Confidential information (119).
377 CRST. Fax BH Command Kiseljak to HQ Unprofor Zagreb, 01/01/94 (letter President Karadzic).

VRS had been exhausted. The use of force to get the convoys through could result in spiralling escalation and even the need to withdraw the UNPROFOR contingents.[378]

Though the stalemate now seemed irreversible, Yasushi Akashi, the new Special Representative of the Secretary-General managed to achieve a breakthrough. On 10 February 1994 Akashi received a number of concessions from the Bosnian-Serb President Karadzic during their first meeting at Sarajevo airport. These related to the restoration of Freedom of Movement and an end to searches of personal baggage. Karadzic also reaffirmed that he would cooperate in the deployment of Dutchbat in Srebrenica and Zepa and of the Ukrainian battalion in Gorazde.[379] Again, Karadzic said that Bosnia-Hercegovina Command had to settle the details with the VRS leaders. This meant that a new meeting had to be arranged with Mladic. Much to the relief of Bosnia-Hercegovina Command and the UN, on 18 January Mladic met the Chief Civil Affairs Officer of Bosnia-Hercegovina Command, V. Andreev, and consented to the deployment of Dutchbat in Srebrenica and Zepa. He reaffirmed this consent two days later to Commanders Cot and Briquemont.[380]

UNPROFOR did not just sit and await developments in the nine days that elapsed between gaining the consent of Karadzic and Mladic. Two serious problems were looming: on 10 January 1994 the NATO heads of government decided to deploy ground troops supported by air strikes to bring an end to the Bosnian-Serb obstruction of the replacement of UNPROFOR contingents in Srebrenica and Zepa, and of the opening of Tuzla Air Base.[381]. This decision triggered deep concern in the uppermost echelons of the UN and UNPROFOR, as such radical action was bound to jeopardize the relief in Srebrenica. In military terms the decision was untenable: UNPROFOR did not have the means to switch immediately from peacekeeping to peace enforcement. Besides, any military success would, in effect, create 'a hostage situation' for Dutchbat. A second – equally important – consideration was that this 'pre-emptive use of armed force' would 'destroy any credible perception of impartiality on the part of UNPROFOR'.

Despite everything, UNPROFOR was still reasonably confident that Dutchbat could be successfully deployed without any serious problems. A 'low-key approach' on the basis of Karadzic' consent seemed therefore the best solution. Bosnia-Hercegovina Command assumed that the VRS would acquiesce in the stationing of lightly-armed units which could not switch from being a peacekeeping force to an intervention force. Dutchbat and the Ukrainian battalion satisfied these preconditions. Any successfully enforced deployment of Dutchbat in Srebrenica 'would probably cause Dutchbat to fail in its mission' because it would find itself in a strongly hostile environment and the VRS would cut off the supply lines.[382] Akashi wanted to test Karadzic by sending out a new Dutch reconnaissance mission.[383] In his talks with Mladic on 20 January Cot was willing to cooperate in this approach by translating the NATO position into 'a portrayal of resolve rather than an example of sabre-rattling'.[384]

UNPROFOR's second problem after gaining Karadzic's consent on 10 January was the uncertainty as to whether the Dutch were still prepared to participate in the deployment. The UN had not responded to the Dutch suggestion of 16 December 1993 regarding deployment in Central Bosnia. The Dutch saw this as a more attractive option than Srebrenica and Zepa. On 22 December, at the request of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, R. van Veen, military advisor to the Permanent Representative in New York, had submitted a timetable for the deployment of Dutchbat: the departure

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[378] CRST. Fax BH Command Kiseljak to HQ Unprofor Zagreb, 01/01/94 (Eastern pockets).
[379] UNNY, DPKO, coded cables UNPROFOR: Z-030, Akashi to Annan, 10/01/94.
[380] CRST. Coded cable Unprofor Z-069, Cot to Annan, 18/01/94; UNNY, DPKO, coded cables UNPROFOR: Z-087. Cot to Annan, 20/01/94.
[381] Owen, *Balkan Odyssey*, p. 246.
[382] CRST. Fax BH Command Kiseljak to HQ Unprofor Zagreb, 'Srebrenica: use of force by BHC', 15/01/94.
[383] CRST. Unprofor inter-office memo, DFC MacInnes to SRSG, 15/01/94. (quotes); UNNY, DPKO, coded cables UNPROFOR: Z-055, Akashi to Annan, 14/01/94.
[384] UNNY, DPKO, coded cables UNPROFOR: Z-057, Cot to Annan, 15/01/94.

of the reconnaissance party from the Netherlands on 3 January and the departure of the first contingent with 25% of the personnel on 18 January 1994. On New Year's Eve the Ministry of Defence decided to postpone the dispatch of Dutchbat by at least two weeks. The dispatch of the first batch – including an infantry company – would now take place on 1 February 1994. 'Further decisions' on the deployment of the rest of Dutchbat would be taken after definitive orders had been received.

*Postponement of the deployment of Dutchbat?*

The reasons for this postponement do not entirely ring true. The Ministry of Defence had heard from its liaison officer at Bosnia-Hercegovina Command in Kiseljak that Briquemont was sticking to his decision to deploy Dutchbat in Srebrenica and Zepa. As Briquemont would not consult Mladic on access for the reconnaissance party until 12 January 1994 he could not – according to the Dutch Government – provide Dutchbat with 'clearly defined orders' before this date.[385] Without orders it was impossible to send out a reconnaissance mission.

It should be noted here that the reconnaissance mission in November-December was sent out without any information on the future operational zone. What is more, The Hague clearly held up the decision-making on the deployment of Dutchbat by only being prepared to discuss the dispatch of one infantry company to Srebrenica. The Ministry of Defence also made this distinction between the deployment of one company in Srebrenica and two in Central Bosnia in the second postponement decision (still to be discussed) of 14 January 1994. This is a clear indication that The Hague was clinging to the option of Central Bosnia. On 3 January the Permanent Representative in New York did no more than announce the Government's decision on postponement and ask two questions: was Central Bosnia still an option and was a draft version of the Dutchbat orders and task available?[386]

Two weeks later, on Friday 14 January 1994, the Minister of Defence, Ter Beek, acting on advice from the Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army and the Chief of the Defence Staff – which was apparently based on information from the liaison officer at Bosnia-Hercegovina Command – again decided to postpone the deployment of a Dutchbat company in Srebrenica by a week. Before the coded cable was sent to New York it transpired that the Department of Peacekeeping Operations had actually requested that the deployment be speeded up. According to the Deputy Permanent Representative in New York, Marchant et d'Ansembourg, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations suspected that the Dutch were procrastinating. He therefore requested permission to inform the Department of Peacekeeping Operations on the morning of Monday 17 January that the Dutch Government was still committed to swift deployment, but that guaranteed entry by a reconnaissance party to the area remained an 'absolute precondition'. As The Hague already knew that Force Commander Cot had asked Annan to urge the Dutch to send out a reconnaissance mission within four or five days, it decided to follow the advice of Marchant et d'Ansembourg.[387]

Accordingly, The Hague kept the Central Bosnia option open for a short while, but it soon conceded to the wishes of both New York and UNPROFOR to address the deployment in Srebrenica in the short term. This eased the strained relations between the Dutch Government and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and UNPROFOR just in time to make quick use of Mladic' consent of 18 January by giving the Dutch the guarantee they had requested. The military advisor to the Secretary-General, the Canadian Major General Baril, conveyed the request of Force Commander Cot on the same day, saying 'It is now crucial that UNPROFOR exploit this window of opportunity.' He asked that the reconnaissance party leave immediately, followed as soon as possible by the

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385 ABZ, DPV/ARA/00209. Celer 553 to Deputy New York, 31/12/93. DCBC: fax Royal Netherlands Army Operational Command to sub-commanders BLS etc., 31/12/93.
386 CRST. Fax no.93/515, Bokhoven (Zagreb) to Crisis Staff BLS, 04/01/94 appendix: fax no.3, Baril to Akashi, 03/01/94.
387 CRST. Fax LO/022, BH Command Kiseljak G3 Plans/LO Dutchbat to Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff, 11/01/94. CRST. HOZ to SCOCIS/PCDS/CDS, [17/01/94]; quote in appendix C: code NYVU040, 14/01/94. UNNY, DPKO, coded cables UNPROFOR: Z-057, Cot to Annan, 15/01/94.

quartermaster contingent.[388] On 20 January Ministers Ter Beek and Kooijmans consulted the Chief of Defence Staff and decided to honour the request. The reconnaissance party left on the following day.[389]

## 10. The third reconnaissance mission: Srebrenica and Zepa (21 January – 10 February 1994)

On 18 January 1994 Dutchbat Commander Vermeulen received orders to get an operational and logistical reconnaissance party ready for departure to Srebrenica on 21 January. A group of fourteen persons left for Split on the same day under the command of Major Peek, Head of Operations at Dutchbat, and arrived in Srebrenica four days later. The aim of the reconnaissance was to collect additional information for the deployment plan that Vermeulen had drafted in December. The main points were embedded in a list of questions.

The first question was whether the three-phase development was acceptable to Bosnia-Hercegovina Command and whether Split was a suitable debarkation point. The other questions related to the viability of the plan for logistical support by Dutchbat's own Operational Support Command; the possibility of assistance from Bosnia-Hercegovina Command with trailers and other heavy transport; contracts for infrastructural facilities; the recruitment of local contractors; the supply of ammunition, fuel, water and building materials; the incorporation of Dutchbat in the evacuation plan of Bosnia-Hercegovina Command; the possibility of transferring equipment from the Canadian and the Scandinavian battalion to speed up the deployment; arrangements for medical evacuation from Srebrenica during the build-up; and finally, any necessary additional training to ensure efficient implementation of the mission in the Safe Areas.[390]

The journey from Split to Srebrenica proceeded without a hitch. After four days of intensive reconnaissance and an initial encounter with the deplorable living conditions in the enclave Major Peek and his party left for Zepa on 29 January, travelling along a 125-kilometre route assigned by the VRS, to embark on the second stage of their mission. This part of the mission was less fluent: Bosnia-Hercegovina Command had to go to considerable lengths to secure VRS cooperation.[391]

The reconnaissance party faxed its findings on Srebrenica to the Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff in The Hague on 2 February. These consisted of a collection of eight, partly handwritten documents with detailed situational sketches. The conclusions were that, first of all, the eight existing observation posts (OP) needed to be manned and the daily patrols needed to be stepped up in order to make the enclave safe. This would require a total of 180 men.

'Para-flares' (light grenades), TOW anti-tank missiles, hinged telescopes and a Quick Reaction Force were needed to secure the safety of the personnel (at the OPs). Access to the observation posts presented a serious problem. There was 'one reasonably passable paved road' in the Safe Area; the rest were 'narrow, steep dirt tracks'. The movements of caterpillar vehicles in wintry conditions had made these tracks unusable and the OPs were now inaccessible to overland traffic. A caterpillar bulldozer was needed to restore these routes. As it took so long to reach the poorly accessible OPs (at least a half-hour and at most a two and a half hour walk) the deployment of helicopters was 'essential' for supplies, medical transport and for building new OPs. Dutchbat would also have to assume more operational responsibility than the Canadians, especially with regard to the protection of the Post Office building in the town (which the UNMOs and UnCivPol used as an office) and the UNHCR warehouse. It was also

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388 ABZ, PVNY. Fax Deputy in NY Milad to Defence/DS, 18/01/94, appendix: fax Baril to Netherlands Mission, 18/01/94.
389 CDPO/GNKD. fax from Royal Netherlands Army Operational Command to sub-commanders of the BLS etc, 18/01/94. DOKLu STAOOPER. Fax from Royal Netherlands Army Operational Command to sub-commanders of the BLS etc. 19/01/94.
390 Jellema, *First-in*, pp.74-75; CRST. no. OZ/7654, from Bouwdijk Bastiaanse to dispatch list, 20/01/94, appendix: 'Taakstelling verkenningsparty Dutchbat UNPROFOR', 18/01/94.
391 Jellema, *First-in*, pp. 75-81.

suggested – without further explanation – that, if necessary, Dutchbat could undertake part of the distribution of UNHCR goods.

An important aspect of the operational concept was the contact with the civil authorities and the parties to the conflict. According to the reconnaissance party, the contact between the Canadian battalion and the local authorities was scarce. Weekly meetings were held between the commander, UNHCR, the International Red Cross and other organizations, and the War President of the municipal council of Srebrenica, who acted as an intermediary to the Displaced Persons. The Canadians said that they had no contact with the ABiH. There were contacts with the VRS at command level and via a telephone line at a few OPs. All in all, the picture was too negative; more details will follow in Chapter 7 of this part of the report.

The reconnaissance party recommended that the contact with the warring parties be improved. Top priority was therefore accorded to the allocation of Dutch interpreters who 'had no affiliations with any party'. It would then be possible to work seriously with the VRS and ABiH on the demilitarization of the enclave.

The second recommendation involved a thorough revision of the deployment plan. It was impossible to set up three compounds as envisaged in Vermeulen's plan. B Company and not the SSC – as Vermeulen originally intended – would be stationed in the Canadian compound, which needed all-out renovation in order to improve safety and sanitation (there were no showers or properly working toilets). The other units (an infantry company, the SSC, the signals platoon, the helicopter detachment and a temporary engineering company) would be stationed in a large compound outside Srebrenica. The chosen location, a factory complex in Potocari close to the enclave border and the VRS positions, was hardly ideal, but the required safety level could be achieved by 'heavy efforts by the engineers'. The reconnaissance party also proposed improving the Weapon Collection Point and moving it to a location outside the town of Srebrenica.

The deployment was planned in five phases. During the first phase, a quartermaster group from the engineers and some the logistical personnel would be brought in to build the new compound in Potocari. In the second phase platoon and group commanders would be deployed for coordination with the Canadians. They would be followed by the first contingent of the main force (B Company, part of the SSC, part of the helicopter detachment and the signals platoon), which would pave the way for phase four – the relief of the Canadian battalion.

The final phase, the arrival of the second infantry company and the rest of the SSC, would come after the Canadians had left. The reconnaissance party did not venture a timetable for the deployment. Ultimately, the entire operation depended on three factors: the support of Bosnia-Hercegovina Command for the transportation of containers and heavy building materials from Split to Srebrenica, the weather conditions and, last but certainly not least, the attitude of the warring parties.[392]

*The installation of Dutchbat*

The installation of Dutchbat would prove to be an extremely large operation. The twelve-year-old complex of the battery factory in Potocari offered various advantages. It was large enough to accommodate the main force in the sheds, the factory hall and the office complex. It had a good internal road network and was enclosed by fencing. One disadvantage was that the complex had been seriously damaged by fighting at the start of the conflict and later by vandalism. According to the engineers, much of the 'heavily' damaged complex was unusable because of 'asbestos and the presence of machinery'. There was a reasonable chance that the street lighting, the sewage and parts of the water system could be repaired. According to the results of analysis carried out in the Netherlands, the (partly chemical) waste was relatively harmless and could be easily cleared. The office building would house the

[392] BLS. Fax Canbatt 2 UNPROFOR (Peek/rec.party) to Crisis Staff/BLS, 02/02/94. Appendix A.

battalion staff and the casualty station. It had to be made water-resistant and draught-free and secured with a two-storey-high defence wall.

The Srebrenica authorities consented to the use of the factory complex as a compound; the UNPROFOR Civil Affairs Department in Sarajevo would finalize the necessary contracts. No extra materials were needed to repair the roof or make the building water-resistant and draught-free. Heating and sanitation needed to be installed throughout the complex. The greatest challenge would be securing the complex by means of a defence wall consisting of segments, concertina entanglement and five watchtowers. The need to bring materials from Lukavac (the base of Operational Support Command), possible obstruction by the VRS – through red tape and checkpoints – and the shortage of crushed stone, sand and gravel in the Safe Area precluded any predictions on the duration of the work.[393]

The reconnaissance provided very few new perspectives on medical care and hygiene. A plan had been drafted for the lay-out and renovation of the casualty station in the office building in Potocari. Specifications were drawn up for a standard medical kit for the observation posts and the compounds in Srebrenica and Potocari and extra medical equipment was requested for the casualty station and the company help posts. Information from the aid organizations of *Médecins Sans Frontières*, the International Red Cross and UNHCR indicated that helicopter connections with Zepa were almost impossible. As it would take over eight hours to transport patients by road, a surgical team had to be stationed in Zepa to satisfy the stipulation that in peace time soldiers must be within a forty-five minute radius of a hospital. It would be possible to station the helicopter detachment and to lay a short airstrip for single-engine emergency landings on the south side of the compound.[394]

The medical part of the plan also addressed the humanitarian assistance that Dutchbat could provide in Srebrenica. It included a list of the medical equipment and doctors that were needed in the enclave. There were various ways in which Dutchbat could support the work of *Médecins Sans Frontières*: for example, by providing medical screening, medication, dressings and equipment and by offering the services of its own medical personnel and specialists on an *ad hoc* basis. Dutchbat could also help to improve hygiene by teaming up with *Médecins Sans Frontières* and the International Red Cross to combat scabies, fleas, lice and (tape-) worm, open TB, hepatitis A and diarrhoea. The installation of a rubbish tip or an incinerator to improve the waste processing would also help to raise levels of hygiene. Extra vitamins and protein, winter clothing and shoes for adults were necessary in order to improve the health of the Displaced Persons.[395]

The logistical part of the reconnaissance concentrated mainly on providing for the immediate needs directly after arrival in Srebrenica, the transfer of supplies from the Canadians and the transport of materiel from Split to Srebrenica. The containers and vehicles would be brought from Split to Lukavac, and then travel on to Srebrenica – on a priority basis – in at least two convoys of fifteen vehicles a day. All the APCs would be brought by trailer to Tomislavgrad and then be driven over 'goat paths' to Srebrenica. The caterpillar treads of the APCs therefore had to be adapted for driving through snow and on steep slopes.[396]

The engineering platoon would have to work intensively to get the roads, the OPs and the compounds ready for use. It was the scale of the operation rather than the materials that gave most cause for concern. This was partly due to the fact that the Canadians had always viewed their stay in Srebrenica as temporary and had only the bare minimum of facilities. The reconnaissance party also reported that the Canadians had carried out scarcely any maintenance. As a result, the necessary improvements to the existing OPs and the compound in Srebrenica would form a large-scale operation for Dutchbat. The main parts of the plan consisted of improvements to the safety of the locations by renewing or raising the bunkers and building defence walls, by laying sanitation and a safe electricity

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393 BLS. Fax Canbatt 2 UNPROFOR (Peek/rec. party) to Crisis Staff/BLS, 02/02/94. Appendices B and G.
394 BLS. Fax Canbatt 2 UNPROFOR (Peek/rec. party) to Crisis Staff/BLS, 02/02/94. Appendices C and D.
395 BLS. Fax Canbatt 2 UNPROFOR (Peek/rec. party) to Crisis Staff/BLS, 02/02/94. Appendix C: umanitarian aid Srebrenica.
396 BLS. Fax Canbatt 2 UNPROFOR (Peek/rec. party) to Crisis Staff/BLS, 02/02/94. Appendix E.

grid and by paving the parking lot. The same activities were envisaged for the compound in Potocari, plus the construction of shelters and a parking lot for the APCs.

It was not possible to enlist local assistance. A start had been made on building a quarry, but large quantities of construction timber still had to be brought from the Netherlands. The possibility of purchasing other building materials in the region of Lukavac was not ruled out. Contingency funds of DM 150,000 were requested for this purpose. Extra sanitary units were also needed. The engineering report stated that a caterpillar bulldozer and a hydraulic digger were needed to restore and maintain the roads to the OPs. Also, the supply route between Zvornik and Bratunac was in an abysmal state; 50-centimetre-deep potholes were no exception. However, as there were other urgent jobs that needed doing inside the enclave, there was no way that this key logistical artery could be improved in the short term. Top priority had to go to the transportation of the engineering containers so that the first minimum improvements to safety, accommodation and hygiene could be realized.[397]

The reconnaissance report on Zepa was equally accurate and detailed.[398] Radical action was also needed in Zepa to ensure responsible billeting, supplies and operational deployment for A Company. As Zepa was situated at an altitude of 1,000 metres, extra vehicles would be needed for movements through the snow-covered terrain in the winter. The compound was also in need of expansion and improvement and the OPs would have to be improved in the spring. Hence, a large engineering detachment was also required in Zepa. As A Company was not eventually deployed in Zepa but in the vicinity of Tuzla (see Section 12 below) this brief summary of the report will suffice here.

The reconnaissance report on Srebrenica formed the basis for the deployment of Dutchbat I. It delivered a wealth of new operational, logistical and engineering information. Many of the operational aspects were not discussed in detail in the contact with the Canadian reconnaissance party in December 1993. These now arose during the discussions in the actual operational zone. Visits to the OPs, participation in patrols and direct personal observations provided a clear picture of the situation and the working circumstances. The need to increase the number of OPs did not come to light until January 1994.

With thirteen OPs and intensive patrolling the operational plan was ambitious. Fundamental logistical and engineering decisions were now taken on the location and construction of compounds and on safety and supply lines inside and outside the operational zone, but no significant changes to the plan were necessary. Without this reconnaissance many decisions would have been taken several weeks later at the start of the deployment. Now at least some time had been gained to allow the military authorities in the Netherlands to respond. From this perspective, the demand of the Dutch Government for an *in situ* reconnaissance was certainly sensible. But it would be no guarantee for smooth deployment.

## 11. Departure and deployment: February – July 1994

The large-scale operation to take Dutchbat from the Netherlands via Split, Brela and Duvno to the base of Support Command in Lukavac and the operational zones of Srebrenica and Zepa began on 26 January 1994. The first stage went from the Netherlands to the Croatian port of Split. All the Dutchbat materiel was stored in hangars at the air base in Soesterberg where a shortage of expertise meant that it was not always skilfully packed in containers. The containers and the heavy materiel were then taken to the Dutch port of Flushing, where they were placed on two ships bound for Split. The first ship had engine problems and did not anchor in Split until 16 February – a week later than planned. The second had arrived two days previously. This created huge problems for Operational Support Command and

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397 BLS. Fax Canbatt 2 UNPROFOR (Peek/rec. party) to Crisis Staff/BLS, 02/02/94. Appendix G.
398 CRST. Fax Barracks Command Oranje Barracks Schaarsbergen to Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff, 15/02/94 Appendix: reconnaissance findings on Zepa [15/02/94].

the deployment, because the first ship was carrying the goods that were scheduled to go first to Lukavac and Srebrenica.[399]

The second part of the exercise involved the transport of 57 vehicles plus trailers as well as 114 drivers and escorts for the quartermaster group by rail from 't Harde to Zagreb on 27 January. This group arrived in Split on 31 January. On the same day the other 40 quartermasters were flown from Schiphol to Split. The journey from Split to Lukavac (395 km) formed the next stage. The quartermaster group made this trip first and arrived in Lukavac on 10 February. The main force would leave Split in its own vehicles and travel to Lukavac via Brela and Duvno in two days and then in one day to Srebrenica or Zepa. The first contingent of the 320-strong main force was flown to Split by Martinair on 8 February 1994; the second contingent followed on 22 February, a week later than planned due to stagnation in the unloading of the ships at Split.[400]

For various reasons the relocation of the materiel and delivery to the right place was a protracted and complicated operation. The Army Logistics Centre and Support Command had underestimated the enormous amounts of red tape connected with Customs and licence plates in Croatia and Bosnia and the problems of transporting vehicles along the narrow and poor roads in Bosnia. The unpacking of some of the materiel was also badly organized. The staff of Support Command had headed off too quickly for Lukavac and had not left enough information in Split on the contents and order of transportation of the containers. To complicate matters further, Bosnia-Hercegovina Command and Zagreb provided only sporadic assistance for the transport of heavy materiel and containers. The chances of borrowing transport capacity from other battalions were limited: their own operations came first. Consequently, after several weeks, the containers destined for Dutchbat were still scattered across various intermediate stations – UNPROFOR bases – along the route from Split to Lukavac, notwithstanding the ample use that was made of the temporary surplus capacity of the Transport Battalion.[401]

The entire logistical operation was also delayed by the chronic problem of Bosnian-Serb permission to use the roads. This came far less quickly than Dutchbat would have wished and Bosnia-Hercegovina Command was unable to speed up the process. As a result, the deployment took far longer than was anticipated. The bottlenecks in the deployment plan were pinpointed on 25 January by Major M.L.A. Boeren of Support Command, who formed part of the reconnaissance mission. According to Boeren, Bosnia-Hercegovina Command said that it was giving priority to 'bringing in Dutchbat', but he had seen no signs of this. He therefore anticipated huge problems with the transport of the containers. Boeren calculated that, with the fourteen vehicles provided by Bosnia-Hercegovina Command and the restrictions on the use of the roads, it would take 396 days to transport the engineering materiel. His conclusion was grim but clear: 'Dutchbat would have to get on with it themselves.'

Bosnia-Hercegovina Command shared Boerens' opinion: the Chief of Staff said that the deployment of two new battalions – the Dutch and the Malaysian – would 'be achieved in about a year' with the current logistical capacity of Bosnia-Hercegovina Command.[402] Bosnia-Hercegovina Command continued to give priority to the deployment of Dutchbat, because the Canadian Government was still pushing for the withdrawal of its battalion. Another background factor was that

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399 W. van Dullemen, 'Opzet, inrichten en "Lessons Learned" of Support Command'; Voordracht voor Dienstvakdag Intendance, 1994, p. 7. Interview F.G. van der Hooft, 17/12/01.

400 DOKL/OZ. Operation order no 24 (DUTCHBAT UNPROFOR), 01/02/94, Appendix T: (Relocations); 'Eerste deel hoofdmacht 'Dutchbat' naar Bosnië' (First contingent of Dutchbat force to Bosnia), *Defensiekrant* 10/02/94; 'Grenadiers begin maart in Srebrenica' (Grenadiers in Srebrenica at the start of March), *Defensiekrant* 24/02/94; Jellema, *First-in*, pp. 83-84.

401 W. van Dullemen, 'Opzet, inrichten en "Lessons Learned" van Support Command'; Voordracht voor Dienstvakdag Intendance, 1994, pp. 11-13. CRST. Satcom from C-1 (NL) UN Sptcmd to SC-O Crisis Staff, 10/02/94. CRST. Fax LO/051 BH Command G3 Plans/LO Dutchbat to Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff, 10/02/94.

402 CRST. Fax Boeren to CS Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff, 25/01/94. CSKL 1994: fax HQ BH Command Kiseljak to HQ Unprofor Zagreb, 12/02/94.

NATO had still not ruled out the use of force to realize the military rotation in Srebrenica. UNPROFOR wanted to prevent this.[403] All in all, this did very little to speed up the deployment of Dutchbat. As if that were not enough, the normal supply of Dutchbat had monopolized part of the container transport capacity from the moment it arrived in Srebrenica in early March.

At the end of July 1994, 157 containers destined for Dutchbat in Srebrenica were still standing at various intermediate stations.[404] However, all these logistical constraints did not seriously affect the operational deployment; they were particularly evident in the first period (Dutchbat I), manifesting themselves in delays to the road repairs and the construction and improvement of the compounds and the OPs, shortages of spare parts and impassable roads to the observation posts.

In the longer term the ammunition supply became a vexed question: only 16% of the planned supply entered the enclave.

## 12. The operational zone of Srebrenica and Zepa changes to Srebrenica and Sapna-finger

The operational deployment encountered fewer problems. The quartermaster engineering detachment arrived on 28 February; the battalion commander, Vermeulen, Bravo Company, part of the SSC and part of the engineering detachment arrived on 1 March. C Company and the remainder of the other units joined them at the start of April. According to the deployment plan, C Company would go to Zepa. However, in mid-March Bosnia-Hercegovina Command had decided that it was more urgent to reinforce the UNPROFOR presence in the area around Tuzla. After consultation with the Dutch authorities, A Company was placed temporarily under the command of the Scandinavian battalion and directed to Tuzla Air Base, which would be reopened for UNHCR flights. UNPROFOR wanted to make sure that flights could resume without disruption by strengthening the peacekeeping force around the air base.

In the meantime, Bosnia-Hercegovina Command had decided against replacing the Ukrainian detachment in Zepa with C Company of Dutchbat. This meant that Zepa was no longer on the cards as far as Dutchbat was concerned. On 15 March Bosnia-Hercegovina Commander, General Rose, spoke to the Dutch Chief of Defence Staff, General Van der Vlis, about stationing all the Dutchbat companies in Srebrenica after the end of the temporary mission at Tuzla Air Base.[405] But it never came to this. The personnel at Bosnia-Hercegovina Command were thinking more and more about stationing A Company in the area known as Sapna-finger near Tuzla (see the map on page #). This relocation would form part of an UNPROFOR redeployment in Sector North East and give a 'more balanced covering'. The final decision was taken on this in mid-May.[406]

The result of this decision by Bosnia-Hercegovina Command and Sector North East was that B and C Company, and not A and B Company, would be deployed in Srebrenica and that A Company would be assigned a task in the vicinity of Tuzla. The definitive stationing of A Company in Sapna-finger meant that the separation of the Dutchbat companies was no longer temporary, but permanent. This had implications for the command structure. The reconnaissance report of December 1993 had assumed that some of the battalion staff would be stationed in Zepa. When A Company was assigned to the area around Simin Han Dutchbat became responsible for two operational zones and could not command A company – the part of the battalion that was not in the enclave – from Srebrenica. As

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403 CRST. Fax 423/94, BH Command Kiseljak ACOS G3 Almstrom to HQ Unprofor Zagreb, 24/02/94. UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 200 file: HB Command 24 Feb thru 1 Mar 94. BH Command Kiseljak to NQ BH Cmd LO Dets, 24/02/94 appendix: Minutes of COS daily meeting 24 Feb 94.

404 CRST. Fax 754, staff Support Command to Royal Netherlands Army Crisis staff, 14/07/94. SMG, 1023, fax TPT 301, LCC Trogir to Dutch Spt Cmd, 31/07/94.

405 DCBC Sitrep Peace Operations no. 052/94, 15/03/94.

406 UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 214, file: BH Command 27/02/95 – 03/03/95. Fax BH Command Kiseljak to HQ Unprofor Zagreb, 07/04/94 (redeployment options).

there was no freedom of movement the battalion commander could not stay abreast of the situation in Sapna-finger and had to rely on the judgement of his second-in-command when viewing the situation.

Vermeulen then made the point that, as the Dutchbat commander, he continued to be responsible for A Company in Simin Han, but the only practical solution was to permanently delegate the operational responsibility. In order to implement this decision it was necessary to station some of his staff in Simin Han. His second-in-command had been with the company in Tuzla from the start; after mid-May Vermeulen transferred a few staff officers to Simin Han as well. These were the Head of Intelligence, Captain Van de Have, and some members of the operational section. The distribution of Dutchbat between two operational zones also meant that the headquarters of Sector North East wanted to deal direct with A Company and circumvent the formal line of command via Potocari.

The dual deployment also had certain advantages. The logistical support for A Company was greatly facilitated by the fact that it was stationed the vicinity of Tuzla. The forty-kilometre route between Lukavac and Simin Han was far shorter than the route between Lukavac and Srebrenica and did not pass through Bosnian-Serb territory. It would at least get better logistical support than Srebrenica and hence would have superior operational possibilities. The operations of A Company in Simin Han are not discussed in this report because they fall outside the spectrum of Dutchbat and the fall of Srebrenica.[407] The troops worked in a different type of engagement under similar circumstances, which included direct attacks by the warring factions, sometimes resulting in serious injuries or permanent physical damage. Tragedy struck Dutchbat for the first time when Private Jeffrey Broere of the Dutchbat III Company in Simin Han was killed by artillery fire on 29 March 1995. His colleagues wrote in the Dutchbat book of remembrance: 'He was hit on the way to the bunker. He died of his wounds on the way to the Norwegian hospital. The personnel at the casualty station fought hard to save him but to no avail. We have lost in Jeffrey a colleague and a friend.'[408]

## 13. The Canadians are out of it – Dutchbat gets started

The Dutchbat quartermaster group that arrived in Srebrenica on 28 February met there part of the reconnaissance party from the end of January that had returned to Srebrenica from Kiseljak as an advance detachment on 6 February 1994.[409] On 11 February, after arriving in the enclave, this team, led by the SSC Commander, Major Oerlemans, was in close contact with the Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff in The Hague, the Dutch liaison officer at Bosnia-Hercegovina Command, the battalion staff and Support Command in Lukavac about the further preparations for the deployment. Oerlemans' team arranged with the Canadian battalion that the command would be handed over after the arrival of the first group at the end of February; they also compiled an inventory of equipment and supplies that Dutchbat would take over from the Canadians, and worked out in detail how the accommodation would be organized during the build-up.

From an operational perspective it was important, in the three weeks prior to the official handover, for the team to meet the civil and military authorities and establish initial contacts with the VRS commanders. These 'chaperoned outings' with Canadian Major Bouchard and the UNMO team gradually led to input in the discussions. Apparently, towards the end of February Major Oerlemans, the head of the liaison department, Major A. Derksen and the intelligence staff officer, Captain Ten Have, had become the discussion partners for their Canadian counterparts. This introductory period allowed them to familiarize themselves with the problems in and around the enclave and to get to know the main players.

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[407] The Dutchbat II and Dutchbat III publications *Dutchbat on Tour* and *Dutchbat in vredesnaam* (Dutchbat in the name of peace) discuss the operations in Sapna-finger.
[408] *Dutchbat in vredesnaam*, p. 233.
[409] Sie LL. Lessons Learned from Commander of B Company Dutchbat in Srebrenica by E. Jellema. Chapter: Verkenningen in Bosnië (Reconnaissance in Bosnia), p. 49.

The VRS was in two minds about the composition of Dutchbat. Colonel Vukovic, the VRS officer with whom the Canadians and Dutchbat had the most contact, said at the first meeting that he was 'very pleased' with the 'number of Dutchbat soldiers' as they could now start demilitarizing the enclave in earnest. Less enthusiastic was the response of a VRS delegation the next day in Milici during the handover of the Dutchbat deployment plan and organization chart. The prospect of a helicopter detachment and anti-tank weapons met with huge opposition. The delegation claimed that 'the treaty' prohibited weapons with a calibre greater that 12.7 mm. in the enclave. The VRS refused to allow helicopters under any circumstances, arguing that they would have a destabilizing effect, as the ABiH would shoot them down and then lay the blame on the VRS. Dutch proposals for the use of the main road between Zvornik and Bratunac and the allocation of a liaison officer to the VRS to assist at roadblocks were also greeted with little enthusiasm.[410] Permission from VRS headquarters on the helicopters and anti-tank weapons failed to materialize. Later Vukovic said that he would like to know the arrival date of Dutchbat so that he could welcome it.[411]

It became clear from the discussions that the VRS and the ABiH both feared that the other party would misuse the replacement of the Canadians by Dutchbat. The VRS feared ABiH provocation along the enclave border in order to incite Dutchbat intervention – these tactics had never worked with the Canadians. The ABiH, in turn, predicted that the VRS would try to push its positions forward across the ceasefire line and into the enclave, and that the Bosnian-Serb army would try to occupy the no man's land between Zepa and Srebrenica. Both parties offered unsolicited advice on the best sites for new observation posts.[412] This is how the Dutch UN troops made their first acquaintance with the standpoints of both sides, the reciprocal distrust and the attempts to win the trust of Dutchbat or manipulate it even in the early contacts.

The convoys travelling from Lukavac to Srebrenica on 28 February and 1 March were not obstructed in their Freedom of Movement. The quartermaster group comprising 130 people and 56 vehicles drove into Potocari at 18.45 hours on 28 February, while the 238 members and 67 vehicles of B Company drove in a day later at 16.00 hours accompanied by an engineering group and part of the support and services company. This group of convoys and battalion commander Vermeulen were welcomed by VRS Captain M. Nikolic at Iron Bridge in Zvornik.

Dutchbat was scarcely given any time to acclimatize. Two and a half months had passed since the departure deadline of 15 December 1993, set by the Canadians. The incumbent troops therefore made haste with the handover. On 2 March, the day after the arrival of B Company, the Canadian battalion started transferring the observation posts, the signals centre and the command centre (a.k.a. the 'Ops Room') to Dutchbat. The formal ceremony in which Major Bouchard handed over command to B Company Commander, Jellema, was held at 15.00 hours on 3 March in the compound in Srebrenica.[413]

The Canadian battalion planned to leave on 6 March. However, on the day of the handover the Muslim civil and military authorities in de enclave launched a strong protest against the VRS occupation of the 'corridor' between Zepa and Srebrenica. According to the Canadian commander, the existence of this corridor had never been formalized. UNPROFOR's hands were tied because the territory in question lay outside the Safe Area. The ABiH interpretation was that the Canadians had acquiesced in the change to the VRS positions. They claimed that Commander Bouchard had sold Muslim territory to the Serbs.[414] When UNPROFOR subsequently refused to open the Weapon Collection Point for the ABiH, the Canadian compound in Srebrenica was blockaded by a crowd that swelled by the day; 500 people on 4 March and 2,000 a day later. It was an orchestrated demonstration

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410 MID/Royal Netherlands Army. Milinfo Srebrenica, 151-152: meeting reports 12/02/94 and 13/02/94
411 MID/Royal Netherlands Army. Milinfo Srebrenica, 151-152: meeting reports 20/02/94.
412 MID/Royal Netherlands Army. Milinfo Srebrenica, 151-152: meeting reports 18/02/94, 20/02/94, undated, 27/02/94, 01/03/94. Jellema, *First-in*, pp. 96-100.
413 DND. CCUnprofor sitrep 01/03/94. *Ibidem*, CCUnprofor sitrep 03/03/94.
414 Interview Y. Bouchard, 15/11/99.

designed to impede the departure of Canbat and a sign that the authorities distrusted the newly arrived Dutchbat, which was seemingly unwilling to follow the ABiH interpretation of the situation. The bottom line was that the Canadians were trapped.

Consideration was given to implementing a secret evacuation plan that had already been drawn up in February. This plan had been compiled after the artillery attack on Markale market in Sarajevo and the NATO threat to use air strikes against the VRS (see Chapter 4 of the Intelligence Appendix). The Canadian Government was afraid that the situation would escalate and wanted to prevent the ABiH and/or the VRS from taking the company hostage in Srebrenica. So, they wanted to pull their troops out of Srebrenica as soon as possible. As the Canadian forces did not have the capability to carry out an independent evacuation, Ottawa struck a deal with the US Administration on a joint US-Canadian extraction operation, should this be necessary. In return for US cooperation the Canadians had agreed to stop opposing air strikes within NATO.[415]

According to the February plan, the US Special Forces would carry out a nocturnal operation with fighter helicopters, supported by SEAD devices, to evacuate the battalion – as well as the Dutchbat Liaison Team that was present in the enclave at that time.[416] Major Bouchard was informed and took precautionary measures. On 2 March the secret plan for the operation was smuggled into the enclave. On the eve of the handover the population was – as already mentioned – demonstratively blockading the compound. The VRS, in turn, had refused to allow entry to a convoy of trucks and buses which had come to collect the departing battalion. The US-Canadian evacuation seemed the only solution. Eventually, the operation was called off because the ABiH abandoned its protest and the VRS let the convoy through. The first batch of the Canadian battalion left Srebrenica on 8 March and the second and last batch on 10 March 1994.[417]

It is understandable that Canada wanted to get its company out of Srebrenica at any price. However, the 'go-it-alone' character of the planned US-Canadian operation is less understandable from the Dutch point of view. The first batch of Dutchbat would supposedly be evacuated at the same time. This is improbable as it consisted of a company. It would have meant at least doubling the capacity; not a readily available option in operations of this type. At all events, the Dutch Government knew nothing of the extraction plan.[418] It is also unlikely that Bosnia-Hercegovina Command was aware of it. If the plan had been implemented, Dutchbat would probably have found itself in an extremely perilous situation, caught between the enclave inhabitants and authorities on the one hand and the VRS around the enclave on the other.

B Company concentrated on its operational task. Until the arrival of C Company it was responsible for securing and guarding the enclave alone. This took place mainly from the eight observation posts. Commander Jellema had changed the structure of four platoons for this reason. The four platoon groups were reorganized into three larger groups.

Each platoon was assigned two OPs, which were manned by two of the three groups. The third group stayed in the compound and formed an *ad hoc* platoon with the three other groups. It was responsible for patrols and for guarding the compound, the Post Office building and the Weapon Collection Point. This manufactured deployment made heavy demands on the personnel of B Company. There was barely any time to rest and the living conditions were downright abysmal. Jellema held daily briefings for his platoon commanders, personally wrote the reports to the battalion, and paid

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415 Interview D. Moore, 15/11/99.
416 Confidential information (64) and 'Serbs stall Canadian withdrawal' in: *The Toronto Star,* 04/03/94.
417 Confidential information (64) and 'Bosnian Muslims want Canadian troops to stay' in: *The Toronto Star*, 07/03/94. Interview Y. Bouchard, 15/11/99. DND Ottawa: Canbat sitreps 04/03/04, 05/03/94,06/03/94, 07/03/94 and 09/03/94. Def, Sitreps. Sitraps Dutchbat: sitraps 08/03/94 and 10/03/94.
418 Interview R. ter Beek, 23/12/99.

frequent visits to the observation posts to familiarize himself with the situation on the ground. He also established contact with representatives of other organizations inside the enclave.[419]

The rest of the deployment progressed sluggishly. The VRS only gave sporadic permission for convoys to Srebrenica. Around 10 March the casualty station was partially operational. Owing to a shortage of building materials the construction of shelters had to be postponed for a long time. The transportation of casualties from observation posts to the casualty station was a sore point: the roads were in an extremely poor condition and the VRS refused permission to station the helicopter detachment in Srebrenica for transportation of the wounded. Two weeks after the handover Vermeulen tried make a virtue of necessity by using rational arguments when asking the Drina Corps commander, General Zivanovic, for more VRS cooperation. Vermeulen told Zivanovic that 'I can only carry out my mission in the right way the moment I have all the assets at my disposal'. The VRS general could subscribe to this viewpoint and saw no problems about bringing the rest of the battalion to Srebrenica. This concession did not, however, prevent the VRS from refusing passage for three convoys which were to head for Srebrenica the next day.[420]

The refusal to let the convoys through was a source of great irritation to Vermeulen. He felt like 'a prisoner in the enclave'. In his situation report of 18 March – the daily report to Sector North East and Bosnia-Hercegovina Command – he wrote that he needed every single soldier and every piece of equipment in order to execute his mission.[421] His exasperation was to continue for the time being. According to Vermeulen, the permission procedure was seriously flawed: the so-called 'central coordination' from VRS headquarters was nothing short of a fake, because many sub-commanders arbitrarily refused passage to the convoys.[422] The logistics convoys entered the enclave at irregular intervals. At the end of March two caterpillar bulldozers arrived and a start could be made on improving the roads to the OPs. On 29 March a convoy carrying personnel and equipment for C Company was refused entry. It eventually arrived in Srebrenica two days later and deployment could proceed in line with Vermeulen's original operational plan.[423]

The arrival of C Company, the reconnaissance platoon of the 108th Commando Company and the second security platoon brought the operational deployment of Dutchbat in Srebrenica up to full strength. C Company and the SSC were billeted in the factory complex at Potocari. The operational emergency scenario of B Company for securing the Safe Area could be disbanded. Vermeulen implemented his operational plan; like his Canadian predecessor, he split the enclave into a northern sector for C Company and a southern sector for B Company. B Company remained responsible for the four southern observation posts, OP-C, OP-E, OP-F, and for the temporary OP-H near the Swedish Shelter Project on the southern border of the enclave at the River Jadar (see map on page #). From 7 April C Company was responsible for the observation posts in the northern sector, OP-N, OP-P (beside the northern entrance to the enclave on Bosnian-Serb territory), OP-Q and OP-R. Each company devised its own rotation system for manning the OPs and other duties.

B Company retained four other important tasks: it had to guard the Weapon Collection Point, the office of the UNMO and UnCivPol in the Post Office building, the UNHCR warehouse and the Swedish Shelter Project.[424] The plan to increase the number of observation posts to thirteen was put on hold for the time being. The personnel must not be overburdened; this had already happened in March when B Company had had to bear the responsibility for eight observation posts. Instead of a system of thirteen permanent observation posts, some temporary posts were set up to supplement the eight permanent ones. These temporary posts were manned for short periods, unless tension started to

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419 Sie LL. Lessons Learned from the Commander of B Company Dutchbat in Srebrenica by E. Jellema. Chapter: Verkenningen in Bosnië, 49. Jellema, *First-in*, p. 184.
420 Def, Sitreps Dutchbat sitrep 17/03/94.
421 Def, Sitreps. Dutchbat sitrep 18/03/94.
422 Def, Sitreps. Dutchbat sitrep 19/03/94.
423 Def, Sitreps. Dutchbat sitreps 22/03/94, 29/03/94 and 01/04/94.
424 Jellema, *First-in*, p. 124.

mount. The advantage of temporary manning was that it dispensed with the need to keep a sergeant and eight soldiers on permanent stand-by. More intensive patrolling from the observation posts and the compound was introduced to tactically compensate for the limited number of observation posts.[425] Opinions varied in the three successive battalions with regard to the effectiveness of this system of permanent and temporary observation posts in combination with patrols. These are addressed in Chapter 6 of this part of the report.

The helicopter detachment constituted the last problem in the deployment. The VRS had responded with surprise when this was mentioned by the advance detachment in Srebrenica and said that permission was needed from headquarters. Vermeulen stated regularly in his reports that the deployment of helicopters would enable him to reduce certain risks. He envisaged various uses. First, the wounded could be transported from remote observation posts to the casualty station in Potocari or a military hospital outside the enclave, until the battalion's own casualty station became fully operational. Helicopters could also be used to supply and relieve personnel at poorly accessible observation posts and to transport materiel from Lukavac to Srebrenica. He made no mention as yet on their use after deployment in Zepa.[426]

The Dutch Ministry of Defence had already decided in early March that deployment in Zepa would not be on the agenda until the detachment was guaranteed full freedom of movement. The Ministry could stick to this standpoint while A Company was temporarily stationed at Tuzla Air Base, but by mid-April it had softened its approach and was reviewing the mission of the detachment in case the VRS continued to refuse permission. The helicopters had been available in Tuzla since 13 March, but had still received no permission to fly on to Srebrenica.[427] According to the ANP, high-placed military officials believed that the VRS would still take months to grant permission, despite the efforts of Bosnia-Hercegovina Command. These merely irritated the VRS.

Chief of Staff Milovanovic explained the VRS position to his counterpart at Bosnia-Hercegovina Command, the Dutch Brigadier General Van Baal: on 15 February Bosnia-Hercegovina Commander Rose, Force Commander Cot and VRS Commander Mladic had agreed that all helicopter flights would be prohibited except for medical evacuations. If UNPROFOR wanted to deploy helicopters around Srebrenica and Zepa, then a new agreement would be needed. Bosnia-Hercegovina Command thought otherwise. Indeed, it pushed so often and so persistently for approval that Milovanovic, answered the umpteenth request from Bosnia-Hercegovina Command for helicopter flights by saying: 'Your everyday requests are getting provocative'.[428]

The VRS showed no signs of budging on this issue. It stubbornly continued to refuse and Bosnia-Hercegovina Command felt it had no choice but to resign itself to this state of affairs. But the deadlock did not mean that the helicopter detachment was permanently grounded. It still carried out incidental medical flights and flew now and then to Srebrenica with important guests such as Chief of Defence Staff Van der Vlis or Minister Ter Beek during their first visits to Bosnia in April and May. However, helicopter deployment in Srebrenica was out of the question; in September a decision was taken to return them to the Netherlands.[429]

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[425] Jellema, *First-in*, pp. 147-148. Sie LL. Lessons Learned from Commander B Company Dutchbat in Srebrenica by E. Jellema. Chapter: Bosbrand bij Crni-Guber (Forest Fire at Crni-Gruber), pp. 149-150.
[426] DCBC sitreps Dutchbat.
[427] ABZ, DIE/2001/00023. Memorandum 266/94, deputy DEU to AP *et al.*, 07/03/94; DAB. no.D154/92/11276, Minister of Defence to the Speaker, 15/04/94. SMG, 1012; CRST. Overview peace operations 17-24/03/94. ADEF DCBC sitrep Peace Operations 049/94, 10/03/94.
[428] CRST. ANP message 09/03/94. UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 59,file Civil Affairs 2.5 BJ Command. Fax BH Command Kiseljak to Unprofor Zagreb, 29/03/94.
[429] Lutgert & De Winter, *Check the Horizon*, pp. 334-337.

## 14. Conclusion

According to a tight government timetable of mid- January 1994, Dutchbat could be operational at the end of March, if the third reconnaissance mission could leave for Bosnia shortly after 20 January.[430] Though this estimation turned out to be fairly accurate, this does not mean that the deployment of Dutchbat went entirely according to plan. C Company and the last part of the SSC had arrived in the enclave on 31 March, but this did not complete the deployment. The timetable was also upset by the decision of Bosnia-Hercegovina Command in Sarajevo to temporarily station the A Company of Dutchbat at Tuzla Air Base. The helicopter detachment for the enclave was also still in Tuzla.

So there was still no question of a complete deployment, not even in logistical terms. Many Dutchbat containers were still on their way to Lukavac or were stranded there at Support Command. A start had barely been made on the improvements to the buildings and the installation of new observation posts. The deployment operations were not running smoothly either, largely because the VRS doggedly refused to let the convoys pass.

It was, effectively, a long-drawn-out operation. For the soldiers this meant that in the initial months they had to work and live in poor conditions. The situation only began to stabilize somewhat in May and June 1994.

It became clear that A Company would not be coming to the eastern enclaves and that the operational use of helicopters was virtually impossible because the VRS refused permission

UNPROFOR did not therefore deploy Dutchbat in the way that was announced at the start of December 1993. Though Srebrenica was still the main task, there was no geographically connected operational zone. It was impossible to anticipate the future operational zone throughout the preparation period. Between the end of September and the beginning of December 1993 the military and political authorities had expected a deployment in their preferred option of Central Bosnia, but this was a miscalculation in which wishful thinking played a role. Signals from, for example, Bosnia-Hercegovina Command that the Dutchbat would be assigned to Srebrenica and Zepa were not taken seriously.

It is scarcely credible that the definitive assignment to the two eastern Safe Areas on 1 December 1993 really came as a surprise to the officials and military authorities. Nonetheless, this turned out to be the case: apparently, insufficient use was made of the Dutch officers at Bosnia-Hercegovina Command in order to stay abreast of the decision-making on the stationing of new UNPROFOR battalions. Staff officers from Bosnia-Hercegovina Command never actually ruled out that Dutchbat would be stationed in Central Bosnia (which had long been the preference of the Dutch Government) but neither were the eastern enclaves described as a 'non-option'. There are clear indications that, since the end of September 1993, Bosnia-Hercegovina Commander Briquemont and Force Commander Cot had destined Dutchbat for Srebrenica and Zepa.

It is a moot question whether the training, the information supply and the materiel preparations would have been tackled differently if Dutchbat had known at the start of October that it would be going on a peacekeeping mission to Srebrenica and Zepa. The logical answer to this question is yes, because Dutchbat would then have been able to prepare itself for the future working environment and conditions on the basis of specific information on the operational zone. The actual answer to this question points in another direction. After the announcement on 1 December 1993, the reconnaissance missions investigated what else was needed in addition to the equipment and training efforts that had already been undertaken. Their reports made hardly any mention of the need for supplementary training. On the other hand, they paid a great deal of attention to the logistical and operational aspects. The reconnaissance mission at the start of December mainly made use of the advice of the Canadian battalion, which had hands-on experience of Bosnia and Srebrenica, and of the Ukrainian battalion in

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[430] ABZ, DEU/ARA/05257. Memorandum DAV/MS-94/007, DAV to S, 14/01/94.

Zepa, which, at that time, would presumably be the second enclave for the Dutch. This resulted in a list of additions and changes to the equipment but not to the training of Dutchbat II and III.

The mission of January/February 1994, the only reconnaissance mission that was allowed into Srebrenica, had a similar effect. Again, new requests came, mostly with regard to the construction and organization of accommodation inside and outside the compounds. Apart from this, it concentrated on specific equipment such as caterpillar bulldozers, cranes and high antennae. These further supplements and specifications of the equipment on the basis of reconnaissance results do not alter the fact that apparently, six months previously in July and August 1993, there was enough information available on the requirements for an independently operating mechanized infantry battalion in Bosnia. The bulk of the preparations were set in motion at that time. The resources that Dutchbat said it needed for the peacekeeping mission were made more or less fully available; the fact that they did not all arrive in the operational zone was another matter altogether.

This question is more difficult to answer in relation to the implications which the late announcement of the operational zone had for the training. The preparations were largely based on a combination of tasks, namely, the original UNPROFOR order to facilitate humanitarian aid and territorial security, also in Safe Areas. Obviously, there were differences in the tasks required for convoy escorts and those for territorial security, but these different types of deployment were, in principle, addressed by the training.

As far as the instructions on the use of force were concerned – absolutely crucial to action – the training made no distinction between escorting convoys and territorial security. This likewise applies to another essential element of peace-force operations, the 'blue' element. This involved open and visible operations as opposed to the 'green' operations of the airmobile training. The distinction between 'blue' and 'green' was included in the preparations, though there were gaps in the training in this respect. This is the theme of Chapter 8.

In the training for the peace mission in Bosnia a key role was played by the conversion of the dynamic airmobile concept into an operational unit with armoured vehicles. Both aspects called for a different approach and pattern of response. Aside from the specific skills for operating the vehicles, the infantry companies experienced this as an enhancement rather than a disruption of their solid basic training.

From the perspective of the military skills required for a peace operation there was also, with hindsight, little reason – after Srebrenica and Zepa had been assigned on 1 December 1993 – to incorporate new aspects in the training. The objectives had been realized in the start-up period (the extra training period for Dutchbat).

In practice, from March 1994, no mistakes appear to have been made because of gaps in the training. Be that as it may, it should be mentioned that the military training paid little attention to passing on specific knowledge of the area of operation, also in the case of Dutchbat II and III. The operations of A Company, which was stationed at Tuzla air base and later in Simin Han, show that this need not have presented problems. A Company had no knowledge whatsoever of this area and still functioned well. This argument is endorsed by a battery commander of the *Gele Rijders* (motorized artillery) who, after a peace mission to Kosovo, described solid infantry training as the primary basis for participation in a peace mission anywhere in the world.[431] But this does not mitigate the fact that specific problems arose in Srebrenica which were not covered by the training. These problems are discussed in detail in Chapter 8.

The point on specific knowledge of the operational zone should not only be discussed in general terms but also in relation to the different levels. It makes a difference whether one is talking about the individual soldier in the infantry group, the group commander, his platoon or company commander, or the members of the battalion staff. Important factors with regard to the individual

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[431] P.G.F. Hoefsloot, 'Ervaringen van een batterijcommandant Gele Rijders. De voorbereidingen' (Experience of a battery commander of the *Gele Rijders*. The preparations) in: *Carré* 24(2001)3, pp. 16-19.

soldier's performance within the group are command of militairy skills and their practical application within the group context.

For the group commander other competencies were important besides military skills. The higher the rank, the greater was the importance of information on the operational zone and knowledge of the conditions. These skills also included the ability to respond to local circumstances; this would be particularly important in the Srebrenica enclave which had, amongst others, a huge population of Displaced Persons. It is always difficult to accurately assess the level of intelligence achieved. The Military Intelligence Service was of little use in this respect: neither the battalion staff nor the NCOs were (regularly) informed by the MIS/Royal Netherlands Army of the developments.

The questions posed at the beginning of this chapter on the perception of the future mission, the materiel preparations, the training and the collection of information have been addressed. It has clearly emerged that the materiel presented the least problems, and that more problems arose with regard to the training, the perception of the future mission and the information position. These elements also received less attention due to the pressure of time and because of the organizational framework of the Defence machinery; the involvement of many different agencies led to considerable bureaucracy.

It is clear that the emphasis on the military aspects of the training fitted in with the battalion's perception of its future mission. It was seen mainly as a military task. However, it is open to question whether this was an adequate assessment: operating as a peace mission soon turned out to involve more than just military action. It also called for interaction with the local population, the civil authorities, and the international aid organizations. Chapter 8 of this part of the report will discuss the extent to which attention was paid to these aspects in the preparations.

In short, where the preparations went wrong in practice was in manning the mission effectively, ensuring the consistency of the training, and the logistical debarkation at Split. Given the circumstances under which the preparation and deployment had to take place, these flaws and shortcomings are not, however, out of proportion.

# Chapter 6
# Operational performance of Dutchbat I, II and III in the Safe Area Srebrenica

## 1. Introduction

United States president Bill Clinton said in February 1995 that Dutchbat forces were 'perhaps the most vulnerable of all the United Nations troops'.[432] The Dutch Government, the Chief of Defence Staff and the high command of the Armed Forces had also arrived at the same conclusion by that time. It was not without reason that, among the troop-contributing nations of UNPROFOR, the Safe Area Srebrenica was the least desired location.

The Canadian Government had decided to withdraw from Srebrenica several months after the stationing of the Canadian battalion there in April 1993. But the Dutch Government did not want to refuse UNPROFOR's allocation of this area of operation to Dutchbat in December 1993. This does not alter the fact that the Army formulated preconditions for the effort in Srebrenica that were not met at any time before and during the mission.

Once in Srebrenica Dutchbat soon became aware of the full force of the reality in the enclave. On 8 February 1994, after his first night in Srebrenica, Captain H.C. van der Have, Intelligence Officer for Dutchbat I and member of the reconnaissance mission in January/February 1994, noted that: 'Living conditions are very primitive (…) We are back in the Middle Ages, no electricity, no water and hardly any food. But the morale among our little group is good.'[433]

Srebrenica would make the same impression on visitors. The Chief of Defence Staff later said of his first visit on 15 March 1994, that 'despite everything I knew, [I] still returned home shocked, because I found that we were involved in a task there that had little humanity left in it. What was Dutchbat? (…) A prison guard over a concentration camp.'[434]

On their arrival in Srebrenica, every soldier in Dutchbat experienced a psychological shock from face-to-face confrontation with the war-torn area: an experience that the scenes broadcast via the media could not fully evoke. Furthermore, the reception of Dutchbat, contrary to expectations, was decidedly chilly. The Bosnian Muslims resisted the departure of the Canadian battalion almost violently. At the same time, they overloaded Dutchbat with complaints about Bosnian-Serb violations of the status of the Safe Area and requested actions that did not appear to be compatible with the UNPROFOR mandate. In turn, the Bosnian Serbs of the VRS, through frequent refusal to grant permits for convoys to Srebrenica, made it clear that they were running the show around the enclave. After the arrival of the first Dutchbat company, the Canadian battalion pulled out very quickly. Within a week after arriving in Srebrenica, Dutchbat, still far below strength, was thrown in at the deep end.

The main focus of this chapter will be the performance of Dutchbat as executive of the UNPROFOR mandate in Srebrenica, from deployment until the end of May 1995. The period after the end of May 1995 will be described in Part III.

In this chapter the questions up for discussion will include: what were the Airmobile Brigade battalions to make of their operational task, which was after all mainly static? Did they succeed, for example, through strength of numbers in making Srebrenica a safer place than the Canadian battalion had been able to do in its final months? What was the contact like with the warring factions and how did Dutchbat try to find a solution to three closely related burning issues in the enclave – the determination of the ceasefire line/enclave border, the demilitarization of the area and the withdrawal

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[432] NOS Journaal Nederland 3, 10pm, 28/02/95.
[433] 'From a letter from one of the six scouts in Srebrenica', *Falcon Buddy Bulletin*, February 1994, p. 2.
[434] Interview A.K. van der Vlis, 12/02/99.

of the VRS to a comfortable distance from the ceasefire line. Was there a clear line in the development of the operational situation – for better or worse – or were the operating conditions more characterized by fluctuation as a result of the very changeable and unpredictable attitudes of the two sides? The intention here is to present a dynamic view of the situation in the enclave.

The answers to these questions will be arranged thematically. Throughout this account, it should always be kept in mind that Dutchbat had to function in Srebrenica in the context of the rules and lines of command of Bosnia-Hercegovina Command and UNPROFOR. Dutchbat operated in Srebrenica without a direct geographical connection to UNPROFOR units, but this did not diminish the fact that the battalion was operationally controlled from Sector North East (Tuzla) and Bosnia-Hercegovina Command in Sarajevo/Kiseljak and, a greater distance away, from UNPROFOR in Zagreb. The chapter therefore opens with a consideration of the views of the Force Commander, General Cot, and the new Bosnia-Hercegovina Commander, Lieutenant General Rose, concerning the UNPROFOR mission. At the end of this chapter the question will be raised as to the extent to which the two headquarters realized operational control.

## 2. Struggling with the UNPROFOR mandate in Bosnia

At the time of the deployment of Dutchbat in Srebrenica, a changing of the guard occurred within UNPROFOR. This change was important, because it was closely linked to the discussion about the nature of the UNPROFOR mission. On 1 January 1994, Stoltenberg handed over his function as Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) to the Japanese diplomat Yasushi Akashi, but stayed on as co-chairman of the International Conference on the Former Yugoslavia (ICFY). As reported in Chapter 1 of this part, this split at the top of the pyramid was aimed at bringing about better control and coordination between the Geneva negotiation process and the actions of UNPROFOR in its contacts with the warring factions, down to local level. Stoltenberg, in his double function, had scarcely got around to his task at UNPROFOR, to the great displeasure of Force Commander Cot, who contended that he was receiving insufficient political support.[435]

Additionally, General F. Briquemont stepped down as UNPROFOR's Bosnia-Hercegovina Commander in late January 1994. In late 1993, frustrated by the lack of a sense of reality among diplomats and politicians in handling the Bosnian dossier, he decided to depart in early 1994.[436] He was succeeded by the British Lieutenant General M. Rose. Then, in early March, the French Force Commander, General J. Cot, resigned after expressing serious criticism of the refusal of Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali to delegate authorization for the use of Close Air Support to the Force Commander.[437] This meant that there was a conflict between Zagreb and New York about the political control of the peace operation. Cot was succeeded by his compatriot, General B. de Lapresle.

Shortly before Christmas 1993, Force Commander Cot had presented his views of the action of UNPROFOR in his second Force Commander's Guidance and Objectives. He assumed that, with the appointment of the Special Representative Akashi, he could devote himself more to the military aspects of the peace mission, while Akashi would take on the coordination of the political talks in the former Yugoslavia and the fine-tuning with UN headquarters in New York. As he saw it, UNPROFOR ought to be focusing on supporting the peace process through concrete actions in the mission area. Cot formulated eight ground rules for this new approach, the most important being unity in action, credibility, safety, freedom of movement, communication and support for humanitarian organizations. Cot wanted to achieve an improvement regarding the esteem of UNPROFOR among the warring factions; by performing unequivocally, impartially and transparently on the one hand and, on the other hand, by direct response to aggression through strict application of the Rules of Engagement. Another

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435 UNGE, ICFY Box 122 file: fax 29 Jan thru 17 March 1994: Z-216 McLeod ICFY Zagreb to Stoltenberg ICFY Geneva, 13/02/94.
436 Briquemont, *Do something*, pp. 214-216.
437 Interview J. Cot, 19/04/00.

instrument for a better performance by the peacekeeping force was intensification of contacts with the local population.

Cot's new approach was a reaction to the state of affairs in the first six months of his tenure of command in which, through the emphasis on the first part of Stoltenberg's double function as co-chairman of the peace conference in Geneva and Special Representative of the Secretary-General in the former Yugoslavia, coordination between the peace process and the peace mission had shown serious shortcomings. As a component of his new approach, Cot had charged Bosnia-Hercegovina Commander Briquemont with strengthening the command structure and integrating new units, improving the escorts for humanitarian aid convoys, effectuating the establishment of Safe Areas and creating a timetable for the relief of the Canadian battalion in Srebrenica.[438]

Cot expected that UNPROFOR could better fulfil its mission through a different style of action and through an intensification of internal cooperation. Against the background of the serious problems between the peacekeeping force and the warring factions in late December 1993, this was an optimistic view. But there were some grounds for it in February 1994: the VRS, for example, became more accommodating after the deployment of Dutchbat. Also, under threat of NATO air strikes, they agreed to the withdrawal of heavy weapons from around Sarajevo by setting up a Weapon Exclusion Zone.

In early January 1994, Bosnia-Hercegovina Commander Briquemont was much more pessimistic. As he now saw it, UNPROFOR could not solve the existing problems in Bosnia-Hercegovina, and both the mandate and the Safe Area concept should come under review. According to Briquemont, the ABiH had used the protection of UNPROFOR and humanitarian aid for reorganization, re-supply and training. The Safe Area concept was undermined, considering that the minimum strength needed for implementation was lacking. Safety in Sarajevo, Srebrenica and Zepa seemed to have increased through the presence of UNPROFOR, true enough, but it remained extremely worrisome, according to Briquemont, that the ABiH used these Safe Areas as bases of military operation.

In his view, the ABiH and the Bosnian Government had developed a fixed pattern of behaviour for such use: the ABiH launched an attack on the VRS from a Safe Area, the VRS generally responded by shelling the ceasefire line. UNPROFOR did not react. The Bosnian Government then accused UNPROFOR of neglecting to protect the Safe Areas and demanded air strikes against the VRS positions. In Srebrenica the ABiH had already been provoking the VRS for several months, mainly with shelling from the enclave. In the view of the VRS, a Safe Area was, in principle, a demilitarized zone, but it was precisely in the Srebrenica enclave that an impasse had arisen in implementing the demilitarization agreement of 8 May 1993 (on the basis of Resolution 824).[439] According to Briquemont, this eventually led to the conclusion that the UNPROFOR mandate for the Safe Areas was not feasible, unless an agreement could come about between the warring factions about the definition of the concept and its preconditions. The question was to what extent the new Bosnia-Hercegovina Commander, General Rose, would underwrite the vision of his predecessor.

Who was this new Bosnia-Hercegovina Commander? The fifty-three-year-old Lieutenant General Sir Michael Rose stood at the peak of an impressive military career. Born in India in 1940, he was the son of a British officer. After his studies in Oxford and at the Sorbonne in Paris, and after his training with the Royal Air Force was broken off, he joined the British army. He began his army career as an officer with the Coldstream Guards, later switching to the Special Air Service (SAS) Regiment. He served in Malacca and Oman. Under his command, the 22nd SAS Regiment moved into the international limelight by bringing an end to the siege of the Iranian embassy in London in 1980, and during the Falklands War (1982). He got acquainted with the phenomenon of civil war during his posting in Northern Ireland. As SAS Director he was responsible for all special operations of the SAS

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438 UNGE, UNPROFOR Box 59 file: Civil Affairs 2.5 BH Command. Fax 681 FC Cot to BH Command, 21/12/93, appendix: FC Guidance and Objectives 20/12/93.

439. Confidential information (142).

and the Royal Marines' SBS. He then became Commander of the 2nd Infantry Division, thereafter taking charge of the Staff College in Camberley (1991-1993). Shortly after his appointment as Deputy Commander of British Armed Forces came the appointment to Bosnia-Hercegovina Command. Rose had led many and varied operations in his military career, but he was not from the circuit of generals who had served in a NATO connection or with the British Army of the Rhine. Rose had a powerful personality in all respects. He would not be trifled with and, directly after arriving in Sarajevo, caused a stir by going to the presidential palace on foot rather than in an armoured car. His intention was to break through the prevailing siege mentality.[440]

Rose supported the necessity of a different approach, but believed that this approach was possible on the basis of the existing mandate and the premises of the Guidance and Objectives of Force Commander Cot. On 1 March 1994 (the very date of the deployment of the first Dutchbat company in Srebrenica), he presented his views in a Campaign Plan for Bosnia Hercegovina that had been drawn up at the British Staff College in Camberley. The aim of this campaign plan was to provide a formula for reconciling the values of the warring factions (history, sovereignty, territory and religious integrity) with the interests of the United Nations and the international community (international stability, humanitarian welfare and collective awareness). In this peoples' war, the UN could not become a warring party itself. The ultimate objective of the plan was 'peace, security and creating the conditions for economic renewal for all peoples of Bosnia and Hercegovina'.[441]

The strategic objectives were: containment of the conflict in Bosnia-Hercegovina, improvement of the humanitarian situation, phased negotiations about a peace deal and support in creating a favourable climate for internal reconstruction and economic renewal and a peaceful and safe society. The central premise of the plan was 'the popular will of all parties – to fight or to make peace.' In order to realize this strategic objective a different, more positive attitude of the population was needed and a better coordination of the policies of UNPROFOR, UNHCR and the Yugoslav conference (ICFY). Rose, like Cot in his Guidance document of December 1993, pleaded for better mutual coordination of diplomatic and political pressure, economic sanctions, humanitarian aid and military actions as the way to achieve peace. Rose formulated a number of options for implementation: he rejected maintaining the status quo because the idea had lacked success; as to the option on the other side of the spectrum – peace enforcement – he characterized it as 'a non-starter'.

Rose chose the option 'towards peace' as 'a better way forward'. He set himself the goal of achieving an improvement in the efficiency of the ongoing humanitarian operation, through better synchronization of 'the activities of all UNPROFOR agencies and forces by actively seeking and perhaps compelling the cooperation of the belligerent parties and thereby making an indirect contribution to the peacemaking process' This approach was aimed at leading to ceasefire agreements and to setting up zones without heavy weapons (Heavy Weapon Exclusion Zones) around cities.[442] Rose thus held to the supporting role of UNPROFOR in the peace process, but he also wanted to contribute to improvement of the living conditions of the population through more forceful action in the face of the warring factions and better synchronization of UN activities. Improving living conditions had to be the basis of all activities. If this plan succeeded, the option of implementation of a peace plan could come within reach. According to Rose, if the plan failed, the only remaining option for the UN peacekeeping force was withdrawal.

In his analysis of the situation Rose said that the Bosnian Serbs and the Bosnian Croats had achieved their military objectives and wanted to end the war, but that this did not apply to the Bosnian Muslims. They still thought they could win more on the battlefield than at the negotiating table. Sarajevo wanted to draw the United States and NATO onto its side in the war.

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[440] Confidential information (142); Rose, *Fighting for Peace*, pp. 24-25; Stankovic, *Trusted Mole*, pp. 228-230.
[441] UNGE UNPROFOR Box 71 file 2.2.6. Command Matters: no. CPLAN01.DOC: *A Campaign Plan for Bosnia Hercegovina Command*, 01/03/94, p.1.
[442] UNGE UNPROFOR Box 71 file 2.2.6. Command Matters: no. CPLAN01.DOC: *A Campaign Plan for Bosnia Hercegovina Command*, 01/03/94, pp. 1-3.

The strong points of the Bosnian Government lay with the army, the ABiH: there was no shortage of soldiers and ammunition, the army itself was growing, it was on the offensive and morale was high. The weak points on the side of the Bosnian Muslims were the population in the enclaves, the poor strategic position of the state, the food shortage and dependence on aid, the shortage of heavy weapons and military air power, poor military organization and command structure, unresolved differences of opinion between hawks and doves, a ruined economy and, finally, sensitivity to American pressure. Rose concluded that support for the 'doves' among the Bosnian Muslims could lead to the return of Sarajevo to the negotiating table. Aid and building the economy could be used to this purpose. The 'key precursor to any deal' was clarity from Washington that ruled out American intervention on the battlefield to the benefit of Sarajevo. After all, the Government in Sarajevo, was sensitive to media attention that could undermine the Bosnian position in the United States, according to Rose.[443]

Rose set himself the objective of regaining the initiative 'in the present, largely chaotic, situation'. The main instrument involved was an independent UNPROFOR 'information policy'. He hoped this would achieve a better relationship between the peacekeeping force and the population, and bring about greater confidence in the peacekeeping force. In his Campaign Plan Rose then indicated how he wanted to achieve his objective. As far as organization and policy were concerned, Rose followed the Guidance of Force Commander Cot: introduction of sectors as a new command level between Bosnia-Hercegovina Command and the battalions; greater unity of action internally through better coordination at all levels and, externally, through integration of the activities of UNPROFOR, UNHCR and NGOs. Regarding the supply of information, Rose wanted to take the initiative in putting an end to rumours and inaccurate reporting. UNPROFOR had to conduct a proactive policy in the face of the media and open its own radio station, so that the population would get reliable information and would know, for example, why aid convoys did not reach them. The second pillar of information policy was to use a large and open network of liaison teams for the exchange of information between the warring factions and UNPROFOR.

Bosnia-Hercegovina Command also wanted to institutionalize the contacts with the warring factions at all levels in order to make clear the intentions of the peacekeeping force and to take the local reactions into account. These Local Action Groups would consist of the UNPROFOR liaison teams, UNHCR and NGOs and local civilian and military representatives. Rose wanted to respond to hindrance or thwarting of execution of the mandate 'by a robust response including the selective use of force'. He put forward the suggestion of using 'attack helicopters as a complement to fixed-wing Close Air Support'. Freedom of Movement was essential to the execution of the UNPROFOR mandate. Finally, Rose wanted to improve the quality of humanitarian aid by distributing food under UN supervision, by protection and care for the sick, wounded and displaced persons and by safeguarding the repair of crucial public utilities.[444]

Rose's plan was ambitious. His departure points were almost identical to those of Force Commander Cot: UNPROFOR had to regain the initiative; it must take stronger action against the warring factions and compel them, with the use of force if necessary, to cooperate with the execution of the mandate; the cooperation between UNPROFOR, the UNHCR and the NGOs had to be improved and, furthermore, it was of great importance to try to win the hearts of the population. Cot, too, realized that UNPROFOR had to win the information battle but, unlike Rose, he had no plans in that area. The Rose plan, however, also had weak spots. First of all it had to be seen whether the ABiH, the VRS and the army of the Bosnian Croats (HVO) would change their behaviour in response to the threat that UNPROFOR was prepared to publicly denounce the warring factions for sabotaging the provision of humanitarian aid. Even if this were the case, it was very optimistic to assume that

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443 UNGE UNPROFOR Box 71 file 2.2.6. Command Matters: no. CPLAN01.DOC: *A Campaign Plan for Bosnia Hercegovina Command*, 01/03/94; Annex C: the Belligerents.

444 UNGE UNPROFOR Box 71 file 2.2.6. Command Matters: no. CPLAN01.DOC: *A Campaign Plan for Bosnia Hercegovina Command*, 01/03/94.

dissemination of the true facts was sufficient to win over the international press and the regional media to his side – and, with that, to drive a wedge between the population and the political and military leadership. UNPROFOR had a poor relationship with the media and this shortcoming was not about to be remedied from one day to the next. Furthermore, the propaganda machines of the warring factions worked perfectly. Another drawback was that the part of the plan which stipulated that the peacekeeping had to be carried out robustly was received with scepticism by the staff of Bosnia-Hercegovina Command. Nevertheless, Rose persisted. He called a meeting with the commanders of military units and representatives of aid organizations to discuss the plan. He also put a more robust performance into practice in Sarajevo. The plan went into effect on 1 March 1994, after approval by Zagreb; it was converted into an operational order in May 1994.[445]

## 3. Dutchbat's order

In early January 1994, the order came in to the Netherlands Army Crisis Staff via the Dutch Permanent Representative in New York for the deployment of Dutchbat in Srebrenica and Zepa and for setting up the logistical Support Command in Lukavac. The operational order had three components: (1) to give military assistance to the UNHCR and other aid organizations for humanitarian activities and for the repair of public utilities in the two Safe Areas; (2) the creation of favourable conditions for the evacuation of any wounded, for protection and care for the population, for improvement of their living conditions and for bringing an end to the hostilities; (3) maintenance of the demilitarized status of the two Safe Areas.

Bosnia-Hercegovina Command divided the order into five sub-tasks:

- the establishment and manning of UN observation posts;
- the improvement and expansion of 'liaison' with and between the warring factions, in order to prevent 'uncontrolled actions'. Dutchbat had to build a network up to VRS and ABiH brigade level and set up as many 'hotlines' as possible with the civilian and military authorities in the area of operation.
- the improvement of the process of Intelligence gathering. In a military regard by determining the objectives and plans of VRS and ABiH at all levels. In a humanitarian regard by pinpointing the locations of ethnic minority groups, refugees and displaced persons within the enclaves, with a view to their monitoring and protection by the UN and their treatment by the local authorities. Another part of the collection of humanitarian information involved making an inventory of local needs for food, heating, housing and medical care and passing this on to the UNHCR and other aid organizations and Bosnia-Hercegovina Command.
- assisting the UNHCR's distribution efforts by storing and guarding fuel and oil, by distribution to the population and by safeguarding the UNHCR storage sites.
- participation in the repair of public utilities such as electricity, gas and water.

Dutchbat began its task in Srebrenica on virtually the same day that the new Bosnia-Hercegovina Commander presented his campaign plan. This plan signified a different approach to execution of the mandate, but at this point the consequences of this change were barely felt at Dutchbat level. The setting up of regional commands – in the case of Dutchbat the Sector North East Command in Tuzla, which became operational from 1 April 1994 - was the first big change. Otherwise, little had changed in comparison with the approach taken by the Canadian battalion. Dutchbat, in any case, had departed for the area of operation with an order of an earlier date than the Campaign Plan of Bosnia-Hercegovina Commander Rose. The extent to which further instructions were given after deployment is not to be found in the available documentation. In designating Srebrenica and Zepa as the area of operation for

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[445] Rose, *Fighting for Peace*, pp. 23-24, 35 and pp. 39-40; CRST.HQ BH Comd Forward Sarajevo, OPO 02/94, May 1994.

Dutchbat in December 1993 UNPROFOR had not given any specific task description. Of course, the task was known in general terms: execution of the UNPROFOR mandate for Bosnia Hercegovina (Security Council Resolution 770) and for the Safe Areas (Resolutions 819, 824 and 836). The UNPROFOR Rules of Engagement which Dutchbat had become familiar with during the so-called UN reprocessing period, represented a more detailed expression of this task.
This gave the general context but, at the start of its mission, the Dutch battalion lacked a specific operational order. During his reconnaissance mission in November/December 1993, the Battalion Commander, Colonel C.P.H. Vermeulen, had asked Bosnia-Hercegovina Command in Kiseljak to no avail for a written instruction in the form of a Commander's Guidance for Srebrenica and Zepa.[446] It apparently did not exist. The documentation shows that the military authorities, through the mediation of Dutch officers, had asked for a Dutchbat task description. Early in January, a document of the kind summarized above was received via the official UN route – i.e. from Bosnia-Hercegovina Command via UNPROFOR in Zagreb, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations in New York, the Dutch Permanent Representative in New York to the Dutch Foreign and Defence Ministries in The Hague. It is doubtful whether this document answered Vermeulen's expectations.

As a whole, the order to Dutchbat was not specific enough. The tasks listed, after all, applied in every area of operation and had hardly any relation to the current situation. In the operational orders of Bosnia-Hercegovina Command and Sector North East from late 1993 and early 1994 the order is set out in the same general formulations.[447] The only specific part for Srebrenica involved the maintenance of the demilitarized status on the basis of an agreement between ABiH and VRS dated 8 May 1993. The order did not contain an evaluation of the situation in Srebrenica or concrete directions for tasks in the short term. The document met the official requirements of the Commander's Guidance desired by the Dutchbat I Commander Vermeulen, but it offered very little that was concrete in order to begin carrying out the mission in Srebrenica.

No official change was made in this order during the dispatching of Dutchbat but, on Dutch initiative, an unofficial change was made. This involved the provision of humanitarian aid: in the original, Dutchbat was only to facilitate humanitarian aid, not provide it. From the reconnaissance missions, it was already evident that Dutchbat wanted to make a contribution of its own. The reconnaissance mission of November-December, according to the mission report, considered the provision of medical aid to the population to be an obvious Dutchbat task.[448]

This view also prevailed among the authorities in the Netherlands. The Minister for Development Cooperation, Jan Pronk, made 500,000 guilders available for humanitarian aid projects in the enclave. Dutchbat responded positively, as was noted during the first visit of Defence Minister Relus Ter Beek to Srebrenica on 10 May 1994. In this way, Dutchbat expected to be able to win the confidence of the local population and to make a contribution to a sustainable improvement in the living conditions in the enclave.

From the explanatory notes on a spending proposal for the 500,000 guilders, it turned out that projects of Dutchbat's own belonged to the task, on condition that they were 'simple in nature' and could be executed within the mission period. Of course, they were not to be carried out at the expense of the operational effort.[449] This meant that a humanitarian element had also become part of the task. In point of fact, the Commander of Dutchbat II, Lieutenant Colonel P. Everts, expressed a view that connected seamlessly with the March 1994 campaign plan of Bosnia-Hercegovina Commander Rose, even though any reference to it was lacking. According to Everts, providing humanitarian aid fitted 'very well' within the task. It served the strategy, after all, that was aimed at restoring the initiative to

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446 DCBC. Commander 11 Infbat Lumbl GG (APC)/Dutchbat to BLS attn SC Crisis Staff, 12/12/93, sub 2.
447 CRST. BH Command OPO 02/94, May 94 sub 2. DJZ. Sector North East Operations Order 05/1994 05/12/94 sub 2.
448 DCBC. Commander 11 Infbat Lumbl GG (APC) Dutchbat to BLS attn CS Crisis Staff, no. 001, 12/12/93: Scouting report Srebrenica and Zepa, appendix B sub Civilian Health Care Aspects Srebrenica, point 3.
449 DCBC. no.v04013865, A. ter Beek to J.Pronk, 31/05/94; C-Dutchbat Srebrenica to Crisis Staff BLS (M. Felix), [27/06/94].

UNPROFOR, by contributing to the acceptance of UNPROFOR by the population. The aid would create goodwill for the battalion and also increase the motivation of Dutchbat personnel. But to be able to reap these benefits, Dutchbat had to restrict itself to a few projects that were directly visible to the population and actually reduced their problems. A project outside the enclave, for example, in the neighbouring northern Bosnian-Serb town of Bratunac, could provide the same effect and, with it, contribute to a better execution by Dutchbat of its own task.[450]

The question now is whether this was perhaps too broad an interpretation of the operational order. In any case, within UNPROFOR and Bosnia-Hercegovina Command the idea was also current that the task of the peace mission in Bosnia-Hercegovina should not be restricted to facilitating the provision of humanitarian aid and to the protection of the Safe Areas. As stated earlier, Bosnia-Hercegovina Commander Rose, in his Campaign Plan for Bosnia-Hercegovina, saw an active role for UNPROFOR in improving the living conditions of the population as an important contribution to the peace process. In late 1994, Force Commander De Lapresle described the *raison d'être* of UNPROFOR in Bosnia-Hercegovina as 'containing the conflict' and supplying humanitarian aid. The peacekeeping force had contributed to stabilizing the military situation and improving the living conditions of the population. De Lapresle emphasized that it was mainly the versatile humanitarian work of the battalions at local level, 'from assisting the most needy to repairing schools, hospitals and roads and caring for the wounded', that deserved the fullest attention.[451] De Lapresle too interpreted the task of UNPROFOR in Bosnia more broadly than the official mandate. The setting up of small humanitarian projects by Dutchbat certainly fitted within that interpretation.

The order of Dutchbat in Srebrenica, as we have seen, was no more than a general translation of the UNPROFOR mandate for the Safe Areas. This was aimed at providing protection to the enclave by securing its borders and through open relationships with the warring factions at all working levels. Within this task there was definitely room for a Dutchbat interpretation of possibilities for the improvement of living conditions (for example, by also making a contribution to the repair of the facilities for gas, water and electricity). The insight rapidly grew that, for Dutchbat to function well, a restricted number of humanitarian projects was a good, if not indispensable means of winning the confidence of the population.

## 4. The organization of Dutchbat

Prior to examining the performance of Dutchbat in Srebrenica in 1994-1995, here is a brief overview of the Dutchbat structure. Dutchbat consisted of two main components. The reinforced Airmobile Infantry Battalion was the operational component; the Support Command in Lukavac was the logistical component. Officially the two components came under the orders of the commander of Dutchbat in Srebrenica. In actual fact, they functioned as two independent elements. In the spring of 1995 the Support Command was officially cut loose from Dutchbat and converted into a logistical centre for the Dutch troops in Bosnia. As was indicated in Chapter 3, the reinforced airmobile battalion operated in two areas. During deployment in March 1994 the Bosnia-Hercegovina Commander Rose stationed A Company at Tuzla Air Base to reinforce the Scandinavian battalion and, from June 1994, this company was responsible for the area around Simin Han, the so-called Sapna Thumb (see Flowchart 1).

The main body of Dutchbat I and II, consisting of the staff company, the services company and two infantry companies, was stationed in the Safe Area Srebrenica. B Company was billeted in the former Canadian battalion compound in Srebrenica, the three other companies in a new compound at the battery factory in Potocari on the north side of the enclave. The staff company consisted of the battalion staff with its own signals unit, the company staff and the helicopter group. The battalion staff

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450 CRST. Letter Everts to Sitcen BLS, 29/09/94.
451 UNNY, DPKO, coded cables UNPROFOR: Z-1676. De Lapresle to Annan, 04/11/94, Appendix 4: Force Commanders conference on Bosnia and Hercegovina, p. 6.

consisted, along with the battalion commander, his deputy and the battalion warrant officer, of the usual sections for Personnel (Section 1), Intelligence and Security (Section 2), Operations (Section 3) and Logistics (Section 4). Another element here was a special section for contacts with military and civilian authorities in the area of operation (Section 5), as well as a detachment of the Explosives Disposal Unit (EOD) and of the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee and for religious and social-psychological care and information (see Flowchart 2).

The company staff consisted of the staff of the company commander, a reconnaissance platoon, two security platoons, a signals platoon and a first-aid location. The helicopter group consisted of a signals section and a maintenance group as well as the pilot group. The services company consisted, along with the command group, of four units: a supplies platoon, a repair platoon, a medical platoon and an engineer's platoon. In Dutchbat III these companies were combined into a staff company and services company. Segments of the staff company and the services company were assigned to the infantry companies. Along with the company staff, the B and C Companies each consisted of three infantry platoons, a mortar group and an anti-tank group (see Flowchart 3). Detached to each company was a group for medical assistance and transport of the wounded, a signals group of the staff company and a kitchen group of the services company. Because of the distance between Lukavac and the enclave several components of the Support Command were detached to Srebrenica. The two most important ones were the engineering construction company and the so-called first-aid location (the military field hospital with its surgical team).[452]

## 5. Rules and instructions for Dutchbat: Standing Orders

Chapter 1 discussed the organization of UNPROFOR, as well as covering the instructions of UNPROFOR and Bosnia-Hercegovina Command for the units under their command were mentioned too. It was said that, according to general organizational and military custom, general guidelines were always translated to a lower level. Within UNPROFOR the Force Commanders Policy Directive(FCPD) and the Standing Operating Procedures (SOP) were the most important instruments, whose content ultimately had its outcome in the standing orders of the battalions. Things were no different at Dutchbat. Dutchbat operated on the basis of a Standing Order 1 (NL) UN Infbat that, per section (Personnel and Administration, Intelligence and Security, Operations and Logistics), contained directions and instructions for performance. At company level, this was partly translated into a general instruction to the company commander for the carrying out of the order. The instruction focused on operational matters in most cases, because the responsibility for personnel, security and logistics basically belonged to the competence of the battalion.[453]

To embark on a full discussion of this substantial work would make little sense here. Much of it is of administrative and procedural significance. A few points should be examined, however, so that some insight might be gained into the day-to-day operational course of affairs at Dutchbat. It is also necessary to make a few remarks about the significance of the Standing Orders. To function efficiently, every large organization develops its own procedures and internal rules. These are aimed at creating an orderly and identical treatment of matters. Military instructions and regulations, such as Standing Operating Procedures and Standing Orders are documents of this nature. They are indispensable to an efficient course of affairs, in the administrative, operational and logistical process of the military operation, the peace mission included. Insight into the personnel strength of a unit, the granting of allowances and compensation for goods that have gone missing comes about in line with these same regulations. This also applies to the operational procedures.

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452 MID/KL. 'Dutchbat Srebrenica / Lukavac /Tuzla' chapter 1B. Klep & Van Gils, *Van Korea naar Kosovo* (From Korea to Kosovo), pp. 280-281. Karremans, *Srebrenica*, p. 266.

453 SMG/Debrief. Dossier Standing Orders Dutchbat. An example of an operational order for a company in: Jellema, *First-In*, pp.179-187.

Every commander – from the sergeant group leader to the commander-in-chief – issues orders to his unit on the basis of a fixed matrix. This same principle of uniformity has been established for all forms of military action and they are generally put into practice. These orders and instructions are a blueprint for an optimal situation. In practice, they are subject to wear and tear. On the tenth issue of an order for a patrol, the patrol leader will treat the regularly recurring fixed elements in a very perfunctory way or perhaps not at all, because all members of the patrol are familiar with them. It is quite possible for a deviation from the fixed instructions to occur without a change being expressed therein. It is also possible that observance of rules may become less stringent and precise through lax control of observance.

In this process, the role of the commander as controller is of paramount significance. Where one commander, for whatever reason, can put great emphasis on the maintenance of uniformity in clothing, his colleague within the same unit can attach greater value to other aspects of his exercise of command and the functioning of his unit. It is therefore dangerous to use the Standing Orders as a kind of railway timetable. They contain procedures and instructions whose use and execution is less stringent and rigid in operational practice than they may look on paper. Maintaining the standard depends frequently on the seriousness and nature of the subject in question and on supervision of observance and the objectives of the commander.

What applies to the nature and significance of Standing Orders in general also applies to the Standing Orders of Dutchbat. This set of rules and procedures for conduct was a compilation of existing Dutch and UN rules and procedures, and regulations specially drawn up for the mission in the former Yugoslavia. The UNPROFOR Rules of Engagement discussed in Chapter 1 were part of this Standing Order. The Standing Order regularly referred, for more detailed information and instruction, to the Manual for Participation in International Peacekeeping Missions. The first part, about personnel matters, opened with a discussion of working hours.

The starting point for the operation of Dutchbat was continuous service: 24 hours per day for seven days per week, to be carried out in shifts. The basis was a division into active service, stand-by and rest. The seven-day working week with a work day of 11 hours (morning, afternoon and evening) also applied for personnel with supportive tasks. To the extent that work permitted, Sundays had a 'different character'. In practice, the Sunday was generally respected and work in the compound began later and proceeded at a slower pace. There was no breakfast on Sundays, but there was brunch.[454]

Leaving the barracks area, the compound, was not permitted. Nor was receiving private visitors. Everyone wore, in principle, the prescribed military battledress (without the Dutch flag on the sleeve, in order to prevent any confusion with the Croat or Yugoslavian flag). Wearing sports clothes was permitted during periods of rest, but wearing civilian clothes was not. Fitness equipment was available in the compound. Two sports instructors were responsible for the physical condition of the personnel.[455] In practice, the Dutchbat soldiers made extensive use of the sports facilities. The men also organized intramural competitions.

The Standing Order contained a number of stipulations about hairstyle and the wearing of earrings and other jewellery: men had to have short hair; ponytails and so-called Huron or Mohican haircuts were prohibited. Earrings and ear studs for men were also prohibited. The Standing Order, in line with UN regulations, also pointed out the risk that articles of UN equipment could fall 'into the wrong hands', and the need to prevent this. Trading in and exchanging articles of UN and military clothing was expressly forbidden.[456]

In practice, blue berets and other articles of military attire regularly disappeared. At Dutchbat III, those reporting losses gave theft as the cause of incidents, both in the compound and at the

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[454] NIOD, Coll. Koreman. Koreman, 'Experiences with Dutchbat III', p.17/24.
[455] SMG/Debrief. Dossier Standing Orders Dutchbat, chapter 1 subjects 1/02, 1/11 and 1/13.
[456] SMG/Debrief. Dossier Standing Orders Dutchbat, chapter 1, subject 1/07.

observation posts. In a few cases, the stolen goods were returned via the local Muslim police or in one instance, in June 1994 through the mediation of Naser Oric.[457]

The part dealing with personnel matters contained a detailed procedure for action and reporting in the event of an accident or death.[458] It also dealt with procedures for repatriation of personnel before the end of the mission for disciplinary, medical, social or psycho-social reasons.[459] After provisions about Dutch criminal law and disciplinary rules and the UNPROFOR regulations in regard to what were 'major offences' (these will be discussed further in Chapter 9 on misconduct) came a section about discipline in the area of operation. The soldier had to behave as a 'guest (…) in another country' and respect all local customs. Dutchbat personnel were to show respect for local customs and religious traditions and were not to react to them as if offended or shocked. Special attention was given to the behaviour of female soldiers and interaction with women in the Islamic area of operation. These were no more than rules of thumb and, for optimal effect, of course, some knowledge of the local culture was necessary.[460] Finally, the personnel and administrative component of the Standing Order dealt with a series of regulations for matters such as leave, postal traffic, travel, evaluations and ceremonial matters.

The chapter about Intelligence and Security was logically constructed, and had military security as its central topic. Military security, according to the Standing Order, aimed at the protection and keeping secret of data, equipment, personnel, activities and installations against espionage, sabotage, subversion and terrorism on the one hand and against theft, loss or unauthorized perusal on the other hand. Every commander (up to company level) was responsible, within his area, for military security and for drawing up a security order to this end. Within each unit an officer or non-commissioned officer was appointed Military Security Officer (MVO) and was charged with carrying out these instructions. The detailing of the regime of military security was generally done top-down, while the opposite tack was taken in reporting matters and events with a security aspect and security incidents of breaches of military security. In this respect, Dutchbat, was no closed circuit. In principle it applied the regulations of UNPROFOR, Bosnia-Hercegovina Command and Sector North East and also reported in this chain of command.

Dutchbat, as peacekeeping force in Srebrenica, paid special attention to military security because of the unusual operational conditions (i.e. operating in an enclave in the immediate vicinity of two warring factions). This had its effect on the daily course of affairs, because there was a greater chance of transgressions. Although within the battalion and the company, the commander was responsible for military security, this responsibility was actually delegated to security officers. At battalion level this was the combat intelligence captain and his close colleagues, the sergeant-major for combat intelligence and the sergeant-major for military security; at company level the company's sergeant-major fulfilled this task. On this point, they were also responsible for intelligence and training within their units.[461]

In the Standing Order, a number of rules were included for the effectuation of military security and the collection of intelligence. In security, a distinction was made between safeguarding buildings, documents and personnel. The buildings were permanently guarded by a sentry at the entrance and by admission checks, while permanent patrols were mounted along the perimeter of the compound. A separate regulation existed for the protection of weapons, calling for regular control of the presence of the personal weapon and ammunition.[462] The safeguarding of documents included, along with

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[457] Dutchbat situation report, 04/06/94. KMAR, Detachment Srebrenica: Mutatierapporten///Turnover reports January-July 1995, passim.
[458] SMG/Debrief. Dossier Standing Orders Dutchbat, chapter 1 subject 1/21.
[459] SMG/Debrief. Dossier Standing Orders Dutchbat, chapter 1 subject 1/17.
[460] SMG/Debrief. Dossier Standing Orders Dutchbat, chapter 1 subject 1/14.
[461] SMG/Debrief. Dossier Standing Orders Dutchbat, chapter 2, subject 2/1.
[462] SMG/Debrief. Dossier Standing Orders Dutchbat, chapter 2, subjects 2/7, 2/9 and 2/11.

classification and putting them away in a safe or secured space, key security and the protection of computer and crypto installations, and signal links.

The Standing Order applied the UN regulations for the classification of documents and crypto security. Otherwise, these regulations essentially corresponded with the instructions of the Netherlands Army. These instructions did not contain any guidelines concerning the admission of outsiders into the areas where operational Intelligence was available. This was an oversight, because it left access to the battalion and company Ops Room (Operations Room) open to interpreters and local cleaning personnel. A serious suspicion arose that the local personnel collected information for the ABiH. These personnel were selected by the Opstina (the local authority). According to some Dutchbat personnel, they had a fair command of German or English. Twice a day, three or four women cleaned the Ops Room of C Company (Dutchbat II) in Potocari and it was impossible to keep an eye on everything they did. Even though no classified information was kept in this Ops Room, UNPROFOR military information summaries were present. There were patrol timetables, duty and guard rosters on the walls, and a logbook lay open for incoming messages. The bag with outgoing mail also hung in the Ops Room. Empty envelopes were routinely thrown into the wastepaper basket and this allowed residents of the enclave to obtain the Netherlands address of Dutchbat personnel.

It did not surprise the officer charged with Military Security in The Hague that relatives of Dutch soldiers received mailed requests from Yugoslavians in the Netherlands to smuggle money into the enclave by mail. Local personnel were not checked on leaving the compound.[463] This security risk was not recognized, in the first instance, and was only given more attention during the time of Dutchbat III. In B Company, after a number of thefts and suspicions of rummaging in personal possessions, access to the living quarters was denied. The work of the local personnel in the compound was restricted for reasons of military security.[464] For the protection of personnel the Standing Order focused on knowledge of the security regulations, reporting departure and arrival at a military site, rules for taking personal photographs and making video recordings and rules for contacts with the local population. Signing in at one's own Ops Room or on departure from and return to the compound were mandatory. Taking personal photographs and making video recordings was only permitted within the compound. Outside it, photographing and recording were only allowed for operational objectives.[465] It is not clear to what extent this rule was observed. Dutchbat personnel often brought costly equipment with them to Srebrenica and if they succeeded in getting it through the Bosnian-Serb control points in the enclave, they used it too. The books about the Bravo Company of Dutchbat I, Dutchbat on Tour and *Dutchbat in Vredesnaam* ('Dutchbat in the Name of Peace'), are richly illustrated. That the instruction was not always carried out to the letter is evident from the fact that, during the days of the fall of the enclave in July 1995, Dutchbat personnel used their own equipment to take photos of victims of executions; but by that time the chaos was so extensive that hardly any regulations were being observed any longer.

Contacts with the local population receded from the fairly frequent contacts of Dutchbat I to hardly any contacts for Dutchbat III. On this subject, it is important to state that a difference existed between the regulations and the reality, as will be discussed later in Chapters 8 and 9. Dutchbat II and III employed the rule that individual contacts with the local population were prohibited. In practice, this certainly did not mean that there was no contact at all. In certain situations, such as at the observation posts, it was difficult to make a distinction between business and personal contacts. Furthermore, not everyone observed the regulation strictly.

The other rules in the security Chapter of the Dutchbat Standing Order related to information. It concerned the collection of information for operational action and preventing information from falling into the wrong hands, particularly those of the warring factions and their Intelligence Services.

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463 Archive 101 MID-C. Jawad to Van Dijk, debriefing report, 09/02/95.
464 Interview J.R. Groen, 05/07/99.
465 SMG/Debrief. Dossier Standing Orders Dutchbat, chapter 2, subjects 2/8, 2/9, 2/12, 2/13, 2/14 and 2/15.

This preventive task required the application of security measures that related to the protection of the compound, weapons, documents and signal links. Censorship by the army postal service in communications with the home front was another available instrument, according to the Standing Order, but it was never used during the Dutchbat mission. The active gathering of information concentrated on five key subjects: the actions of the warring factions and any preparations for hostilities; the attitude of the residents of the enclave towards the UN; the attitude or reaction of political groups and individuals; the effects of the weather and the condition of the terrain and, finally, the status of convoy routes.

For all this, Dutchbat utilized a series of reports. Each day the battalion staff received a report from each company drawn up on the basis of a standard form: the situation report or 'sitrep' for short. Processed into these situation reports was the daily reporting from observation posts and patrols. On the basis of these internal reports, the battalion staff drew up the Dutchbat situation report for the headquarters of Sector North East. There was also a series of occasional reports, for example; patrol reports, shooting reports about gunfire observed, firing close reports for targeted firing on UNPROFOR personnel, overflight reports for sightings of aircraft and incident reports for accidents. Also in this context there were debriefings after each transport outside the enclave. Most of these reports have not been saved. Using information from these reports, Dutchbat Section of Intelligence & Security wanted to provide for its own intelligence needs and those of UNPROFOR.

In accordance with the fundamentals of UN peace operations the starting point of the duties of the Dutchbat information officer was not the active collection of Operational Intelligence. On a daily basis, he distributed general information in the Milinfo for the whole Dutchbat area of operation. It covered six subjects: a short weather report, a brief description of the situation in Bosnia and Sector North East (on the basis of the situation reports of Bosnia-Hercegovina Command and Sector North East); the situation of Dutchbat; ceasefire violations (with specification per sector and calibre of weapon); an overview of talks conducted and, finally, the situation of the roads – actually an overview of the accessibility of the observation posts using different types of vehicles.[466]

A summary of the main elements of this internal Milinfo also went daily to Sector North East as an information report. In general this report was limited to the day-to-day events in Srebrenica and the Sapna Thumb. An attempt at making an analysis for a somewhat longer period was not written up in reports. It is not ruled out that this was done for security reasons: the reports were sent to Tuzla and the Netherlands using ordinary fax machines.[467] The consequences of this method of information gathering for Dutchbat's intelligence picture in Srebrenica will be discussed later in this chapter.

The Operations Chapter of the Standing Order was created from material that had been collected for exercises of Dutchbat I and II and the School Battalion of the Airmobile Brigade. It was used during the exercises 'Blue Falcon' and 'Noble Falcon' and it was supplemented and altered on the basis of the experiences in Bosnia. This chapter was the pendant of the general instruction of the Royal Netherlands Army for peace operations, the first edition of which appeared in November 1991 and an updated version in 1993 ( 2-1393).[468] This chapter of the Standing Order consisted of eight short sections about general subjects and 19 appendices. The first eight sections dealt with the main elements of an action and set down general rules of behaviour; in the appendices, the Standing Operating Procedures (SOP) of UNPROFOR were given in translation.

The section about general aspects of performance summarized the most important points about the positioning of Dutchbat checkpoints, the searches at checkpoints, the use of force in the compound and at observation posts, behaviour in response to threats to personnel and equipment and the main features of Safe Areas. The use of force was elaborated in a separate section on the basis of

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466 SMG/Debrief. Dossier Standing Orders Dutchbat, chapter 2, subjects 2/3 and 2/12. Wiebes, *Intelligence and the war in Bosnia 1992 - 1995* (Chapter 1: UN and intelligence).

467 Wiebes, *Intelligence and the war in Bosnia 1992 - 1995* (Chapter 3: Dutchbat and intelligence gathering).

468 SMG/Debrief. Dossier Standing Orders Dutchbat, Chapter 3, subject 3.1. Netherlands Army, *Voorschrift (Instruction) 2-1393, 2e edition. Manual for the services on peace missions in the international connection* (z.pl.? [1993])

the Rules of Engagement.[469] According to the Standing Order, hostilities between the warring factions were prohibited in a Safe Area. Only one of the warring factions could stay in the Safe Area: the other was kept at a distance outside the demilitarized zone under supervision of UNMOs. Within the protected area, all weapons had to be stored under UNPROFOR supervision. Bearing arms was only permitted for UNPROFOR and UnCivPol.

This was indeed the official situation according to the letter of Security Council Resolutions 819, 824 and 836 and the demilitarization agreement of 8 May 1993. The reality presented a different picture: the situation within the enclave was stable; there was no demilitarization, however; on both sides of the ceasefire line the warring factions remained militarily active. This interfered with the task of Dutchbat, manifesting itself mainly in the execution of the five 'derived tasks or subtasks'. According to the Standing Order, these subtasks stemmed from the responsibility for the Safe Area: mounting patrols, setting up observation posts and checkpoints, guarding a Weapon Collection Point and escorting convoys.

According to the Standing Order, UNPROFOR was not responsible for the protection of the population in the Safe Area: after all, the main task was deterring attacks on the enclave and supervising observance of the ceasefire and the demilitarization process. In principle UNPROFOR could indeed help, but only if a direct threat arose to the personal safety of civilians and there were no other aid organizations at hand. The UN personnel could not run any unacceptable risks and the instruction on the use of force remained in effect in such situations. Providing support of this type meant that civilians (non-combatants, in military and international law terms) were equated in such cases with UN personnel. According to the details, the execution of the main tasks was not to be jeopardized nor was there to be 'too great an involvement of the UN personnel in the conflict'. In the examples regarding this subject in the Standing Order, it appeared, in the first place, that it had medical assistance to individuals in mind.[470] This also applied to the other two forms of aid mentioned in the Standing Order.

UNPROFOR could use UNPROFOR transport to move civilians out of a dangerous area, as long as the politically sensitive points were taken into account: the question of whether one would be cooperating with ethnic cleansing on the one hand or, on the other hand, whether the action would deny people the right to take flight. In the case of discovering the use of physical violence against civilians a UNPROFOR commander could 'if *necessary* and *possible*' decide to provide support on the spot.[471]

The sections about the Rules of Engagement and the related definitions made it clear in wording and through the use of capital letters that firearms could be used 'ONLY AS A LAST RESORT'. The application of the rules of conduct to bearing arms was linked to the so-called readiness phase and the place of residence. Bosnia-Hercegovina Command distinguished three readiness phases:

1. Green: an everyday situation with normal message traffic;
2. Orange: status of heightened alert with doubling of shifts, only essential movements, control of essential equipment, reserves ready for use within ten minutes and cancellation of leave; and
3. Red: full-scale alert with manning of all posts and alert positions, closing of the checkpoints and reserves immediately available for use.

For each alert phase, regulations were in effect for the personal weapon, the wearing of helmet and flak vest and for the protection of compounds and observation posts.[472]

The last subject dealt with the 'emergency resupplying plan (Bluewind)'. This was part of the Military Security Plan of Sector North East that had been drawn up on the basis of the starting points

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469 See for the content of the ROEs of Unprofor Part II, Chapter 1.
470 SMG/Debrief. Dossier Standing Orders Dutchbat, Chapter 3, subject 3.2 sub 4 (Safe Areas) and 5 (behaviour on threats to personnel and/or equipment).
471 SMG/Debrief. Dossier Standing Orders Dutchbat, Chapter 3, subject 5 sub 5 e and f.
472 For a scheme see Karremans, *Srebrenica*, p. 299.

of the central plan for UNPROFOR.[473] Other than the name suggests, the plan was related to the operational effort in the event of a resupplying blockade. At Dutchbat it was known under the name 'minimize [plan]'. Developed by Dutchbat II, the plan assumed that in the event of a blockade of resupplying, it would take at least fifteen days before the logistical flow could return to normal. Dutchbat should therefore have enough supplies for twenty days. The plan was essentially a timetable for rationing measures and restrictions on the operational effort and humanitarian service.

The first phase of the minimize programme began with rationing of water and food and reduction of the number of patrols on the third day. On the fifth day, liaison would be ended, the consumption of fuel restricted and personnel would be regrouped in order to ensure the continuity of operational tasks. Also on this day, preparations for the airdrops, which would occur two days later, would begin. On the tenth day, the patrols with vehicles and the transport of the wounded of non-UN personnel would come to an end. On the fifteenth day all engineering work would be halted and preparations would begin for execution of the evacuation plan, the next part of the Military Security Plan.[474] Evacuation was thus considered a logical step once resupplying had come to a halt.

The principle part of the Operations Chapter of Dutchbat's Standing Order consisted of the eighteen appendices in which the main Standing Operating Procedures of UNPROFOR were presented. In part, these appendices dealt with subjects that had already come up in the preceding section: the carrying out of controls, the actions taken at checkpoints and roadblocks. In fact, the major part dealt with new subjects: action in the event of hijacking and hostage-taking (Appendix 3), escorting high-ranking civilian and military authorities (Appendix 4), the setting up of cordons and mounting of search operations (Appendix 5), patrols (Appendix 7), air support (Appendix 12) and requesting fire support (Appendix 18). Reference was always made to the relevant chapters in the previously mentioned Manual for Participation in International Peacekeeping Missions. There was no reference to the specific UNPROFOR SOP. These Dutchbat Standing Operating Procedures – given in the appendices of the Standing Order – will be dealt with in the discussion of the work of Dutchbat in Srebrenica. The Operations Chapter of the Standing Order concluded with an appendix about Lessons Learned by the British battalion in the field of movements and convoys.[475]

The fourth Chapter of the Standing Order dealt with logistical matters. Dutchbat operated independently with regard to logistical matters and relied in large part on the Netherlands for its resupplying and maintenance. The Dutch regulations were therefore the point of departure. Amendments to these regulations were carried out on the basis of the Standing Operating Procedures for logistical matters (see Chapter 1) and the logistical instructions of UNPROFOR and the *aide-mémoire* of June 1993 for the troop-contributing nations of UNPROFOR. Along with sections about resupplying, equipment services and medical care, this part also had a section about rationing. It contained a specification from the Operations Chapter of the logistical aspects of the emergency resupplying plan. This rationing was limited to food and fuel in four phases of increasing restriction.[476]

The fifth and last Chapter dealt with notifications, reports and messages. Part of the reporting has already been discussed under Military Security and under Intelligence. In general, different types were called for, as well as different numbers and frequencies. Each company was responsible for twenty-one types of notification. Of the five written reports, the situation report was a daily obligation. The other four (shooting report, firing close report, over flight report and incident report) were occasional. Additionally the company was responsible for sixteen written reports. Four were a daily obligation (logbook, report of the command post, report of the patrol and the engineer's report). One report was required weekly (the UN personnel list) and one monthly (the roll-call list). The other ten were only drawn up if there was something to report (for example, a debriefing after movement, a

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473 UNGE UNPROFOR Box 249. SRSG to FC, Interoffice memorandum re: Security Planning Guidance, 01/09/93.
474 SMG/Debrief. Dossier Standing Orders Dutchbat, chapter 3, subject 3.7.
475 SMG/Debrief. Dossier Standing Orders Dutchbat, chapter 3, appendices.
476 SMG/Debrief. Dossier Standing Orders Dutchbat, chapter 4.

seizure of weapons and ammunition, explosives reconnaissance, a convoy report and obstacle reports). Furthermore, the services company was responsible for a daily logistical and medical report.[477]

The battalion staff was responsible for eight daily and nine periodical reports. The first category included the situation report, the information report ('infosum' in UNPROFOR language), the situation report of the engineers and the report about movement possibilities ('movsit' in the jargon), the logistical and medical report. Dutchbat reported weekly to Bosnia-Hercegovina Command on accommodation, military information, the personnel situation, the press and information, transport and maintenance. The battalion also submitted a weekly request for fuel and oil. On a monthly basis, it reported about the personnel present and about accidents. Finally, it reported, where cases occurred based on the reports of the companies, about shooting incidents, violations of the no-fly rule by the warring factions, accidents, shelling with artillery and mortars, obstacles and mines, convoys, the wounded and victims among the Dutchbat personnel and medical evacuations.[478]

From the extensive reporting requirement of Dutchbat as UNPROFOR unit it is clear that the operational performance, availability and general situation of Dutchbat had to be made known at the next highest level – to the extent, of course, that all relevant matters were reported – and a total picture emerged from the daily figures. The reporting about the situation in the Dutchbat area of operation went upward in the UNPROFOR line, of course, and was processed in the reporting of Sector North East and subsequently in that of Bosnia-Hercegovina Command. Along with written reporting, of course, there was also telephone contact with Sector North East in Tuzla and with Bosnia-Hercegovina Command in Kiseljak.

The heart of the reporting continued to be the daily situation report. Its quality was indicative for making evaluations. In general, Dutchbat I reported in greater detail than its successors. This applied particularly to the contacts with the warring factions and the last point in the situation report, the commander's assessment. Through the tiered manner of reporting, the main lines of what was going on in the Srebrenica enclave were also known elsewhere. At the same time, the developments in the Safe Area Srebrenica found their place in the general picture of the peace operation in Bosnia and the former Yugoslavia. In this way, reporting could play a role in determining the policy lines of UNPROFOR and Bosnia-Hercegovina Command.

The Dutchbat situation reports also found their way daily to the Army Crisis Staff in The Hague and from there to the staff of the Comander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army and of the Airmobile Brigade, among others. The information report also went directly from headquarters in Potocari to the Intelligence officer of the Crisis Staff in The Hague. This method of distribution of the daily Dutchbat reports, ensured that the responsible military commanders were well informed about the Dutchbat situation. The evaluations they made did not only depend on the information flow from Srebrenica. Thanks to the placement of senior Dutch officers in key positions with the UNPROFOR staffs in Zagreb, Kiseljak and Tuzla, it was possible to interpret and analyse in the broader context of the peace operation in the former Yugoslavia. However, this sketch of the information flows mainly presents the official regulations. Whether all the parties who received the reports actually read them and whether they regarded the content of the reports as a reason to take action is another matter.

The discussion of the Dutchbat Standing Order creates the picture of a large amount of rules and regulations for taking action as part of a peace mission in the Safe Area. In addition to the division of tasks between the battalion and the companies the Standing Order also makes it clear that, for the execution of the operational task, the key departments were the Operations section together with the Military Security and Intelligence section. This is not to dismiss the essential function of the logistics section. It is striking, however, that the important liaison section is left out of the picture in the instruction. Nevertheless, this admittedly small section of a few officers and non-commissioned officers was of great importance to the operational performance of Dutchbat, because the liaison section

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[477] SMG/Debrief. Dossier Standing Orders Dutchbat, chapter 5 subject 4.3.
[478] SMG/Debrief. Dossier Standing Orders Dutchbat, chapter 5 subject 4.3.

maintained the contacts with the civilian and military authorities in and beyond the enclave. They worked in close cooperation with the UNMO team. The liaison task was assigned by the battalion commander to officers from the battalion staff. The task and the performance of this section will be discussed in greater detail later in Chapter 8.

The Standing Order was, as has already been stated, a manual with regulations, rules and procedures that were meant to ensure a uniform approach to day-to-day activities. It was applied within a hierarchical organization model. Of course, the commander was responsible for the overall course of affairs: the battalion commander for Dutchbat as a whole; the company commander for his own unit. Certainly the Support Command in Lukavac, but also the company in Simin Han, operated as more or less independent units. Along with the commander as official leader, the Operations Room (Ops Room in the day-to-day jargon) had central significance for a smooth course of events. This was the nerve centre where all lines of communication of the companies, convoys and Support Command came together and from which the battalion communicated with the outside world. Grouped around the Ops Room were the work areas of the key officers (battalion commander, head of the Operations section and head of the Intelligence & Security section), so that the required decisions could be taken quickly.

The Ops Room could be reached at all times. The running of the Ops Room was entrusted to the Duty Officer, a captain of one of sections of the battalion staff. He was supported by a non-commissioned officer and a private or corporal. The Ops Room received reports of wounded personnel, hostage-takings and accidents, the shelling of observation posts or patrols, the discovery of weapons or the obstruction of convoys. There were fixed procedures for dealing with these reports. Communication was via HF radio connections, telephone, fax and a satellite link. To this end, a signals platoon was stationed in the Ops Room, a communication centre called Comcen. A very small part of the signals traffic was secure. The protected connections were accommodated in a closed-off area, the crypto-room. This was only accessible to the communication centre personnel on duty, and to officers and cadre personnel authorized to read classified documents.[479]

Every infantry company had its own Ops Room on a more modest scale, but with a Duty Officer and Comcen in any case. Each company commander determined for himself who could serve as Duty Officer. For the B Company of Dutchbat I, for example, this was the commander, his deputy and the company's sergeant-major. For the C Company of Dutchbat III, the post was filled by the deputy company commander, the platoon leaders and the Forward Air Control officer.[480] In principle, all data collected had to be noted in logbooks. All relevant information from the patrols was recorded in patrol diaries, so that it was possible to read them for analysis and the preparation of new patrols.[481] The Duty Officer, at the end of his 24-hour shift, gave a briefing to the platoon leaders, their deputies, the administrator, the company doctor (the head of the medical aid station), a representative of the engineer's detachment, the communication centre, the heads of the supply group and the maintenance group. The briefing consisted of an overview and analysis of the events of the last 24 hours and an overview of the work of the coming 24 hours.[482]

After outlining the organization of Dutchbat, it is necessary to present a more or less comparable outline of the organization of the two warring factions in the enclave. These were the parties that Dutchbat mainly had to deal with in the execution of its task. This went beyond monitoring the observance of the agreements made on a ceasefire and demilitarization and the maintenance of the Safe Area. The daily activities of the two parties in the enclave and its immediate vicinity were also of importance. From the outline, it will emerge that Dutchbat information was incomplete. The two parties had a vested interest in keeping certain information secret from Dutchbat.

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[479] SMG/Debrief. Dossier Standing Orders Dutchbat, chapter 1 subject 1/03; chapter 2 subjects 2/12, 2/13 and 2/15; chapter 5 subject 4.1 and 4.2.
[480] Jellema, *First-In*, p. 187. Interview R. Rutten, 25/09/01.
[481] Dijkema, *Dutchman in Vredesnaam* (Dutchbat in the name of peace), p. 132.
[482] For the course of affairs on company level see Jellema, *First-In*, 187.

## 6. The ABiH in Srebrenica

Before the arrival of UNPROFOR and the Canadian battalion in March/April 1993 there was no orderly organization of the Muslim units in Srebrenica. At the start of the war, several small and improvised Muslim paramilitary groups were created within the enclave. Some of these groups consisted of residents of the municipality of Srebrenica, while others were made up of Muslims who had fled to Srebrenica. In the town of Srebrenica the most important group organized itself around the old Turkish Fort (Stari Grad) under the leadership of Hakija Meholjic and Akif Ustic. In Potocari a second group was created around Naser Oric. Smaller fighting groups sprang up in villages such as Suceska (with Ramiz Becirovic as Commander), Bajramovici (with Hamdija Fejzic in charge) and Kragljivode (led by Nedzad Bektic and Sefik Mandzic). Within the county of Bratunac there was a comparable process of 'militia'-forming on a local basis. In Konjevic Polje, Velid Sabic formed a crisis committee with an armed paramilitary group.[483] As described in Chapter 2, through the efforts of these groups a united Muslim area, with Srebrenica as centre, was created in the spring and summer of 1992. The militias of Srebrenica, Potocari and Suceska began to work together under the leadership of Naser Oric and his Deputy Commander Akif Ustic. They set up headquarters in the post office in Srebrenica.

As an increasingly larger area came under Muslim control the number of militias grew. In August 1992 these groups came into contact for the first time with the regular Bosnian army, the ABiH: a well-armed company wearing the ABiH uniform was drawn to Srebrenica through the VRS lines. This company was part of a Muslim brigade formed by Nurif Rizvanovic – the leader of a paramilitary group in Bratunac who fled to Tuzla – and made up of displaced persons from Bratunac. For the time being, there was no fixed military organization structure serving as umbrella. In mid-October 1992 three brigades existed: one in Potocari, one in Suceska and one in Kragljivode. Additional battalions were active in Osmace, Biljeg, Skenderovici, Luka and Srebrenica. In November 1992 the Muslim units of Srebrenica, Konjevic Polje and Cerska were brought under a single command. Naser Oric, the Commander of the units in Srebrenica, became Commander-in-chief of the new formation. From February 1993 Ramiz Becirovic acted as chief of staff. Meanwhile, the strength of the Muslim militias in the area around Srebrenica was roughly estimated at almost 15,000 men.[484]

Naser Oric became the undisputed Commander of the ABiH in Srebrenica. When the war broke out in Bosnia he was 25 years old. His family had lived in Srebrenica/Potocari since time immemorial. The flamboyant teenager Oric, who spent a great deal of time practising karate and lifting weights, left for Belgrade in 1988 after leaving secondary school and completing his national service. He took a training course as a police officer and became part of a special police troop force in Kosovo. He went on to become one of the bodyguards who were with the Serb president Milosevic as he made his notorious speech in June 1989 commemorating the Battle of Kosovo Polje. In July 1991, when the war broke out, Oric was working as a police officer in Sarajevo. Several weeks later the Bosnian authorities transferred him to Srebrenica with secret orders to organize a local Muslim militia.

At the start, Oric found few supporters and his small group of supporters could hardly be called impressive: they only had hunting rifles and automatic rifles from the police armoury in Srebrenica. Oric began to train his men as guerrillas in laying ambushes, knocking out tanks using Molotov cocktails and in hand-to-hand combat culminating in killing the opponent with a knife. In April, when the conflict also spread to Srebrenica Oric became the hero of the town within a matter of days, as he and his group of Muslim fighters succeeded in driving the Serbs from Srebrenica (April 1992). Along with these feats, his biography also reports a range of violent action against people and even involvement in murders. This was no hindrance to his performance as Commander of the Muslim fighting groups in Srebrenica, nor did it interfere with his involvement in the black market in the enclave.

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[483] Duyzings, *History, Memory and Politics in Eastern Bosnia*, Chapter 6.
[484] Duyzings, *History, Memory and Politics in Eastern Bosnia*, Chapter 6.

Oric succeeded in enlarging the size of the enclave using guerrilla tactics. Just as important for his reputation was that he personally led his guerrillas in raids on Serb villages without sparing his earlier Serb friends. Oric was more than a local warlord. He operated in consultation with the high command of the ABiH, and thereby let military-strategic interests take priority above humanitarian concerns. For example, as described in Chapter 3, he resisted the planned large-scale evacuation of displaced persons in April/May 1993, because this would mean that a part of the Muslim area would have to be abandoned. Oric was the man who ran the show in Srebrenica, who was involved in the black market in the enclave and who had acquired a very violent reputation. The civilian authorities could not take a step without his approval.

Oric was an impressive phenomenon: well-muscled, powerful frame, bearded, he was generally seen with several bandoleers of ammunition crossed over his chest, and most often in the company of several bodyguards. Later on, he would often wear camouflage battledress, an armband on the right sleeve saying 'SREBRENICA 1' and another on the left sleeve saying 'AIRBORNE' and 'SPECIAL FORCES'. He kept up his sporting activities and was regularly seen in the enclave running with a large group or in unarmed hand-to-hand combat. Among outsiders, he often created the impression of having seen too many Rambo films.

The Bosnian Serbs saw him as the key figure in the attacks on Serb villages, responsible for massacres and mutilation of victims in the first year of the Bosnian war.[485] Due to his role in the period 1992-1993, the population of the enclave, indigenous and displaced persons alike, saw him as the liberator and saviour of Srebrenica. At that time, people increasingly mythologized the person and role of Oric, which strengthened his political power base. He held to his promise to the displaced persons that everyone would be able to return to their places of birth. This made it impossible for him to make concessions to the VRS. For him, peace was not a subject for negotiation. In his perception, peace was only possible 'if the Bosnian Serbs [would] unconditionally meet the demands of the Muslims.'[486]

The demilitarization agreements of April and May 1993 brought an official end to the existence of Muslim units in the enclave Srebrenica. Armed men disappeared from the streets and in reports of the Canadian battalion and Dutchbat the correct official designation was the 'former Muslim warring faction' and its Commander Naser Oric. But, in point of fact, the military organization continued to exist; until April 1994, its headquarters was even located above the headquarters of the Canadian battalion, on the first floor of the post office. In May 1994, the Muslim guerrillas reorganized. The brigades in the enclave Srebrenica were attached as 8th Operational Group to the 2nd Corps of the ABiH in Tuzla. Oric set up new headquarters in the former hunting lodge near the Turkish Fort. According to Dutchbat, the lodge was well-equipped, with workspaces for Oric and the members of his staff: the chief of staff Ramiz Becirovic, the head of operations Smajo Mandzic (25 years old), the security officer Nedzad Bektic (25 years old), the Intelligence officer – and childhood friend of Oric – Ekrim Salihovic (23 years old) and the head of legal affairs Amir Salihovic (31 years old). Oric formed four light brigades within the enclave, each with its own terrain and commander (with the rank of major), and all operating with a large degree of independence. The strength of these units varied between 500 and 1500 men. According to 1993 UNPROFOR estimates, the total strength of the ABiH in Srebrenica amounted to between 3000 and 4000 men; the assessment of Dutchbat I put the figure at between 2000 and 3000. Even with this reorganization, there was still no complete operational unit within the

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485 Sudetic, *Blood and Vengeance*, pp. 150-151 and 245. Honig & Both, *Srebrenica*, pp. 77-81. Roth, *Endgame*, pp. 7-8 and 107-108; MID/KL. Dutchbat Srebrenica/Lukavac/Tuzla Milinfo Sie 2/3: Chapter 1 section D (6) (A). UNGE UNPROFOR Box 115, file: SNE CVAO. Fax out Jan-Jul 95: fax CAO Bezrouvchenko (Tuzla) to Luc Duchensne (CA BH Command), 20/03/94.

486 Sie LL. Info for Sie 5: lecture for LSO personnel 13 Infbat (lumbl) [probably by Major A. Derksen], 09/01/95,14-15.CRST. Fax of HE Sector NE Maj. Dagelet to G1 Netherlands Army Crisis Staff, 31/10/94, Appendix: Civil Affairs, Sector NE, Srebrenica Trip Report 21-24 September, 1994 [Ken Biser], undated, p. 2.

ABiH in the enclave. There were differences in strength per brigade and the loyalty to the person of the commander remained a vital binding factor.[487]

The northern half of the enclave was entrusted to the 280th Brigade; the area took in the observation posts OP-M in the north-west to OP-R in the east. Major Ibrahim Mandzic commanded the brigade, but the day-to-day leadership of the command post in Potocari was in the hands of Nasir Sabanovic. The Commander in the northern part, between Bukova Glava in the west and Budak in the east, was the 23-year-old Captain Zehrudin Osmic, known as 'Zele'. In the eyes of the staff of Dutchbat, Osmic was a reliable man with a lot of authority, in the sense that agreements could be made with him. The eastern part of the area of the 280th Brigade, in the neighbourhood of observation posts OP-Quebec and OP-Romeo, was run by Deputy Commander Jusuf Besic.

The south-western part of the enclave was the area of operation of the 281st Brigade of Zulfo Tursunovic. He was responsible for the area between Slatina in the west to Kutuzero/Bucje in the south. For contacts with the more southerly Muslim enclave of Zepa this area was of vital importance. Tursunovic was the only oldeBrigade Commander (his age was estimated at between 50 and 60 years). According to some descriptions, he was 'harsh man' with 'black eyebrows' who used 'strong language' with his people.[488] He had been condemned for a double murder. He came from the area, and he therefore considered the area of operation of the 281st Brigade as his private domain and most often went his own way. His relationship with Naser Oric was tense and he maintained few contacts with UNPROFOR. Tursunovic's Deputy, Avdo Husejnovic, and the eight local commanders, were also from the area, but of a younger generation. The majority had worked in Serbia and returned to their birthplaces shortly before the start of the war.[489]

The 1000-man 282nd Brigade was responsible for the south-eastern sector, where the town of Srebrenica was located. Since most villages in this area had been burned to the ground and abandoned, this brigade had no subcommanders. Leadership was in the hands of the 25-year-old Brigade Commander Ibro Dudic, who had achieved success as a Battalion Commander in 1992-1993 and wore a green beret, He was known as a brave fighter who avoided unnecessary risks. His Deputy was the 40-year-old Suljo Suljic, who lived in Pusmulici, a village south-west of Srebrenica that had been flattened during the war, but was rebuilt in mid-1994. In general, the 282nd Brigade made no active impression. This was partly the result of the actual demilitarization of the town of Srebrenica, but perhaps also because all kinds of activities in this area of operation were not attributed to the Dudic Brigade, but to smugglers and disorderly elements.[490]

The 283rd Brigade was the fourth brigade of the 28th Division in the enclave. It operated in the mountainous area south of the town of Srebrenica between Zalazje and the Cicevac River. The formation was a combination of units from Skenderovici, Biljeg and Voljavica with the fighting group of Hakija Meholjic around Stari Grad in the town of Srebrenica.[491] This brigade was led by Huso Salihovic, from Bratunac, who had been involved in the fighting in this region since the beginning of the war.[492] The 284th Brigade, also called the Mountain Brigade, was the fifth and last component of the

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487 MID/KL. Dutchbat Srebrenica/Lukavac/Tuzla Milinfo Sie 2/3: chapter 1; Sie LL. Info for Sie 5: lecture for LSO personnel 13 Infbat (lumbl) [probably by Major A. Derksen], 09/01/95; D. Jellema, *First-In*, p. 152.

488 MID/KL. Dutchbat Srebrenica/Lukavac/Tuzla Milinfo Sie 2/3: appendix BiH commanders within the enclave Srebrenica and chapter 7; Sie LL. Info for Sie 5: lecture for LSO personnel 13 Infbat (lumbl) [probably by Major A. Derksen], 09/01/95. NIOD, Coll. CD-ROMs. No.69/94, 07/03/94 'The Commando of the 8th Operative Group 'Srebrenica". NIOD, Coll. Koreman. Koreman, Experiences with Dutchbat, p.18/7.

489 MID/KL. Dutchbat Srebrenica/Lukavac/Tuzla Milinfo Sie 2/3: appendix BiH commanders within the enclave Srebrenica.

490 MID/KL. Dutchbat Srebrenica/Lukavac/Tuzla Milinfo Sie 2/3: appendix BiH commanders within the enclave Srebrenica. Sie LL. Info for Sie 5: lecture for LSO personnel 13 Infbat (lumbl) [probably by Major A. Derksen], 09/01/95. Sudetic, *Blood and Vengeance*, p. 291.

491 MID, CD-ROM: No.69/94, 'The Commando of the 8th Operative Group 'Srebrenica", 07/03/94.

492 MID/KL. Dutchbat Srebrenica/Lukavac/Tuzla Milinfo Sie 2/3: appendix BiH within the enclave Srebrenica. Rhode, *Endgame*, p. 75.

28th ABiH Division in Srebrenica. This reserve unit, unlike the other brigades, consisted entirely of units from outside the Opstina Srebrenica: the 114th East Bosnian Brigade from Bratunac, the 1st Ceranski Detachment and the 6th Detachment Kamenica. These units had linked up with the sub-region Srebrenica in November 1992.[493]

The 8th Operational Group of the ABiH in Srebrenica was no regular military unit. It was a mixture of volunteers, former conscripts and reservists plus a handful of professional personnel from the Yugoslavian National Army who wanted to participate in the defence of the enclave against the VRS. Aside from training, reconnaissance, building trenches and fortifications, the main activities mainly consisted of nightly actions against VRS positions outside the enclave behind the ceasefire line and keeping a watchful eye on UNPROFOR activities. From 1994 the quality of the units improved thanks to better organization, more intensive training and particularly due to better weapons and equipment. The equipment was supplied from central Bosnia, where the ABiH could command growing stocks of weapons despite the arms embargo.

Despite all this, the ABiH in Srebrenica retained its own character, which went together in part with the unclear position of the Bosnian Government army: officially the brigades no longer existed, but their presence was unmistakable. After the failure of demilitarization in May/June 1993 UNPROFOR did not overly concern itself with the brigades: it seized any weapons it discovered but did not actively search for them; UNPROFOR, because of its unclear mandate, allowed training without weapons and other military exercises. Setting up positions within the enclave was permitted to a limited degree. The ABiH in Srebrenica tried to keep out of the sight of UNPROFOR. For its part, UNPROFOR tried to use contacts with the local commanders to acquire as much information as possible about internal relations and intentions. At central level, there was regular contact between UNPROFOR and Oric or his chief of staff Ramiz Becirovic.[494] The results of this contact, either at low level or higher level, were meagre. For, while profiting from the extensive reporting about the actions and the presumed intentions of the VRS, the ABiH maintained utmost silence about its own activities in and around the enclave.

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493 MID, CD-ROM: No.69/94, 'The Commando of the 8th Operative Group 'Srebrenica", 07/03/94.
494 MID/KL. Dutchbat Srebrenica/Lukavac/Tuzla Milinfo Sie 2/3. The frequency of these contacts is evident from situation reports of Canadian battalion and Dutchbat.

## 7. The VRS around Srebrenica

The Bosnian-Serb military organization around Srebrenica came into being later than that of the ABiH. Initially, it was poorly organized at central level and a great shortage of manpower prevailed as the result of desertion on a large scale. The actions against the Muslims in Eastern Bosnia were mainly carried out by paramilitary groups and local units under the command of local crisis committees. Compared with the fighting forces of the Muslims and the Bosnian Croats, *Vojska Republike Srpske* (VRS), elsewhere referred to as the BSA (Bosnian Serb Army), commanded the best professional officers and the best equipment, but it had a permanent shortage of infantrymen. The VRS consisted of seven regional corps. The area around Srebrenica came under the Drina Corps. This unit, under the command of General Zivanovic, had its headquarters in Vlasenica. In early 1993 better organization and coordination came about through the integration of the paramilitary units and special troops into the regular fighting forces under a centralized VRS command.[495]

In the area around Srebrenica this integration had already got off the ground in the autumn of 1992. It was coupled with the large shortage of well-trained officers among the paramilitary defenders of Bratunac. VRS units were sent there because of the increasing threat to the town by Muslim troops. The result was the founding of the Bratunac Brigade, on 15 November 1992, as a component of the Drina Corps.[496] Shortly thereafter the Skelani Brigade and the Milici Brigade came into being. These three brigades, reinforced by other units of the Drina Corps, and with generous equipment support from Serbia, mounted an attack on Srebrenica in March and April 1993. After the demilitarization of May 1993 the regular troops of the three brigades were replaced by less seasoned units which consisted mainly of conscripted older Serb men from the region and of displaced persons from Serb areas elsewhere in Bosnia that had fallen into the hands of Muslims and Croats.[497]

The Bratunac Brigade consisted of four battalions under the command of well-trained and skilled officers. Two battalions were charged with guarding the north side of the enclave Srebrenica. The two other battalions could be used for other tasks. Presumably the Brigade also had a commando unit led by Mungos Prodanovic and a unit of border police for controlling the convoys of UNPROFOR and the UNHCR. The Commander of the Bratunac Brigade, Lieutenant Colonel Slavko Ognjevic, put the enclave Srebrenica in the hands of his Chief of Staff and Security Officer, the 43-year-Major Momir Nikolic. Before the war broke out, Nikolic had been a teacher in Bratunac; he had fought in Sarajevo. Dutchbat considered Nikolic, on the basis of its contacts, to be reliable and to the point. For Dutchbat he was important because he was also responsible for the Dutchbat convoy checkpoint for the northern entrance to the enclave at Yellow Bridge.[498]

The Milici Brigade was responsible for the area south-west of the enclave. The soldiers came from the Vlasenica and Milici. Dutchbat knew little about the organization of this brigade. It had two battalions – consisting of displaced persons and badly uniformed old farmers – on the south-western border of the enclave, but Dutchbat had only vague indications about the existence of other battalions, with young, well-clothed and well-trained soldiers. Brigade Commander Colonel Vicic had delegated responsibility for his sector of the enclave border to his chief of staff, the almost 40-year-old Major Sarkic. Sarkic wanted to build good relations with UNPROFOR, did not like idle chatter and was a hardliner where the Muslims were concerned. Captain Durhan Kovgovic was probably Commander of the first battalion, which was responsible for the area between observation post OP-ALPHA in the west and Cizmici, the northernmost point of the enclave. Captain Boskovic and his battalion were used in the area from observation post OP-Alfa to the south up to Mt. Hrustine (between OP-C and OP-D).

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495 Duijzings, *History, Memory and Politics in Eastern Bosnia*, Chapter 6; Bassiouni, *Final Report*, annex III; MID/KL. Dutchbat Srebrenica/Lukavac/Tuzla Milinfo Sie 2/3: chapter 1 E.
496 Duijzings, *Memory and Politics in Eastern Bosnia*, Chapter 6.
497 MID/KL. Dutchbat Srebrenica/Lukavac/Tuzla Milinfo Sie 2/3: Chapter 1 E.
498 MID/KL. Dutchbat Srebrenica/Lukavac/Tuzla Milinfo Sie 2/3: chapter 1 E; Sie LL. Info for. Sie 5: lecture for. LSO personnel 13 Infbat (lumbl) [probably by Major A. Derksen], 09/01/95.

The Skelani Brigade apparently consisted completely of displaced persons and men mobilized from Skelani. Because of the manpower shortage, the brigade obtained support from the border police in order to be able to man the positions. Probably because the Skelani Brigade had no other task, its Commander, Colonel Vukota Vukovic, was appointed as liaison officer between UNPROFOR and the VRS around Srebrenica. Because of his rank, Vukovic preferred to do business with the Dutchbat Commander, but in practice he did business with the head of the Dutchbat liaison team. His authority was limited. In important matters he could only negotiate on instructions from General Zivanovic or VRS headquarters in Pale. Vukovic (53 years old) had been an officer since he was 18. Before the start of the war he taught sociology and political science at the military academy in Sarajevo. After the fighting around Srebrenica in 1993, he became Commander of the Skelani Brigade, in what rumours called a punitive transfer on account of misconduct. Colonel Vukovic was anything but a soldierly type: he was well-spoken and showed great interest in cultural anthropology. He spoke readily and with verve about the living standards of peoples ranging from Eskimos to New Zealanders, as Dutchbat officers found out in their first meeting with Vukovic. The colonel sometimes showed himself to be spontaneous and cooperative on local matters.[499]

## 8. The Dutchbat information picture

It would be incorrect to assume that Dutchbat, from the start of its mission, had a clear picture of the warring factions in its area of operation and of the other factors that could influence operational performance. Dutchbat was only able to build up that picture gradually but, looking back, it was never sufficient at any time during the mission in Srebrenica. Immediately upon the deployment of Dutchbat I, Battalion Commander Vermeulen complained to the Army Crisis Staff and Sector North East about the lack of a three-dimensional information picture, because of which his view of the surroundings was 'very restricted'. The main problems this created were the impossibility of correctly anticipating the developments that were generated outside the enclave and, along with that, the lack of possibilities to verify information from the warring factions.

The information picture thus consisted mainly of information that was delivered in the enclave. The main sources were the military and civilian authorities, and the population. Dutchbat was also able to use local information that was delivered via the departments of international aid organizations in the enclave. Furthermore, information was gleaned from talks with the VRS. The common feature of information from these sources is that it was biased and, even worse, that it could not be checked. The UNMO team recognized this and qualified its information, if necessary, by saying whether it was information verified by the team or information received from third parties. Hardly any information flows from higher echelons such as Sector North East or Bosnia-Hercegovina Command were available, through lack of technical means, or were not delivered by Sector North East and Bosnia-Hercegovina Command because their information position was also unsatisfactory. Dutchbat did receive the daily situation reports of the two higher levels of command, but because UNPROFOR had to do without technical resources such as signals information, radar, aerial reconnaissance and unmanned reconnaissance aircraft, Dutchbat had no access to more information.[500] Furthermore, Dutchbat worked with Yugoslavian maps that were ten years old. This made discussions about incidents or the determination of the ceasefire line difficult. After a visit to the enclave of the chief of staff of the Army Crisis Staff the maps were translated according to Dutch standards.[501]

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[499] MID/KL. Dutchbat Srebrenica/Lukavac/Tuzla Milinfo Sie 2/3: chapter 1 E. Ibidem: report on talks 12/02/94. Sie LL. Info for Sie 5:: lecture for. LSO personnel 13 Infbat (lumbl) probably by Major A. Derksen], 09/01/95.
[500] CRST. no. CRST/374, Brantz to BLS et al., 06/06/94, appendix: Report on trip to Bosna Hercegovina, p.2.
[501] CRST. no. CRST/374, Brantz to BLS et al., 06/06/94, appendix: Report on trip to Bosnia Hercegovina, p.3. This did not contribute to improvement of the communication between Dutchbat and the higher levels of command within Unprofor. They worked with maps that were made by Unprofor in Zagreb. There was a small difference between the Dutch maps and

Vermeulen did not receive much understanding for his problems from the Commanding Officer in The Hague. He withheld his approval of the proposal of the chief of staff of the Army Crisis Staff, Brantz, to clear away the shortcomings in the Dutchbat information picture with the aid of additional information from the Netherlands and to draw up a plan of action to this end. Couzy contended that it would be sufficient if the head of the Military Intelligence Service lived up to his promises to Dutchbat.[502] Couzy's decision stemmed from his conviction that Intelligence played no role in a peace operation. Couzy was not alone in this view. In the preparations for the Dutchbat mission, the subject of Intelligence never came up, nor did it come up during the various reconnaissance missions of Dutchbat I. Within the Netherlands Army, the responsible officials evidently assumed that the peace mission in the former Yugoslavia was a classical peace operation and that it did not require any Intelligence.

This point of view remains hard to understand, a point that will be returned to in detail in the Intelligence Appendix to this report. In a 'traditional' collective defence operation the emphasis lies on the study of the (measurable) military capabilities of the opponent (what can he undertake and where?). In peacekeeping operations and asymmetrical warfare, knowledge of the capabilities of the parties is subordinated to insight into their intentions (what do they want?) and their motives (why?) but, it should be said, without losing sight of capabilities. The intentions and motives can even be perceived as irrational in some cases.[503] In peacekeeping operations Human Intelligence is of particularly great importance and valuable information can come from both the local population and military leaders and politicians. Refugees who have fled from a Safe Area can also often contribute important information via systematic debriefings. This also applies to staff of the NGOs that are active in certain areas. The military Intelligence requirements for a peacekeeping operation, however, will be more closely related to the circumstances surrounding a Low Intensity Conflict than to a conventional war. The threat in a peacekeeping operation (or in asymmetrical warfare) is generally more diffuse and more difficult to identify. Regular fighting forces play a subordinate role, while paramilitary 'volunteers', controlled or uncontrolled, have the initiative, as do other conflicting elements hard to distinguish, such as criminal groups.[504]

Intelligence about, for example, the general situation of the local population is at least as important in a Low Intensity Conflict as knowledge of the exact number of tanks in a region. Intelligence should also be collected about the ethnic, linguistic, social, economic and religious situation on the spot, in order to avoid cultural blunders and to find out, for example, whether a black market is in operation and who is running it. In such a conflict peacekeepers also have to keep in mind possible confrontations with 'barely controllable ethnic and criminal groups warring over a large area', as was the case in Bosnia. Once again, such a situation has consequences for the collection of Intelligence.[505] It was also important that, in Bosnia, there was continuous asymmetrical warfare in which a party 'tries to focus one side's comparative advantages against its enemy's relative weaknesses'. UNPROFOR was always confronted with asymmetrical threats. This meant that a warring party was incapable 'either due to his own inabilities or the strength of the force opposed to him, of confronting an opponent in a conventional manner, using similar means or weapons to his opponent'.[506] For example, the obstruction of convoys by the warring factions was an effective weapon for diminishing the fighting strength of UNPROFOR units.

Although there were signals that the reality in the UNPROFOR area of operation was different than was assumed on the basis of the existing view of peace operations, it is still somewhat

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the Unprofor maps. Because of this difference the helicopter of FC de Lapresle, on his visit to Srebrenica op 2 February, could only touch down on the ground in the compound on its third attempt. SMG, 1004. TA9A to TX8, 21/02/95.

[502] CRST. no.CRST/497, 22/06/94.

[503] R. Theunens, 'Intelligence en vredesoperaties' ('Intelligence and peacekeeping operations'), in: *Militaire Spectator,* 170(2001)11, p. 601.

[504] R. Theunens, 'Intelligence en vredesoperaties', in: *Militaire Spectator*, 170(2001)11, p. 599.

[505] Pär Eriksson, 'Intelligence and Peacekeeping Operations', in: *International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence*, Vol. 10 (1997)1, p. 7.

[506] Kevin O'Brien and Joseph Nusbaum, 'Intelligence gathering for asymmetric Threats, Part I and II', in: *Janes Intelligence Review*, October and November 2000.

understandable – from this viewpoint – that Dutchbat left for Bosnia without an Intelligence capability. More difficult to explain is why no attempts were made to do something about the shortcomings determined in June 1994. A check of other battalions from NATO countries active in Bosnia would have shown that the Scandinavian, Canadian and British battalions each commanded an Intelligence group of its own, and used it to analyse incoming information and make it usable for operational actions. This will also be dealt with in detail in the Intelligence Appendix to this report.

The June 1994 decision by Couzy not to let Dutchbat have its own Intelligence unit had far-reaching consequences. The decision blocked the making of an inventory of Dutchbat's intelligence needs. A direct link between Dutchbat and the Military Intelligence Service/Netherlands Army (MID/KL) for the exchange of information was expressly prohibited. Dutchbat received no information from the Netherlands about the situation in the former Yugoslavia, continued to be deprived of an Intelligence gathering unit on the scene and was thus not able to optimally process and analyse the available information. With that, it must be said that the Dutchbat leadership continued to complain about the shortage of information. However, they made no attempt to designate personnel to cope with this shortage, nor to train them for the task. Neither did they press for extra personnel to be made available for this purpose.

In principle Dutchbat needed general information about developments throughout Bosnia in order to obtain a good picture of the larger political and military context. This would enable Dutchbat to interpret developments in the enclave. Intensification of the activities of the warring factions in the enclave, for example, could be connected with the flare-up of fighting between ABiH and VRS in central Bosnia in the vicinity of Brcko. Knowledge of events in the immediate vicinity of the enclave was more urgently needed, for example in an adjoining radius of 5 to 10 kilometres.[507] Sector North East and Bosnia-Hercegovina Command did not supply this information and the sporadic patrols outside the enclave of the 108th Reconnaissance Platoon, as carried out during Dutchbat I and II, could only fill this information need in a fragmentary way. The UNMOs could scarcely fill the gap either. Their freedom of movement was also restricted and they had just as little access to the Bosnian-Serb area. To what extent Bosnia-Hercegovina Command asked NATO to use training flights above Bosnia for aerial reconnaissance is not clear. The same is true of the deployment of other resources for aerial reconnaissance.[508] In any case, Sector North East Commander Haukland received no NATO Intelligence from UNPROFOR. Sector North East, in its own words, was 'blindfolded in the dark'.[509] In April 1995, for example, Haukland submitted five requests to NATO for aerial photos. NATO, however, refused to comply.[510]

But it would be going too far to conclude that Dutchbat was completely blind in the area of Intelligence. Dutchbat I, through its frequent contacts with the warring factions and the displaced persons in the enclave, did have access to a great deal of information, which was also analysed. Vermeulen, in most cases, added a so-called Commander's Assessment to the situation reports, presenting his own evaluation of developments within the enclave, plus possible connections with external events and his short-term expectations. This was done to a lesser extent during Dutchbat II, due to such factors as the deteriorating relationship with the ABiH, and to an even lesser extent under Dutchbat III. For security reasons, Everts and Karremans prohibited contacts between the local population and Dutchbat soldiers. Not everyone consistently observed this prohibition; at OP-A, OP-M and OP-E there was regular contact with the local population.[511]

Nevertheless, through the sharp drop in contact with ABiH and the VRS, an important source of information was lost. Karremans in fact followed the Couzy line and restricted his possibilities to gathering information about the immediate vicinity of the enclave by explicitly prohibiting patrols

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[507] Interview E. Wieffer, 18/06/99.
[508] Interview E. Wieffer, 18/06/99. Wiebes, *Intelligence*, Chapter 2.
[509] Interview H. Haukland, 03/05/99.
[510] NIOD, Letter Minister J. Pronk to NIOD, 29/05/01.
[511] *Dutchbat in Vredesnaam* (Dutchbat in the name of peace), pp. 108 and 156.

outside it to the 108th Reconnaissance Platoon and a group of British Joint Commission Observers (JCOs), from Bosnia-Hercegovina Command. Nor did he try to obtain British Intelligence from Bosnia-Hercegovina Command via the JCOs. But there was cooperation in this area between Dutchbat and the UNMOs. In some cases they scouted VRS positions with a group from the 108th Reconnaissance Platoon.[512] All in all, the information picture continued to be limited. Hardly any information about military developments in the area was available. This fostered the feeling of isolation in Dutchbat.[513]

## 9. Demilitarization and the Ceasefire Line

In March 1994 there was still little evidence of that feeling of isolation. Dutchbat Commander Vermeulen and his battalion had departed enthusiastically for their area of deployment on the assumption that a useful task awaited them. It was clear that a gap existed between the official status of Srebrenica (and Zepa) as demilitarized Safe Areas and the real situation, in which there was no demilitarization and the safety of the area and its residents was anything but certain. There was no recognized ceasefire line and, on the border of the enclave, the fighting between the warring factions did not appear to have ended. The situation that Dutchbat encountered in the enclave Srebrenica is discussed below.

Op 8 May 1993 agreements were made at national level on a ceasefire, demilitarization via the handing in of weapons by the ABiH and a subsequent withdrawal of the VRS to behind the ceasefire line. As stated in Chapter 3 of this part, very little of this actually occurred. There was great difference between the various interpretations of virtually all elements in the agreements, particularly with regard to the question of exactly where the ceasefire line (CFL) ran and under what conditions the ABiH would hand in its weapons and the VRS would withdraw. To begin with, there was even a conflict about the question of the significance of the ceasefire line: the VRS honoured the point of view that it was a border. As they saw it, the Muslims should stay within this ceasefire line; as the surrounding area was Bosnian-Serb terrain. The ABiH, on the other hand, saw the surrounding area as VRS-occupied terrain where the fighting had not yet ended; in their eyes the ceasefire line was not a border but only a line selected by UNPROFOR along which the fighting with the VRS had been halted for the time being.

Furthermore, the ABiH would continue to maintain that the front line in April 1993 encompassed a larger area than the 'red line' that UNPROFOR held to as ceasefire line around the Safe Area. According to Naser Oric, who repeatedly broached this subject, ABiH terrain had been lost, because the Canadian battalion had set up its observation posts within the ABiH front line.[514] On this point, though, Oric was wrong. After the ceasefire of 18 April 1993 the Canadian battalion had indeed held to the ABiH front line as ceasefire line, but the VRS had withdrawn at two points.[515] Close to Zalazje, an observation post had been set up to keep the road from Potocari to Srebrenica out of view of the VRS. In that area, the observation post OP-R had been set up so as to command a view of the VRS area. A few months later, the VRS asked for relocation of this observation post, but the Canadian battalion refused. Additionally, the VRS line at Zeleni Jadar (at the road exit to Milici and the Ikea wood factory) had been drawn back for the establishment of observation post OP-E.[516]

Thus, the terrain of the Safe Area had not been reduced but actually enlarged as a result of the placement of the observation posts. Oric contended the opposite and was, furthermore, firmly convinced that the VRS would use the replacement of the Canadian battalion by Dutchbat to even further reduce the Muslim area.

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[512] SMG, 1001. Situatierapport (Situation report) UNMO Srebrenica, 09/02/95.
[513] Interview R. Smith, 12/01/00 and 08/02/00; Interview Le Hardy, 08/10/97; Stankovic, *Trusted Mole*, p. 420.
[514] MID/KL. Milinfo Srebrenica 26/10/94 sub: report of talks: 18/02/94 with Oric in post office building
[515] Interviews T. Geburt, 18/11/99 and P. Desjardins, 12/11/99.
[516] Interviews T. Geburt, 18/11/99, J. Champagne, 12/11/99, D. MacIssac, 16/11/199 and J. Zoutendijk, 06/04/01.

However, the presence of UNPROFOR and the UNMOs seemed to have a positive effect. The VRS offensive was halted, UNHCR convoys came to the enclave, and demilitarization was more or less observed in the town of Srebrenica. According to the reports of the Canadian battalion, the situation in the enclave itself was 'calm', albeit that on the ceasefire line the war seemed to go on: there were shooting incidents at least one hundred times per day with small-calibre weapons and machine guns, along with exchanges of mortar fire. This situation could only change if the ABiH were persuaded to disarm and the VRS persuaded to withdraw further. In January 1994, it looked as if progress could be made in the talks to this effect. Vukovic, via the Canadian Battalion Commander Bouchard, offered a pause in the shooting, after which withdrawal from the ceasefire line could follow – this in exchange for the collection of all ABiH weapons in the enclave by the Canadian battalion.

Vukovic called this proof that the Bosnian-Serb population around Srebrenica wanted an end to the war and desired peace.[517] The reactions in the enclave to this proposal, however, were ambivalent. People there attached hardly any credence to the promise of the VRS to withdraw after weapons were handed in. Furthermore, according to Vice-President Hamdija Fejzic, too many people were earning money from the war and thus had no interest in seeing it end. But several subcommanders of the ABiH appeared, in spite of everything, to favour the plan. Zulfo Tursunovic, for example, who had scarcely shown himself to the Canadian battalion until then, declared his accord with the plan and promised to use his influence among others to this effect. A decision, however, failed to materialize. Bouchard still cherished some hope, but resumption of hostilities remained a continuous threat.[518] Naser Oric, for example, was convinced that a halt to VRS shelling only meant a calm before the storm. He was certain that the VRS was preparing for an attack in the area between Srebrenica and Zepa.

The two Safe Areas were separated by an uninhabited no-man's land. According to Oric, this area – as the result of an agreement between chief of staff Hayes of Bosnia-Hercegovina Command and the Commander of the Drina Corps, General Zivanovic – was demilitarized.[519] According to the authorities in Srebrenica there even existed a corridor between the two enclaves. Nothing of this could be found in writing, however. Since September 1993, the Canadian battalion had travelled from Srebrenica to Zepa a few times, but always after obtaining the express and specific permission of the VRS – which made the idea of an agreement on a corridor unlikely.[520] Oric contended that the VRS would avail itself of a number of skirmishes to occupy this area, whereby he demanded that UNPROFOR should take action against such a violation of the agreements. The Canadian battalion had ruled this out, though, because the area fell outside the mandate.[521]

Dutchbat inherited this unclear situation when it relieved the Canadian battalion. Even during the first talks between the authorities in the enclave and representatives of Dutchbat, the unsolved problems were aired: the lack of clarity about the ceasefire line, the demilitarization agreement violated by the ABiH and the related refusal of the VRS to withdraw. It appeared highly likely that the two parties would make use of the changing of the guard to have Dutchbat take responsibility for the no-man's land.

In the days surrounding the transfer of command on 3 March 1994 Dutchbat put an end to any speculation: UNPROFOR was only responsible for the area within the enclave Srebrenica.[522] But that was not all.

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517 DND. Situation reports Canadian battalion 28/01/94 and 31/01/94.
518 DND. Situation reports Canadian battalion 02/02/94, 04/02/94, 05/02/94 and 08/02/94; MID/KL. Milinfo Srebrenica 26/10/94 sub: report on talks:: 13/02/93 and 17/02/94.
519 MID/KL. Milinfo Srebrenica 26/10/94 sub: report on talks: 21/02/94, 02/03/94 and [03/03/94].
520 Def. Situatierapporten. Situation report Dutchbat, 04/03/94. Interview J. Champagne, 12/11/99.
521 MID/KL. Milinfo Srebrenica 26/10/94 sub: report on talks: 21/02/94.
522 Def. Situatierapporten. Situation report Dutchbat 04/03/94. NIOD, Coll. CD-ROMs. No.01-1/21-151, R. Delic to Presidium BiH, 08/03/94. Delic proposed to mention combining the Safe Areas Zepa and Srebrenica to the UN

Dutchbat Commander Vermeulen was afraid that the ABiH would provoke an incident at the ceasefire line in order to force UNPROFOR to enlarge the enclave 'until the borders they would like to have'.[523] Oric indeed seemed to be taking this road: there were incidents from the moment that Dutchbat arrived, from which the Dutch would have to conclude that the VRS was actively making itself master of the no-man's land. As evidence of the VRS intentions, the Muslim authorities reported four murders and the disappearance of one hundred civilians from this disputed area. The VRS denied any involvement in the incidents, but did admit that the area between the enclaves was unsafe for civilians. UnCivPol later made an investigation on the basis of a list, drawn up by the Muslim authorities, of four murdered civilians and 23 civilians who had disappeared, but little came of it: one could only establish that a small number of people had been killed.[524] Oric demanded the withdrawal of the VRS to the old positions and threatened Dutchbat with spontaneous action by former residents of this area if this did not happen.[525] At the Swedish Shelter Project, incidents also occurred. According to the Canadian battalion and Dutchbat these were Muslim provocations intended to increase unrest along the southern border of the enclave. The number of ceasefire violations grew.[526]

The question is whether the ABiH misrepresented matters here. This was not the case, in any event, with regard to the activities of the VRS between the two enclaves. Aerial reconnaissance of the area showed VRS troops south of Srebrenica moving in a southerly direction to Zepa. Dutchbat Commander Vermeulen interpreted this as reinforcement of the VRS position in that area aimed at hindering Dutchbat from creating a link between the two enclaves. The consequences of the VRS move had an immediate effect in Srebrenica: the prices of goods doubled within a few days.[527]

The ABiH did not stop with a demand for the withdrawal of the VRS. Mayor Fahrudin Salihovic, in letters to the Security Council, General Rose, President Izetbegovic, the Bosnian Government and Dutchbat, demanded the withdrawal of the VRS to the positions of May 1993 and demilitarization of the area between Zepa and Srebrenica. The granting of particularly this last demand would have changed the situation profoundly, because it would have led to merging the two enclaves and enlargement of the intervening area under Bosnian control. That could only have been achieved through renegotiation of the demilitarization agreement of 8 May 1993. Salihovic asked for a delegation of the Bosnian Government and army and representatives of the UN and Bosnia-Hercegovina Command to come to Srebrenica to discuss the situation. There was no response to the proposal.[528]

Calm returned to the enclave from 9 March. The cooperation between Dutchbat and the local authorities improved and the Close Air Support training flights, according to Dutchbat, raised the credibility of UNPROFOR.[529] The ABiH, however, did not simply rest content with trusting Dutchbat completely. According to Vermeulen, the ABiH would continue to use provocations against the VRS to try to force Dutchbat to intervene for the benefit of the ABiH. Dutchbat was so convinced of this that it flatly let the Muslim authorities know that they should not imagine that UNPROFOR would make this mistake and risk the loss of its impartiality as peacekeeping force.[530]

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[523] Defence, Situatierapporten. Situation report Dutchbat, 04/03/94.
[524] Def. Situatierapporten. Situation report Dutchbat, 09/03/94, 16/03/94 and 20/03/94.
[525] Def. Situatierapporten. Situation report Dutchbat, 04/03/9 and 17/03/94; Situation report Dutchbat to Crisis Staff BLS, 07/03/94; UNGE UNPROFOR Box 434, file: UNMO Srebrenica situation reports. UNMO Srebrenica to UNMO HQ BH North East, 10/03/94. Special Report on Recent Events in the Srebrenica Area, 3-8 Mar 94.
[526] UNGE UNPROFOR Box 434, file: UNMO Srebrenica situation reports. UNMO Srebrenica to UNMO HQ BH North East, 10/03/94. Special Report on Recent Events in the Srebrenica Area, 3-8 March 94. Thorsen, 'Swedish Rescue Services Agency Swedish Shelter Project in Srebrenica', p. 28.
[527] UNGE UNPROFOR Box 434 file: UNMO Srebrenica Situation reports. UNMO Srebrenica to UNMO HQ BH North East, 10/03/94: Special Report on Recent Events in the Srebrenica Area 3-8 Mar 94. Defence, Situatierapporten. Situation report Dutchbat, 04/03/94, 16/03//94 and 22/03/94.
[528] Def. Situatierapporten Dutchbat 07/03/94 and 11/03/94. UNGE UNPROFOR, Box 119 file: Civil Affairs SNE Situation reports 1994. Fax Bezrouchenko to Andreev, 20/03/94: Report for week ending 21 March, 1994. Defence, Situatierapporten. Situation report Dutchbat, 04/03/94 (appendix in letter of Salihovic to Security Council et al.)
[529] Def. Situatierapporten. Situation report Dutchbat, 09/03/94.
[530] Def. Situatierapporten. Situation report Dutchbat, 21/03/94, 24/03/94, 26/03/94 and 28/03/94.

The VRS also tested the position of Dutchbat with regard to the warring factions. On 16 March 1994 the VRS liaison officer, Colonel Vukovic, asked for permission to use the road at Zeleni Jadar so that it would be easier to reach VRS troops in Jasenova and other towns in the corridor between Zepa and Srebrenica. The Commander of the Drina Corps, General Zivanovic, relayed this request the next day to Vermeulen. Part of the road lay within the UNPROFOR ceasefire line. According to Zivanovic, this was a consequence of the withdrawal of the VRS troops in April 1993 over a distance of 750 to 1500 metres to enable UNPROFOR to disarm the ABiH. In essence, this was a correct description of the course of events around OP-Echo, but there was no talk at all of withdrawal over the whole line around the enclave.

According to Zivanovic, there was no reason to let the situation continue any longer, because the disarmament of the enclave had failed. Nevertheless, he did not ask for a return to the old situation: the VRS would respect the UNPROFOR ceasefire line, even though it did not recognize it officially. The road would remain under UNPROFOR control, on condition that the VRS could use it for military purposes. Vermeulen, however, foresaw problems with the local authorities, who would certainly also put demands for the use of the road. Nevertheless, he promised to discuss this proposal with Bosnia-Hercegovina Command on 19 March in Kiseljak. However, that discussion never took place because the VRS refused to give him permission to use the road. Nevertheless, the Drina Corps commander showed himself to be prepared to do business. He gave the impression that he had only good intentions and also proposed organizing a meeting with the authorities in Srebrenica (albeit without Naser Oric), and making direct communication links between OPs and VRS positions. He also gave Dutchbat permission for reconnaissance of the locations for observation posts along and on the ceasefire line.[531]

In the weeks thereafter, the VRS also tried to promote its own interests in a clever way by showing some obligingness to Dutchbat. The most important instrument for this was granting permission for reconnaissance patrols on the ceasefire line and on the VRS side, accompanied by the VRS sector commanders. Along with pointing out suitable sites for observation posts, the VRS also used this reconnaissance to point out ABiH positions outside the enclave. Vermeulen realized that he would be powerless if the VRS compelled use of the road by force, but the situation seemed to be less forbidding. The ABiH agreed in principle to a meeting with the VRS, but no date was set.[532]

In late March, the crisis atmosphere of a few weeks earlier appeared to have subsided somewhat because both the ABiH and VRS were prepared, at least in principle, to discuss the problems surrounding the enclave under Dutchbat supervision. Apparently Dutchbat had stood the test in the eyes of both parties by both holding to its own order within the UNPROFOR mandate and listening at the same time to the wishes and suggestions for improvement of the situation. Of course, the respective interests of the two warring factions played the leading role and the two parties evidently thought they could achieve their goals with the help of Dutchbat. The central problems were tabled and it appeared possible to begin a discussion about them. This was more than the Canadians had been able to bring about.

The questions on the agenda were, one and all, charged and loaded subjects: the course of the ceasefire line and any changes, violation of the ceasefire and completion of demilitarization and, finally, the use of the Zeleni Jadar – Milici road by the Bosnian Serbs. These three dossiers were characterized by great interconnectedness and could not be treated separately from each other. Additionally, each issue was so explosive that it could lead to a resumption of the fighting in the Safe Area. For Dutchbat this was a spectre, because it would no longer be able to maintain the Safe Area and provide the residents the safety that was expected of the peacekeeping force.

Therefore, Dutchbat had every interest in stimulating talks between the ABiH and the VRS and keeping them going in the hope that this process would result in agreements about acceptance of the

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[531] Def. Situatierapporten. Situation report Dutchbat, 16/03/94 and 17/03/94.

[532] Def. Situatierapporten. Situation report Dutchbat, 20/03/94, 22/03/93, 23/03/94, 24/03/94 and 27/03/94.

existing UNPROFOR border, further implementation of the demilitarization agreement and use of the road south of the enclave by the Bosnian Serbs. Thus, a direct connection existed between these talks and the day-to-day work of Dutchbat in the form of patrols, observation of the border of the enclave and facilitation of humanitarian aid. Precision and accuracy in each day's operational work and frequent demonstrations of Dutchbat's presence could contribute to the stabilization of the situation in the Safe Area. Even so, the two parties probably only saw a settlement as a solution for the short term, in expectation of a peace settlement.

The contacts between the warring factions and the role of Dutchbat therein will be discussed separately, as will the operational action of the three successive battalions in the enclave. To the extent possible, the three subjects will be discussed independently. In this context other matters that came up in the talks between the VRS and the ABiH under Dutchbat supervision will pass in review. For a good understanding of the political and military context of the matter, there will also be discussion of the way in which the talks in Srebrenica were fed back to the higher echelons of the warring factions and UNPROFOR and the effect this had on the course of the talks themselves.

## 10. Dutchbat I and the Ceasefire Line

During its first three months in Srebrenica Dutchbat tried actively to bring about agreements between the VRS and the ABiH. In the first month, the signals from the two parties were contradictory but there was a remarkable turnaround in April. The VRS use of the Zeleni Jadar – Milici road appeared to have priority, while continuing demilitarization was now put on a back burner. After the negative response to the VRS proposal of early January, the ABiH did show interest in early April in possible demilitarization and a precise determination of the ceasefire line.

In late March, the VRS was spoiling for a fight again. Colonel Vukovic showed some officers from Dutchbat several ABiH positions in the Bosnian-Serb area of high ground in the neighbourhood of Kiprovo that, according to Vukovic, lay in Serb terrain. At the end of the reconnaissance Vukovic asked the Dutchbat delegation to convey the demand to the ABiH that these positions be evacuated the next day, 30 March, at noon. If this did not happen, the VRS would attack a series of ABiH positions in the Bosnian-Serb area between Donje Zedanjsko and Kiprovo, south of the ceasefire line. He made a direct link between the existing situation and the task of Dutchbat: as he saw it, the Dutch peacekeepers were responsible for implementation of disarmament of the ABiH and had to keep the Muslims within the enclave. On the proposal of Dutchbat the ABiH was given until 2 April. Dutchbat also promised to patrol more intensively along the ceasefire line in the neighbourhood of Donje Zedanjsko (in the vicinity of OP-C). With this ultimatum the Bosnian-Serb army aimed at putting Zeleni Jadar – Milici beyond the reach of the ABiH, because the VRS could use this road without coming under ABiH fire. Vermeulen understood that, through the ultimatum, the situation could escalate if the VRS should attack ABiH positions from outside the enclave. The risks for the enclave were evident. Dutchbat could not take any concrete steps, however. Vermeulen contended that, through frequent patrols along the ceasefire line in the south of the enclave, he could in any case show VRS and ABiH that 'we are aware of our responsibilities'.[533]

The ABiH would not directly respond to the demand of the VRS. The ABiH leadership did not deny the presence of positions in the VRS area, but said that they were not occupied by ABiH troops. The ABiH had no objection to talks with the VRS but the main point on the agenda should not be withdrawal from the challenged positions outside the enclave. The talks, according to the ABiH, should mainly concern the course of the ceasefire line, the setting up of a buffer zone, continuing with demilitarization and exchanging the bodies of the dead.[534] Vukovic obtained the permission of the Drina corps to agree with holding talks on 9 April. It appeared that these developments were also

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[533] Def. Situatierapporten. Situation report Dutchbat, 29/03/94 and 30/03/94.
[534] Def. Situatierapporten. Situation report Dutchbat, 30/03/94.

followed at the highest level in Sarajevo by President Karadzic of the Republika Srpska and Bosnia-Hercegovina Commander Rose. Meanwhile the VRS shelled several villages in the west of the enclave and several Dutchbat patrols and observation posts as well. On the ABiH side, rumours increased about an attack on the enclave from Kladanj. That was linked to the increasing tension around the third East-Bosnian Muslim enclave and Safe Area Gorazde where, according to the ABiH, the VRS had mounted an attack.[535]

Despite this sabre-rattling and the division within the Muslim ranks, the talks on 9 April went well. Even though it took ten hours to reach results on all important points the outcome signified a definite breakthrough in tense relations. A major UNPROFOR delegation led by Dutchbat Commander Vermeulen mediated between the VRS delegation and the Srebrenica delegation.[536] Agreement was reached on 8 points. The first three dealt with the ceasefire line. VRS and ABiH would respect the 'red' UNPROFOR ceasefire line and support the setting up of observation posts 'where they can best achieve their task'. The VRS preferred placement within the ceasefire line, but would propose placement at three sites beyond it. The ABiH also wanted several observation posts outside this line 'at dominating points'.

Finally, it was agreed that the VRS positions had to be situated at a certain distance from the ceasefire line: 500 metres according to the VRS, 1000 metres according to the ABiH. There was also a series of agreements about improving and stabilizing the situation around the enclave. First of all, the Muslim authorities should implement demilitarization on the basis of the agreement of 8 May 1993 in return for the VRS promise not to endanger the safety of the residents. An end should be made to illegal departures of people from the enclave. The disputed Zeleni Jadar – Milici road would be opened under UNPROFOR supervision for 'commercial BSA [VRS] traffic only'. The Ikea wood factory and other factories in the vicinity of OP-E would remain under the protection of UNPROFOR. Finally, a full ceasefire would apply around the enclave 'during this period of renewed cooperation and further negotiations'.

To continue the contact made, a local Joint Commission of the ABiH, VRS and UNPROFOR would meet at a UN observation post once per week. The agreements were set down in a Protocol (in English and Serbo-Croatian).[537] Because Vukovic had no proxy right to sign any document, the protocol was not signed by the ABiH and Dutchbat either. For implementation, approval at a higher political and military level was necessary. Sector North East headquarters doubted this. The Civil Affairs Officer in Tuzla, on the other hand, had determined after a visit to the enclave in mid-March that 'the problem of actual delineation of the Srebrenica DMZ [demilitarized zone]' was a matter for discussion at a high level. 'Obviously, it is not the level of the Dutchbat Commander.'[538]

The protocol of 9 April 1994 contained eight starting points that should be fleshed out during follow-up talks. Although it would be going too far to say that the protocol was a result of the agreement between the Canadian battalion and the VRS two-and-a-half months earlier, the elements of that agreement were reflected in the protocol: demilitarization of the ABiH and withdrawal of the VRS from the ceasefire line. The parties still had different opinions about the required distance, but accepted

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535 Def. Situatierapporten. Situation report Dutchbat, 31/03/94, 01/04/94, 02/04/94, 03/04/94, 05/04/94, 07/04/94 and 08/04/94.

536 The Unprofor delegation consisted, along with Vermeulen, of S5 Major A. Derksen, S1 Capt. M. Verweij, ass. S5 sm E. Oskam, UNMO Lt.Cmdr. M. Foster and Major Th. Gottschalck. The VRS Drina corps delegation consisted of Col. V.Vukovic and Major N. Nikolic. The 'County of Srebrenica' delegation consisted of Fahrudin Salihovic, Vice-President Hamdija Fejzic, Naser Oric and his chief of staff Ramiz Becirovic. Appendix with Defensie, Situatierapporten. Situation report Dutchbat, 09/04/94.

537 Three interpreters attended the meeting: Hassan (UNMO interpreter), Emir (Dutchbat interpreter) and Petar (VRS interpreter. Defensie, Situatierapporten. Situation report Dutchbat, 09/04/94 sub 5.

538 Def. Situatierapporten. Situation report Dutchbat, 09/04/94 with appendix: Protocol of a bilateral meeting between representatives of the Srebrenica enclave and 2 Drina corps held on 9 April 1994 at 12am local time in HQ Dutch Battalion, Potocari. Defensie, Situatierapporten. Weekly Summary no. 02 Sector. North East/BHC, 10/04/94, sub 2. Unprofor Civil Affairs Tuzla: Bezrouchenko to Andreev, 20/03/94. (quotes in this document).

the principle of a buffer zone. Remarkably, nothing was agreed about the withdrawal of artillery and mortars: the VRS could easily cross those 500 or 1000 metres with its artillery and mortars to shell the enclave. Clearly, this was a transitional measure for the period of demilitarization. The withdrawal of artillery would only come in for attention afterwards. In this respect too, the VRS held to the agreement of 8 May 1993. Even so, it had indeed made concessions. It implicitly recognized the existence of the Safe Area and the role of UNPROFOR in the separation of the warring factions.

Nevertheless, the ABiH made the most concessions and, by so doing, had a weak starting position for the follow-up talks. Along with demilitarization, the army of Bosnia obliged itself to the restriction of freedom of movement within the UNPROFOR ceasefire line and allowed use of the Zelini Jadar – Milici road to the Bosnian Serbs, and exploitation of the bauxite mines along with it. UNPROFOR had its own interests in the result of the talks. With responsibility for use of the road south of the enclave, it took on a new obligation outside the area of operation. The gain was mainly in recognition of the UNPROFOR Red Line as ceasefire line and the recognition of placement of observation posts on the ceasefire line or in front of it in the Bosnian-Serb area. That weekly joint talks between the VRS and ABiH would take place under UNPROFOR supervision was also a positive result. It meant that UNPROFOR no longer had to act as intermediary between the two parties and thus reduced the risk that one of them would consider UNPROFOR to be partial.

Although the necessity was recognized of approval of the protocol at a higher level, the VRS and the ABiH exchanged ideas about implementing the agreements in the days following the meeting. From these meetings it appeared that the two parties saw the ceasefire line as the core of the problems. Both sides put their own solutions forward. By way of experiment, the Bosnian Serbs proposed withdrawing all VRS units between Kiprovo (CP 6279) and Zutica (CP 5286) 750 metres from the ceasefire line. The ABiH should withdraw from VRS terrain at the same time and, on the side of the enclave, civilians and the military would stay at the same distance from the UNPROFOR line.

Naser Oric rejected this proposal for the formation of a buffer zone according to the VRS model. His alternative meant that the VRS would stay at the existing positions in the area between Kiprovo and Zutica and refrain from actions. UNPROFOR would patrol between the VRS positions and the ceasefire line, while the ABiH would undertake the demilitarization of the enclave and would try to persuade the residents not to leave it. As far as he was concerned, the use of the Kiprovo – Zutica road for economic traffic was also discussible.

Oric would evidently not talk about abandoning the ABiH positions beyond the ceasefire line. He wanted to restrain the VRS by means of a ban on actions against the enclave and by UNPROFOR patrols outside the ceasefire line. This was mainly a tactical proposal and did not diminish the fact that, also for Oric, the course of the ceasefire line remained the central point. He now seemed to reconsider the recognition of the 'red' UNPROFOR ceasefire line in the protocol of 9 April, by repeating his earlier contention that the VRS had shifted its positions towards the enclave after 8 May 1993. In the same meeting with Dutchbat Oric put forward the idea of having a commission of the VRS and the ABiH under supervision of UNPROFOR to establish the border of the enclave and the Bosnian-Serb area. With the authorization of the two parties, UNPROFOR would take responsibility for maintaining the buffer zone between the two borders, a risky task on account of the existing animosity. There would be no talks on the proposals, however. This was a result of developments outside the enclave: the crisis around Gorazde and the NATO air strikes. In response to these events, the VRS temporarily broke off all contacts with Dutchbat without tension increasing around the enclave itself.[539]

On 18 April 1994, after an interruption of one week, the talks between Colonel Vukovic and Naser Oric resumed under Dutchbat supervision at OP-E . Both showed evidence of good insight into the core problem: an arrangement concerning the ceasefire line and demilitarization. Both also made it clear that they could only negotiate with authorization from the higher commanders, something neither of the two had. However, the big handicap for talks about a ceasefire line and demilitarization

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[539] Def. Situatierapporten. Situation report Dutchbat, 10/04/94 and 11/04/94.

continued to be, according to Dutchbat, that the warring factions did not trust each other. In the view of Vukovic, Oric could realize demilitarization on his own authority while Oric, in turn, was convinced that after demilitarization the VRS 'will move forward to the Ceasefire Line'.[540] The VRS demand for immediate use of the road at Zutica offered the ABiH the opportunity to take a stand and show the VRS its teeth.

Dutchbat therefore did not rule out a confrontation over the road at Zutica. Sector North East headquarters in Tuzla shared this fear. Tuzla and UNMO advised short-term aerial reconnaissance to spot any possible concentration of VRS units (stationing the helicopter detachment was recommended) and a meeting of the Joint Demilitarization Commission under supervision of the chief of staff of Bosnia-Hercegovina Command – this in order to be able to hold onto the progress that Dutchbat had made in the talks between the VRS and ABiH. But despite the urgings in that direction by Civil Affairs in Tuzla and the Dutchbat Commander Vermeulen, response was not forthcoming from Bosnia-Hercegovina Command.[541]

Meanwhile, the Dutchbat liaison-team regarded continuation of the talks between the VRS and ABiH as more important than achieving results on the core questions of demilitarization and the ceasefire line. As long as the two parties kept talking to each other, in the view of the liaison team, an escalation over the use of the road was less likely. After the Gorazde crisis the talks between Colonel Vukovic ABiH chief of staff Ramiz Becirovic were resumed on 4 May 1994. The result was an agreement about a procedure for a correction of the ceasefire line and the establishment of a buffer zone: both parties would draw in their proposals on maps. Two starting points applied: preferably natural borders (waterways and hills) and proposals for the allocation of houses, factories and agricultural areas. The maps were to be discussed during a subsequent meeting on 9 May and, after agreement, the exact course of the ceasefire line in the terrain would be determined.[542] The VRS thus seemed to be prepared to follow the proposal of Oric for a new delineation of the ceasefire line.

Becirovic handed over the ABiH map to Vukovic on 9 May. The Drina corps had prohibited Vukovic from presenting his map because the corps had not yet approved his proposal. This did not stop Vukovic from expressing his proposal orally. With the exception of the southern border, Vukovic' proposal followed the UNPROFOR Red Line. The borderline would be laid down to the north between Zeleni Jadar and Kiprovo, so that the three forks at the start of the road to Milici fell outside the enclave. The ABiH proposal allowed a part of the Zeleni Jadar – Milici road to fall right inside the enclave. Becirovic could not explain why the Muslims needed this road, so Vukovic broke off the talks: 'The Muslims only wanted to take instead of trying to find a solution'. But this was not yet the end of the talks. Dutchbat proposed consulting separately with each party and after Vukovic had obtained the green light from the Drina corps, they would all meet together again. According to Dutchbat, the issue was deadlocked, because the ABiH continued to obstruct the use of the road to Milici. Dutchbat was convinced that the VRS would agree to adjustment of the ceasefire line to the benefit of the Muslims in exchange for use of the road and, thus, for resumption of bauxite mining. Dutchbat therefore continued to urge Bosnia-Hercegovina Command for the meeting of a Joint Commission, because a solution was not possible at local level.[543]

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[540] Def. Situatierapporten. Situation report Dutchbat, 18/04/94. UNGE UNPROFOR Box 434, file UNMO SNE Srebrenica. Unmo HQ BH NorthEast to Unmo HQ Zagreb (MIO and BH Comd (MIO), [19/04/94]: Special report on meeting between representatives of BIH and BSA in Srebrenica.

[541] Def. Situatierapporten. Situation report Dutchbat, 18/04/94, 26/04/94, 28/04/94 and 29/04/94. UNGE UNPROFOR Box 434, file UNMO SNE Srebrenica. UNMO HQ BH North East (MIO) to UNMO HQ BH Comd. and UNMO HQ Zagreb, [19/04/94] 'Special report on meeting between representatives of BIH and BSA in Srebrenica'. UNGE UNPROFOR Box 434, file UNMO SNE Srebrenica. Fax no.101 HQ Sector NE to BH Command Forward, 22/04/94: Military Activity in Srebrenica. This evaluation of the situation in Srebrenica during the Gorazde crisis was drawn up at the request of HQ Unprofor Zagreb of 20 April 1994. UNGE UNPROFOR Box 202 file: HBC faxes 30 March – 29 April 94. Fax BH Command Sarajevo to Unprofor HQ Zagreb, 23/04/94, attention MIO only.

[542] Def. Situatierapporten. Situation report Dutchbat, 04/05/94.

[543] Def. Situatierapporten. Situation report Dutchbat, 09/05/94.

There were no steps towards reactivation of the Joint Commission for Srebrenica, however. It is not clear whether this was connected with talks on a ceasefire at central level and the setting up of a network of Joint Commissions.[544] Dutchbat continued to talk with the parties at the local level and tried to reach an agreement on correction of the ceasefire line. Dutchbat itself made a proposal and thereby avoided working out the departure points concretely on a map: adjustment of the course of the ceasefire line to the natural features of the terrain, without reducing the size of the enclave, but including economic use of the road to Milici by the VRS, with UNPROFOR control of part of it. Both parties judged it a 'fair' proposal. However, this qualification did not stop them, from coming up with additional demands for acceptance of the map. Vukovic once again brought up the necessity of the demilitarization of the enclave to Dutchbat. The internal ABiH talks resulted in a series of extra conditions, unacceptable to the VRS.

Dutchbat also tried to keep the talks going with its own proposal about completing demilitarization: handing in weapons at a UNPROFOR Weapon Collection Point would result in withdrawal of the VRS troops. In the event of a VRS attack on the enclave the possibility existed of asking for the return of the weapons. For Becirovic and Bektic this appeared to be an option but, after internal deliberations, handing in weapons was still not discussible. With that, this UNPROFOR proposal was also, in effect, dead.[545] Oric, the de facto leader in the enclave, did not believe in a political solution for the problems in the Srebrenica enclave. At celebrations of the second birthday of the ABiH in Srebrenica on 25 May, he declared that only a military solution was possible.[546] Resumption of the local Dutchbat-supervised talks on the three central issues (demilitarization, ceasefire line and the opening of the southern road) never occurred during the Dutchbat I mission. On a proposal by a representative of VRS headquarters in Pale at a subsequent trilateral meeting, the question of the border of the enclave and the use of the road was passed on to the military authorities in Sarajevo and Pale.[547] The talks at local level did go on, but with a largely different agenda: exchange of information about missing people and exchange of the bodies of the dead, family reunification and possibilities for leaving the enclave.

For four months, in any case, UNPROFOR had tried to break through the impasse in the demilitarization of Srebrenica and also to settle questions such as the delineation and reconsideration of the ceasefire line, the establishment of a buffer zone, the placement of UNPROFOR observation posts and use of the Zeleni Jadar – Milici road. After the 'accord' of 9 April, however, the basis for an agreement had narrowed. The warring factions had stopped making proposals themselves and those of UNPROFOR broke down on rejection by the ABiH or VRS. This was not attributable to a poor negotiation strategy of the Dutchbat liaison-team. On the contrary, despite the conviction that the two parties theoretically could not reach agreement on account of a fundamental mutual distrust, one kept them at the negotiating table. The continuation of the talks was no panacea, of course, against resumption or intensification of the fighting, but aimed at building some confidence in the promises of the other party. This did not lead to a tangible result. That was not attributable to Dutchbat, but rather to the already-mentioned mutual distrust, to the relationship of the problems of the enclave Srebrenica to the situation elsewhere in Bosnia and to the lack of sufficient follow-up on the side of Bosnia-Hercegovina Command. In any case, this active approach suited the new strategy of Bosnia-Hercegovina Commander Rose, even though this is not evident from any sign of interest from Sarajevo.

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544 UNGE, ICFY, Box 128, Fax In 35. Fax Akashi to Milosevic, 28/05/94.
545 Def. Situatierapporten. Situation report Dutchbat, 14/05/94,15/05/94, 17/05/94, 20/05/94, 21/05/94, 23/05/94, 24/05/94, 27/05/94, 31/05/94, 02/06/94 and 10/06/94.
546 Def. Situatierapporten. Situation report Dutchbat, 25/05/94.
547 Def. Situatierapporten. Situation report Dutchbat, 13/07/94.

## 11. Dutchbat II and the Ceasefire Line

After the frequent talks under supervision of Dutchbat I, a change occurred in the approach to the problem of the ceasefire line and the related questions. The issue no longer had a primarily local character. Dutchbat I had seen many times that a real decision by the various parties could only be taken at a higher political and military level. In those regions there was evidently no need to really tackle the issue and solve it. In the talks of 13 July 1994, still under Dutchbat I, the impulse for a change of tack was brought about by the participation of a certain Pecanac, a representative of General Mladic headquarters, who, as citizen, played a dominant role on the VRS side, but whose identity remained unclear.[548]

The peace plan of the Contact Group cast its shadow as well. That plan provided the allocation of the three eastern enclaves to the Muslim-Croat Federation. ABiH Commander Oric assumed that the VRS wanted to sound out the ideas of the leaders in the enclaves. He expected that Srebrenica would be sacrificed by Sarajevo for peace; according to Lieutenant Colonel Vermeulen a 'very strange' sound from the mouth of someone who, until that time, did not want to give up one square metre of enclave and talked of re-taking every piece of Muslim ground in Serb hands.[549] On the urgings of Pecanac, the trilateral meeting decided to present a proposal for delineation of the ceasefire line to the two Commanders, Mladic and Delic. After their approval, a Joint Commission could determine the precise course in the field. The ABiH would draw up a written proposal plus map that would go to VRS headquarters in Pale by the mediation of Dutchbat. Pecanac would make efforts towards arranging a meeting between Mladic and Delic.[550] This approach did not deliver much visible advantage: to Dutchbat it remained unclear whether the ABiH proposal had reached the two Commanders and, if it had, whether they had also discussed it. Apparently, the ceasefire line had been the subject of discussion between the chief of staff of Sector North East and his VRS colleague on 25 August. What they discussed remained unknown to Dutchbat headquarters.[551]

On 22 September 1994 Lieutenant Colonel Everts, the Commander of Dutchbat II, received a wholly unexpected order from his superiors to go to OP-E for a meeting with the Vice President of the Republika Srpska, Dr Koljevic, the head of the operational staff of Bosnia-Hercegovina Command, Colonel Chuck LeMieux and the Civil Affairs Officer of Sector North East, Ken Biser. Several days earlier, the President of the Republika Srpska, Karadzic, had demanded use of the Zeleni Jadar –Milici road in a meeting with General Rose and the head of Civil Affairs of UNPROFOR, V. Andreev. Rose and Andreev had agreed to a meeting in Srebrenica. LeMieux and Koljevic wanted to settle the matter on the spot and then travel by road via Srebrenica to Bratunac. For the latter, Everts did not give permission. Together with Biser, he opposed a unilateral agreement about VRS use of the road. Koljevic made it clear that UNPROFOR had to make a gestur+e in return for other VRS concessions, such as permission for helicopter flights to the enclave and transport of the ill to Tuzla and Sarajevo. Koljevic saw no problem for UNPROFOR: a relocation of OP-E to the old position of April 1993 would be sufficient. This was an incorrect presentation of matters: as stated in the preceding chapter the VRS line had been shifted in April 1993.

The meeting took a remarkable course, because Rose and Andreev had apparently already agreed on the request. LeMieux therefore stood his ground despite the great objections of Everts and Biser. They supplied a series of arguments for their resistance against this agreement. The two contradicted Koljevic's contention that there was a standing local agreement about the use of the road: it was part of a more general arrangement. Biser explained to LeMieux, 'in short Anglo-Saxon terms',

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548 Def. Situatierapporten. Situation report Dutchbat, 12/07/94. On questions to BH Command for information about Pecanac Dutchbat received no answers. According to Becirovic his order was to realize the clearance of the eastern enclaves. He had been involved in talks in Zepa and Gorazde. Def. Situation report Dutchbat, 08/07/94 and 20/09/94.
549 Def. Situation report Dutchbat, 08/07/94.
550 Def. Situation report Dutchbat, 12/07/94 and 13/07/94 appendix.
551 Def. Situation report Dutchbat, 31/07/94, 02/08/94, 07/09/94 and 08/09/94.

that UNPROFOR could not take a unilateral decision. The Government in Sarajevo had to be involved in an arrangement and guarantee the safety of the road, not UNPROFOR. The proposed relocation of OP-E would give the VRS the possibility to fire in the enclave and bring the VRS line dangerously close to the Swedish Shelter Project. Furthermore, the safety of Dutchbat would run a great risk as a result of reactions by the ABiH. Finally, it was decided, much against the wishes of Koljevic, who wanted to arrange the opening of the road on the spot, to convene a meeting of the Joint Demilitarization Commission in Srebrenica on 1 October. The meeting would be under the chairmanship of the Commander of Sector North East, Brigadier General Gunnar Ridderstad, with this subject as the only item on the agenda.[552]

Despite his tenacity during the meeting at OP-E on 22 September Colonel J.C. LeMieux incorporated all arguments of Biser and Everts into his recommendations to Bosnia-Hercegovina Commander Rose: the Bosnian Government should agree with use and Rose should then give an instruction to Brigadier Ridderstad for the meeting of the Joint Demilitarization Commission.[553] It is not known whether Rose brought about such an agreement. For other reasons, this issue disappeared from the agenda. In the last week of September 1994, relations between UNPROFOR and the VRS cooled considerably because of a NATO air strike on the village of Dobrosevici near Sarajevo and the threatened lifting of the arms embargo on 1 October.[554] Biser suspected that Bosnia-Hercegovina Command hoped that, by agreeing to the use of the road between Zeleni Jadar and Milici, the VRS would make concessions in other areas. According to Civil Affairs in Sarajevo the VRS would be prepared to do something in return: offer the use of the Zepa – Srebrenica road. According to the same source, the Muslim canton of Drina-Tuzla had already agreed to this.[555]

Nor has it been ruled out that Bosnia-Hercegovina Command wanted to come to a decision quickly in order to put an end to the great political and media attention that the SDA had managed to generate on the situation in Srebrenica: according to Ken Biser, the superintendent of the hospital and Mayor Suljic said, in emotional and completely incorrect statements, that the enclave was being ravaged by epidemics, malnutrition and lack of medicines, food and salt.[556] Whatever motives were at play in Bosnia-Hercegovina Command about opening the Zeleni Jadar – Milici road, the matter fizzled out like a candle. The VRS cancelled the 1 October meeting with the Joint Demilitarization Commission on account of the air strike and the perceived partiality of UNPROFOR. No new appointment was ever made.[557] The Joint Demilitarization Commission for Srebrenica remained dormant.

The cancellation of the meeting on 1 October meant more than the end of the talks concerning the road between Zeleni Jadar and Milici. Now there would also be no more talks on joint delineation of the ceasefire line, the continuation of demilitarization and, along with that, related matters such as setting up a buffer zone, relocation of observation posts and the withdrawal of VRS mortars and artillery. It also appeared in the summer of 1994 that an arrangement on these subjects could only come about at central level. Because, in the perception of the VRS, UNPROFOR had lost its impartiality by

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552 NIOD, Coll. Clingendael. Meeting between Dr Koljevic, VP of 'Srpska' and Mr Ken Biser, SCvAO Sector NE and Col. LeMieux, ACOS G-3, BH Command Fwd, on 22 September, 1994', undated. Interview P.L.E.M. Everts, 27/09/01.

553 NIOD, Coll. Clingendael. Memorandum from BHC HQ (ACOS OPS): Meeting Unprofor and BSA (incl. Prof. Koljevic), Srebrenica 22 Sep 94. Issue: '*Bosnian Serb access to the road from Zeleni Zadar*', 24/09/94.

554 For the air strike see Rose, *Fighting for Peace*, pp. 176-177 and Burg and Shoup, *War in Bosnia*, p. 152.

555 UNGE UNPROFOR Box 120 file: Civil Affairs SNE BHC weekly situation reports 1994. CA SNE: CCA BHC to mailing list, no. CCA-BHC365, 15/10/94: Weekly situation report BH 8-15 Oct. NIOD, Coll. Clingendael. Memorandum of BHC HQ (ACOS OPS): Meeting Unprofor and BSA (incl. Prof. Koljevic), Srebrenica 22 Sep 94. Issue: '*Bosnian Serb access to the road from Zeleni Zadar*', 24/09/94.

556 UNGE UNPROFOR Box 118 file: Civil Affairs SNE 1994-95: Srebrenica Trip Report, 21 – 24 September, 1994 [Ken Biser], undated

557 UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 119, file Civil Affairs-Sector North East. Fax, Biser to Andreev, 01/10/94: '*Cancellation of Joint Demilitarization Committee Meeting Srebrenica*' appendix: Milovanovic to Unprofor Command Sarajevo, no.09/20-891, 29/09/94. CRST. Ridderstad to Milovanovic, 02/10/94.

calling in NATO air strikes and withholding aid to the Bosnian-Serb area, the mediating role of UNPROFOR seemed to have come to an end.

Meanwhile, the trilateral talks in Srebrenica about less politically-charged subjects continued. Those talks had begun in July, shortly before the arrival of Dutchbat II. Attention shifted to practical matters such as the transport of the ill over Bosnian-Serb terrain to Tuzla and Sarajevo, family reunification, return to the enclave and the departure of students at the start of the new school year. The transport of the ill presented the fewest problems: in emergencies the authorities on the VRS side generally cooperated. If treatment of the ill was not possible in Srebrenica, an arrangement often came about for transport to a hospital in Tuzla or Sarajevo. Here, Dutchbat filled a facilitating role in contacts with the Bosnian-Serb authorities, while the International Red Cross and *Médecins Sans Frontières* bore the lion's share of the transport.[558] The attempt to obtain permission for the departure of students for higher education facilities in Tuzla and Sarajevo failed, although in the first instance Pecanac gave the impression that he could arrange this in Pale. A likely contributory factor to this lack of permission was the fact that this group of a total of 78 students consisted for the greater part of young men of military age.[559]

Family reunification occasionally occurred and ran into many bureaucratic obstacles, also on the side of the international organisations.[560] Talks about this subject were a part of the consultations between civilian and military Muslim authorities in the enclave and the VRS on the thornier issue of the exchange of war prisoners. This subject had already been brought up by the VRS in March 1994, but quickly disappeared from the agenda. In August the VRS asked Dutchbat II to organize a meeting on this subject with the local ABiH authorities. The battalion leadership speculated about the motives for this request. They wondered whether the VRS wanted to test whether UNPROFOR wanted to help with the exchange. The thought arose that Srebrenica was chosen because the ceasefire of 8 June in Geneva was still observed in Srebrenica, and because the VRS leadership there wanted to try to create an arrangement at local level.

Whatever the case, on 7 August 1994 at the Dutchbat compound in Potocari, the military section of the Drina Exchange Committee and representatives of the ABiH from the enclave made procedural agreements about the exchange and about missing persons. The two parties would draw up lists with data about these people, their current place of residence or the latest information on their whereabouts. In a follow-up meeting on 30 August the exchange of information went as desired, but the talks stalled when the ABiH delegation said that it had no prisoners of war. It was offered to involve war prisoners elsewhere in Bosnia in the exchange. The VRS wanted to move quickly with the exchange of bodily remains, but the ABiH were reluctant. Results were achieved at the next meeting: on 10 October, in the presence of UnCivPol and the International Red Cross, ten bodies would be exchanged at OP-P, on condition that a Muslim pathologist from Tuzla be present. The exchange ran aground on the latter point: the pathologist was not in Tuzla and the ABiH was not happy with a *Médecins Sans Frontières* physician.[561]

This end to the talks about the exchange of bodily remains came shortly after the VRS cancellation of the talks about the Zeleni Jadar – Milici road. After that, no more attempts were ever made to arrange matters between the warring factions at the local level, with mediation of UNPROFOR. Of course, it can not be ruled out, that the parties had no more confidence in UNPROFOR as local mediator. Even so, another explanation is more obvious. It turned out for all subjects that, for the UN as well as for the VRS and ABiH, the agreement or approval of higher levels was needed and, furthermore, that this was difficult to obtain. Dutchbat I and II had the impression that there was hardly any interest in their efforts at the level of Sector North East of Bosnia-Hercegovina Command. Requests continued to be left unanswered. Conversely, Dutchbat was not

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[558] Def. Situation report Dutchbat, 14/07/94, 31/07/94, 13/09/94, 24/09/94 and 11/10/94.
[559] Def. Situation report Dutchbat, 13/07/94, 15/07/94, 11/08/94 and 24/08/94.
[560] Def. Situation report Dutchbat, 30/08/94 and 22/09/94.
[561] Def. Situation report Dutchbat, 02/08/94, 07/08/94, 30/08/94, 22/09/94 and 04/10/94.

informed at times that the headquarters in Kiseljak did concern itself with matters. The VRS often misused the idea of consultation with the higher level to delay talks, while both parties hid behind the higher level in order to wash their own hands in innocence. All these movements and arguments were part of the negotiation tactics.

The reality was that none of the parties wanted to create a separate arrangement for Srebrenica, not even for subject components that were practical in nature in UNPROFOR's view, such as the exchange of prisoners of war, the departure of students from the enclave, the use of the road to Milici or the delineation of the ceasefire line. The one exception was medical evacuation. In all other cases, every proposal for a subject component was linked by one or the other party to the arrangement of another matter or answered with a series of conditions generally unacceptable to the other party.

## 12. Operational action

For Dutchbat to function well as a component of the UNPROFOR peacekeeping force it was important, in the spirit of the Campaign Plan of Bosnia-Hercegovina Commander Rose, to bring the parties closer together in order to smooth away the rough edges of local relationships. Rose hoped this would make execution of the mandate more possible. After all, that was the main task. As stated in Section 2, it consisted of facilitating humanitarian aid, deterring attacks on the enclave through a military presence there, and improvement of the living conditions of the population. Dutchbat followed the same operational concept as the Canadian battalion: mobile control of the ceasefire line by means of patrols and observation of the ceasefire line and the area beyond it from observation posts (OPs). Additionally, patrols were mounted within the enclave. Dutchbat also maintained contact with UNHCR and the NGOs which worked in the enclave and with the local authorities. Where possible, assistance was offered.

The duties at the observation posts were the task of the two infantry companies. Dutchbat had taken over the eight permanent observation posts of the Canadian battalion. The enclave was divided in two sectors (see map on page #). C Company, billeted in the compound in Potocari, was responsible for the northern sector, the company in the compound in Srebrenica for the southern sector.[562] The division of tasks within a sector was a matter for the commander. There were two systems that the different Dutchbat companies applied at their discretion: the first used the principle of a permanent assignment of sectors and observation posts to platoons and, within them, to groups; the second applied the principle of a system of rotation of sectors and observation posts.

Both systems had advantages and disadvantages. The first resulted in great knowledge of surroundings and population and provided the possibility of building a bond with the population and a relationship of trust with the local ABiH commander; the disadvantage of a permanent work area was unfamiliarity with the rest of the company sector. For the second system advantages and disadvantages were the other way around: after a period of time, familiarity with the whole company sector was created, but there were fewer possibilities to put down roots at an observation post. Per platoon (30 men strong), a group of nine men always manned an observation post and two performed patrol and company duties in the compound. The latter involved both the guarding of the terrain and serving on standby as Quick Reaction Force of the company. A group at an observation post was relieved every week or fourteen days.

Life at the observation post had its own rhythm: making observations from the post and going on patrol. Occasional reports (shelling, accidents and observation of aircraft and helicopters) and periodic reporting (daily reports and ceasefire violations) were sent to the Ops room of the company.[563] The work activities at an observation post formed a well-organized whole. The sergeant-group leader divided up the work and, thanks to the rotation system, every member of the group of nine men (eight

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[562] For Dutchbat I and III this was Bravo company, for Dutchbat II Alpha company.
[563] Jellema, *First-In*, p. 103 and 124. *Dutchbat in vredesnaam* (Dutchbat in the name of peace), p. 143.

infantrymen and a medic) knew his task. Control by special observation orders was done by the Ops room.

After the engineering detachment rebuilt the posts used by the Canadians, a Dutchbat OP consisted of two parts: the observation tower and the residential area. Both parts were located inside a reinforced defence wall of sandbags, bags of stones and barbed wire, with a protected area around it. At the start of the mission, the residential part consisted in most cases of a tent, later mostly replaced by a permanent construction with sitting-room, cooking area and storage space. There was also a shower and a toilet. For the storage of weapons, ammunition, helmets and flak vests there was a fixed and logical storage space. All in all the accommodation was austere. The tall observation towers flying the UN flag consisted of a workspace and another level for the antitank gun (TOW) with night-vision equipment. In the workspace was a panoramic sketch of the surroundings with orientation points in the terrain, positions of the warring factions and parts of the terrain out of the view of direct observation. There was also a distances map for the weapon positions. The last important operational document was the radio logbook in which radio contacts with the company Ops room, other observation posts or patrols were noted.[564]

Working at an observation post was popular among the soldiers. For the group commander it meant high responsibility: he worked with his group for long periods as an independent unit without all that much direct connection with the other two groups of his platoon. The group commander was responsible for the planning of patrol and duty schedules, drawing up a roster for household chores and observance of the standing regulations regarding safety and hygiene. A certain independence was involved in execution of the orders and how things went depended strongly on the leadership qualities of the group commander. He had to find a balance between concern in performing his tasks and genial contact with the soldiers, without relaxation of discipline and postponement or cancellation of tiresome tasks such as the filling of sandbags. Good motivation and timely announcement of work of this type had a stimulating effect.[565] Each observation post was in touch with its surroundings. In one case it was restricted to members of the local population who did the odd jobs such as baking bread, washing clothes or buying vegetables and fruit. There was also sometimes a good understanding with the local ABiH commander or a VRS post, enabling discussion of particular events or incidents.

## 13. Patrols

Just as for the duties at an observation post, going on patrol was fairly popular among the infantry companies. Compared with the clarity of the work at an observation post, patrols were a complicated operational component. In principle, each company was responsible for mounting patrols within its part of the enclave. Arranging this was in the hands of an officer-patrol coordinator. He drew up a weekly schedule for mounting patrols, for observation posts and for the company in the compound. At battalion level, the Intelligence officer drew up the weekly patrol schedule in consultation with the companies. This schedule followed a fixed pattern in part, because it was necessary to let the UNPROFOR colours be seen in the field. In March 1995, after OP-M became a permanent observation post, three permanent patrols were mounted: a patrol along the ceasefire line towards OP-N; a second towards Brezova Njiva in the hinterland; and the third to Lekovici, even further into the hinterland.[566] The other, non-permanent patrols went to areas in the enclave where the situation was tense after incidents and to other places, mainly to show the UN presence. Reasons for patrols could be reports about VRS activities within the enclave, the building of ABiH positions, threats against the local population, multiple violations of the ceasefire truce and particularly VRS or ABiH reports about activities of the other party.

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564 KL, *Handboek Vredesmachten*, pp. II-15-II-16. Jansen, *Dutchbat on Tour*, pp. 101-105.
565 Vogelaar, *Leiderschap in crisisomstandigheden*, pp. 36-38.
566 Dijkema, *Dutchbat in vredesnaam* (Dutchbat in the name of peace), p. 109.

Aside from the infantry companies, other battalion units took part in carrying out the patrol plan. The platoon of the 108th Reconnaisance Company of the Commando Troop Corps was assigned to reconnaissance of routes and objects and a series of special tasks. The commander of this platoon worked closely with the Intelligence officer on account of the commander's specialized knowledge about performing reconnaissance missions and gathering Intelligence. In this respect, there was hardly any difference among the three battalions. The 2nd security platoon of the staff company also took part in the patrols; in the organization of the air mobile battalion this unit made up the 26-man strong reconnaissance platoon.

The battalion Intelligence officer determined the need for patrols in consultation with the battalion staff and the patrol coordinator of each infantry company. Patrols were mounted from four points. First of all, there were the patrols from the OPs; they took place in the immediate vicinity, most often along the ceasefire line of the immediate hinterland. The majority of the four to five patrols from an observation post followed fixed routes to check on fixed points. They were also used to verify observations made from the observation post itself. Patrols were also mounted from the compound of the company in the inner area of the enclave, or to an observation post. The patrols of the security platoon of the staff company came under the direct responsibility of the Intelligence officer. He formulated the orders for the security platoon of the 108th Commando Troop Company in consultation with the battalion commander.[567]

Gathering information was the main objective of the patrols. During the reprocessing period, patrols had been a regular part of the training programme, because this activity, in the context of a peace mission, differed strongly from the task of a normal patrol. Of course a patrol in Srebrenica could also receive orders to gather information on specific matters, but observation now covered a much broader range. For the mission in Srebrenica this not only involved military matters, but also demonstrated the presence of the peacekeeping force. The big difference between 'green' patrols and those in Srebrenica was that the latter, in principle, took place in all openness. In principle, night patrols were not held, although they were mentioned in the Standing Order.

This open action did not mean that concern for the safety of the patrol itself diminished. It remained of primary importance. This form of action had consequences for the effectiveness of the patrol. It was not possible to keep a patrol secret: departure from the gate of the compound and the vicinity of the observation posts were often reported to ABiH commanders in the enclave, so that they could take steps to keep military activities and weapons out of sight of the patrol. Nevertheless, a patrol could serve a varied series of objectives. To begin with, a demonstration of the UN presence or supervision of observance of the ceasefire or other agreements and observation of areas that lay beyond the field of vision of the OPs; also within this broad showing-the-flag range came so-called contact patrols between generally remotely situated observation posts or the manning of temporary observation posts.

Naturally, the collection of specific information was also part of the order. To reinforce the feeling of safety of the residents, patrols went to isolated villages and hamlets. In a period of mounting tension, patrols often served to offer protection to the local residents by preventing incidents during relocation. Patrols could also have a concrete military objective: a mobile checkpoint for tracing weapons, inspection of the positions of the ABiH and VRS (often to verify the reports of one side or the other), inspection of infiltration and exfiltration routes and blocking them. A patrol could also be deployed as a buffer between the two parties in instances of growing tension. Finally, so-called social patrols were mounted in the town of Srebrenica in order to promote contact between the population and Dutchbat.[568]

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567 Interviews E.Wieffer, 07/05/01; R. Rutten, 25/09/01. Jansen et al., *Dutchbat on Tour*, pp. 67-69 and 104. SMG/Debrief. *Standing Orders Dutchbat 2/3*, Chapter 3 Appendix 7.

568 SMG/Debrief. *Standing Orders Dutchbat 2/3* Chapter 3 operations Appendix 7: SOP patrols.

Despite their frequency, patrols had to be carefully prepared. Every member of a patrol had to be acquainted with the objective of the patrol, the route, the duration, possible dangers en route, important points during the patrol such as the positions or old positions of the warring factions, sites of mortar impacts and the like. The patrol commander made this type of data known during an issue of orders where additional points came up such as the weapons and observation equipment to bring along. The patrol reported in on departure and return to its own Ops room. This was also the contact point for regular and special reports. During the patrol, the actions taken followed a fixed pattern, also for spotting men with weapons, threats, shelling, a mine accident or an ambush. When a patrol ran into problems, the battalion commander could decide to use the Quick Reaction Force (QRF) of a company. This consisted of a group from an infantry platoon and was deployable on the short term, depending on the type of alert phase involved. Each member of the patrol knew what he had to do in what situation. Naturally, the correct use of the Rules of Engagement was of vital importance. After the end of the patrol, a debriefing took place.[569]

Despite their open character, the patrols served first of all for gathering the information which was needed for carrying out the Dutchbat order. Because this was one of the few means of acquiring information within the closed-off area, the frequency of the patrols was high compared with their role in regular army performance. Each company was responsible for multiple patrols per day. This frequency and the regular running of fixed routes could have a negative influence on sharpness of observation. That was also a danger because not every patrol could return to base with the information that it was sent to get. Spotting small everyday changes could also be significant. To let each patrol take action as a sharp observation instrument required good instruction and debriefing. The latter was done orally after every patrol, and in the form of a patrol report.

These reports have not been saved, so there is little to say about consistent elements in the mounting of patrols. Incidents such as the shelling of patrols found their way into the Dutchbat situation reports. That was also done for special observations, but it is not certain whether everything was reported. This was not the case for patrols that stepped over the ceasefire line against UNPROFOR instructions.[570] Because of the serious suspicion that the two warring factions could read the UNPROFOR message traffic, it seemed unwise to report sensitive information in a situation report.[571] The mounting of patrols will come up for discussion again in treating the separate battalions.

## 14. The Dutchbat I period

The stay of Dutchbat I in Srebrenica was relatively short. B Company was there almost five months, C Company barely four months: from early April to 21 July 1994. In the eyes of Dutchbat II and III, each with six months in the enclave, the Dutchbat I mission had been a piece of cake: not only had its stay been shorter, but the conditions for the first battalion had been much more favourable: regular resupplying and an engineering detachment was available at all times. According to the general perception, Dutchbat I, with its ample supplies and extra engineering capacity, was said to have commanded more possibilities for humanitarian aid and maintaining good relations with the population and local authorities. In the general sense this qualification was justified, but stressing the black–and-white contrasts between Dutchbat I on the one hand and Dutchbat II and III on the other could create a misleading picture.

For Dutchbat I, the first months of the mission were the most difficult. In the operational respect, uncertainty existed at the start about the area of operation and the dislocation. Since 1 December, the battalion had geared up for deployment in Srebrenica and Zepa, but this came unglued

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569 SMG/Debrief. *Standing Orders Dutchbat 2/3* Chapter 3 operations Appendix 7: SOP patrols. Netherlands Army, Voorschrift 2-1393: *Handboek voor the diensten bij vredesmachten in internationaal verband*; chapter 21.
570 CRST. no. CRST/374. 06/06/9, Brantz to BLS et al., appendix: Report on trip to Bosnië-Hercegovina, p.4. Ibidem: C-KCT to CS Crisis Staff, 31/05/94. Interview Col. P.L.E.M. Everts, 27/09/01.
571 Def. Situation report Dutchbat, 19/04/94.

after arrival in Bosnia thanks to the decision of Bosnia-Hercegovina Commander Rose to deploy A-Company temporarily at Tuzla Air Base. Only in the course of May did the divided performance of Dutchbat take on a definitive character, with the allocation of Simin Han to A-Company and the extension of the stay of the Ukrainian battalion in Zepa. For the operational deployment of the other companies in Srebrenica this had no essential consequences, because Srebrenica and Zepa would not form a connected area of deployment. What did fall away were the advantages of the geographical proximity of each other's area of operation and the possibilities of gathering and exchanging information. Of more influence was the late arrival of C-Company, the engineering detachment and parts of the staff and service companies as a result of Bosnian-Serb refusal to grant the convoys permission to use the road. For the entire month of March, B-Company was alone in a completely new area of operation. It had to take on the operational tasks under relatively poor living and working conditions.

Improvement of the compound in Srebrenica got slowly under way and the stay at the observation posts in dome tents drew heavily on the stamina of the personnel. Along with the normal duties of patrols, manning the observation posts, and protecting the Dutchbat compound in Srebrenica, the Weapon Collection Point and the post-office building (headquarters for the UNMOs), the engineering detachment began the 'spring-cleaning' of the compound with the support of B-Company: to start with, an improvement of security by fencing off the compound with barbed wire, the installation of lighting and the building of new sentry posts. Within the compound this took the form of building a new Ops room, dining hall, kitchen and encampment, and hardening of the parking area surface. For the time being, the compound had to do without air-raid shelters.[572]

Other than provided for in the operational plan of Battalion Commander Vermeulen, Dutchbat I did not proceed to increase the number of observation posts from 8 to 13, as the Canadian Battalion Commander Bouchard had advised. In the first month, this was mainly a question of insufficient personnel capacity: in March 1994 Dutchbat was operating at the same strength as the Canadian battalion and, according to Company Commander Jellema, his unit had its hands full with the operational tasks in the entire enclave. After the take-over of the enclave by Dutchbat, performance in this still largely unknown area of operation demanded extra attention and care for two reasons: the previously mentioned tension in the enclave surrounding the departure of the Canadian battalion and the growing tension between the VRS and ABiH in the area between the southern border of the enclave and Zepa. In these first weeks, Dutchbat was tested by the two warring factions on the question of whether it tended to be accommodating or uncompromising. This was done both in a friendly and in a provocative way. In both variants the warring factions urged the building of more observation posts and showed their readiness to give advice to the newcomers. At the same time, both parties used military action to test Dutchbat's mettle.

The Canadian battalion had not maintained any direct contacts with the ABiH since its arrival in April 1993. It had held the view that the ABiH in the enclave had ceased to exist through official disarmament. The Canadian battalion leadership communicated with ABiH Commander Naser Oric and his people via the civil authorities in the enclave. Dutchbat, on the other hand, talked directly with the ABiH. The small group of quartermasters began doing so in February 1994. Good contact, said Captain Van de Have

> '....was very much worth the trouble (…) even though (…) the possibility exists that we will be led up the garden path. Nevertheless they are people who have very great influence on the population and, in my view, it would not make sense not to accept them as interlocutors . Only in this way can we confront them

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[572] Jellema, *First-In*, 106-107. Def. Situation report Dutchbat, 10/03/94.

> with certain actions, without immediately being taken for the black sheep ourselves via the enormous gossip factory in Srebrenica.'[573]

In any case, these direct contacts at the military level switched off the filter of the civil authorities in communication between the VRS and ABiH and put Dutchbat in the position that it could convey messages without the intervention of a third party. Dutchbat could also bring up matters and evaluate the reactions they produced. This approach worked fairly well at the military level. The contacts were maintained by the Dutchbat liaison team, in cooperation with the UNMO team. In exceptional cases – such as a meeting with the Commander of the Drina corps, General Zivanovic, or an official meeting between the ABiH and VRS under chairmanship of Dutchbat – Dutchbat Commander Vermeulen took part in the talks.

This direct communication also had advantages for the warring factions. It enabled both parties to familiarize themselves with the reading of the other party about the facts behind incidents and gave them the chance to set off their own views against them. This created a better flow of information; it was possible to refute rumours and prevent the escalation of particular developments. In the general sense, this approach fit within the campaign plan of Bosnia-Hercegovina Commander Rose, but without being able to create a new climate between the two parties. After several weeks in the enclave Vermeulen noted that, despite all appearances of rapprochement, the climate of fundamental mutual distrust between the two parties continued to exist. To him it seemed impossible that in the circumstances a solution could come to essential questions such as the determination of the border of the enclave or the completion of demilitarization and the setting up of a buffer zone that would follow in its wake.[574] Furthermore, Dutchbat felt handicapped by the order to practice impartiality in the context of the UN peace mission. To UNPROFOR, Bosnia-Hercegovina Command and Dutchbat the idea applied to the same degree that any appearance of prejudice would bring the mission into discredit. The possibilities for action were therefore limited, but management of occasional tension was not ruled out in advance.

For Dutchbat, it was therefore essential to keep the trust of both parties. Despite its starting point of impartiality, Dutchbat occupied a different position for both parties. For the ABiH, Dutchbat primarily represented protection against the VRS, but evidently protection of relative value. Naser Oric did not want to trust the UN for the defence of the enclave against a VRS attack, despite an emphatic guarantee from Vermeulen. The lack of trust by the leadership of the ABiH was the consequence of a different view of the role of UNPROFOR: Naser Oric assumed that the UNPROFOR task was to oppose VRS aggression. He saw few instances of this in daily practice. Dutchbat did not respond actively to VRS penetration of the region of the Safe Area and was just as little prepared to take measures to reduce the Bosnian-Serb threat to the enclave. Dutchbat did rather the opposite: it hindered the ABiH in preparing the defence of its own terrain by seizing weapons, registering its protest against the construction of positions and taking action against the construction of positions and other activities of a military nature.[575]

Such perceptions were less defining for the position of Dutchbat towards the VRS. Officially, the Dutchbat responsibility for the enclave ended at the ceasefire line, behind which the Bosnian-Serb area began. For the performance of its task Dutchbat depended on the cooperation of the VRS. It needed the VRS to create and maintain a situation of order within the enclave and on the ceasefire line. At the same time Dutchbat depended on the cooperation of the VRS for its own resupplying and the resupplying of the enclave itself. From its arrival in the enclave Dutchbat aimed at establishing a good working relation with the VRS and believed it had succeeded reasonably well in this. Vermeulen also had the impression that the VRS appreciated the active mediation of Dutchbat.[576] However, he did not

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[573] CRST. Superintrep enclave Srebrenica, appendix: Report on talks February-March 1994: meeting 27/02/94.
[574] Def. Situation report Dutchbat, 18/04/94 and 29/04/94.
[575] Def. Situation report Dutchbat, 13/05/94.
[576] Def. Situation report Dutchbat, 14/05/94.

let him be lulled into a false sense of security. The Dutch Battalion Commander had also noted that the VRS used permits for convoys as a show of strength and to exert pressure. He parried VRS urgings to intensify patrolling and set up new observation posts along with the existing eight with a referral to letting through all convoys as the condition for optimal functioning of his battalion.[577] It escaped him just as little that concealed behind the apparent VRS friendliness was the idea of keeping the enclave in a stranglehold. The VRS was prepared to put Dutchbat on the trail of ABiH activities outside the enclave, but it hid its own movements and intentions to a great degree.

Despite the frequent communication with the warring factions –albeit that these were different in nature –Dutchbat groped continually in the dark about the doings of both parties in and directly outside the enclave. The means to keep an eye on these activities were limited due to the lack of the necessary Intelligence. Within the enclave Dutchbat could use patrols to keep somewhat abreast of the activities of the ABiH and infiltrations by the VRS. The observation posts and patrols along the ceasefire line delivered some information about activities around the line. Both warring factions were interested in the use of these operational means by Dutchbat and at the start of its mission they gave their unsolicited advice for using them to the maximum.

Vermeulen did not reject such advice, as in the case of an offer by Oric. Oric knew the terrain like the back of his hand and so, on 27 February 1994 several officers of the quartermaster group accompanied him on reconnaissance in the south-western part of the enclave. Oric mainly pointed out sites in disputed territory and beyond the ceasefire line which, one after the other, would turn out to be highly useful positions for observation posts.[578] Oric later advised placing a permanent observation post near the Swedish Shelter Project, but Dutchbat restricted itself in early March to stationing a YPR (a tracked armoured vehicle) there during the night on account of unrest on the south side of the enclave.[579]

The VRS liaison officer Vukovic also wanted to point out sites suitable for Dutchbat observation posts. To the disappointment of Dutchbat this did not mean a joint reconnaissance of the ceasefire line on the VRS side. Vukovic sufficed with handing over a map on 21 March on which proposals for UNPROFOR and VRS posts were indicated. The reaction to the proposals of both parties was identical: the Dutchbat commander would study the proposals and inform the parties of his decision.[580] It is not clear what Dutchbat did with the ABiH and VRS proposals, but it could not have been much. Not even OP-Q was relocated to a higher position with a better view, despite the advice given on this matter.[581]

There was also no expansion from 8 to 13 observation posts after the deployment of C-Company in early April. Execution of the original operation plan would mean that B-Company had to permanently man seven observation posts and C-Company six. Per company this would create too great a workload. On the initiative of both Company Commanders, E. Jellema and L. van Gool, and the Deputy Officer of Operational Affairs, Vermeulen decided to maintain the existing eight observation posts, i.e. OP-C, OP-E, OP-F and OP-H (near the Swedish Shelter Project) in the B-Company sector and OP-N, OP-A, OP-Q and OP-R in the C-Company sector.

On the basis of experience acquired in Lebanon with permanent and temporary posts, there also came temporary observation posts that were manned for a short period. Construction of these posts began in the course of May. These temporary observation posts - OP-M and OP-O in the northern sector and OP-B, OP-D and OP-G in the southern sector - were old observation posts of the

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577 Def. Situation report Dutchbat, 17/03/94 and 17/04/94

578 CRST. Supintrep enclave Srebrenica, appendix: Report on talks February-March1994: meeting 19/02/94, 26/02/94 and 27/02/94. Jellema, *First-In*, pp. 85-86.

579 Def. Situation report Dutchbat, 07/03/94.

580 CRST. Superintrep enclave Srebrenica, appendix: Report on talks February-March1994: meeting 25/02/94. Defensie, Situatierapporten. Situation report Dutchbat, 09/03/94, 17/03/94 and 21/03/94.

581 Jansen, *Dutchbat on Tour*, p. 102.

Canadian battalion, which had abandoned them after the cuts in October 1993.[582] This change in the operation plan was the result of practical and operational considerations. Because returning soldiers on furlough stayed away longer through refusal of VRS safe passage permits and departing soldiers on furlough departed on time, there were fewer personnel available permanently than had been planned. Also, the deployment of as much capacity as possible at the observation posts would put other operational tasks in a tight corner.

The restriction of permanent posts to eight and the allocation of five temporary posts made it possible to guarantee the required manning by nine people and to use the remaining capacity for other tasks: guard duty and standby duty for the Quick Reaction Force, building the temporary posts, a more ample social patrol and other patrols and help in construction work. In this way rest and variation in tasks for the personnel were also possible. In the end, it remained possible to stay flexible in performance and capitalize on the wishes of the VRS. For example, in April, Vermeulen considered for some time new tasks resulting from the opening of the Zeleni Jadar – Milici road: escorting civilian traffic on the road to the bauxite mine and reinforcement of OP-E.[583]

## 15. Limited possibilities in times of tension

The change in the operational plan also stems from the experience of Dutchbat in the first weeks of its performance in Srebrenica. These had been uneasy weeks: they had begun with the unrest south of the enclave when the VRS had occupied positions in the no-man's-land between Srebrenica and Zepa. In the same early period, rumours circulated about counteractions by Muslims, the rumours had probably been inspired by Naser Oric. Shortly thereafter the VRS asked to use the Zeleni Jadar – Milici road, a request that in any case caused due unrest at Dutchbat: 'If the BSA [VRS] will use force to get access to this road then Dutchbat is unable to stop them.'[584] The next signal came from the already mentioned rumours at the start of the crisis surrounding the Safe Area Gorazde about an ABiH attack on Srebrenica on 7 April, while the confrontations between the ABiH and the VRS also increased in the south-west of the enclave.

This was a process of action and reaction, to which proposals or requests were linked to action by Dutchbat. Through frequent talks with both parties, this seemed to be somewhat manageable. In most cases, Dutchbat responded to the increasing tension with more intensive patrolling. For reasons of safety, the patrol routes were scouted in most cases together with the 108th Reconnaissance Platoon and people from the Explosives Disposal Unit. From April 1994 Vermeulen regularly gave orders for intensive patrolling. In situations of unrest, this instrument indeed appeared to help as a signal to the warring factions. In the event of shelling by the VRS – as in Slatina in June 1994 – patrolling was also meant as a positive sign for the population. In early April, by intensive patrolling in the south-west of the enclave, Vermeulen demonstrated that he recognized the tension and wanted to restore order to the ceasefire line.[585] Occupying a temporary observation post was also a means of giving a signal of alertness to the warring factions at times of increasing tension. That these means were not always sufficient to reduce tension was something Vermeulen found out for himself in June in the case of Slatina.[586]

Unrest and mounting tension were generally the consequence of external developments. As soon as political or military tension rose elsewhere in Bosnia, Srebrenica also prepared itself for escalation of the conflict. With the ABiH this was evidenced by the digging of new positions, the shelling of VRS positions and actions on Bosnian-Serb terrain. The VRS responded from its side by shelling ABiH positions, with threats of targeted fire, and one case with artillery shelling of the town

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582 Interview D. MacIssac, 16/11/99.
583 Jellema, *First-In*, pp. 147-148.
584 Def. Situation report Dutchbat, 20/03/94.
585 Def. Situation report Dutchbat, 31/03/9403/04/94. Jellema, *First-In*, p. 127.
586 Def. Situation report Dutchbat, 16/06/94.

when the ABiH persisted in certain activities on the ceasefire line or beyond it. Of course, not all tension arose through external impulses. A murder in the enclave or Muslim farmers mowing grass on or over the ceasefire line had the same effect. There was always something that occurred that was good for generating tension, blaming the other party or calling for Dutchbat action under compelling referral to the mandate of the peacekeeping force.

In fact, Dutchbat had few means to control unrest. It could not use any force of arms and it mainly tried to talk with both parties and the administration of the Opstina to improve the situation in the enclave. The liaison team succeeded in this in cooperation with the UNMO team in Srebrenica. That does not mean, it should be said, that the operational activity of Dutchbat I became easier in the course of the mission. There was a continual series of incidents that were caused by the warring factions. The shelling of observation posts, patrols and compounds was a much-used instrument.[587] Further, the VRS could use the opening and shutting of the logistical tap to disrupt Dutchbat action. This happened mainly in March and April 1994 and primarily had a disruptive effect on the construction of observation posts and compounds. The negative effect on general resupplying was not great. However, this did not hinder Vermeulen, from keenly sharpening his reactions to the disruption of the rhythm of two convoys per week. He held strictly to the UNPROFOR regulation that supplies for at least two weeks had to be present. As soon as that point approached for the diesel stocks, i.e. a stock of 45,000 tons, he restricted the use of vehicles and switched to patrols on foot. From June 1994, Dutchbat had an ample stock position again.[588]

## 16. Organizational changes at Dutchbat II

On 21 July 1994 Dutchbat II took over the tasks of the battalion of Lieutenant Colonel Vermeulen. The Dutchbat II Commander, Lieutenant Colonel P.L.E.M. Everts, approached the mission from the perspective of the continuity of his air mobile battalion. During training he had placed emphasis on the battalion as unit, where mutual cooperation was important – in part because his battalion would have to continue as an air mobile unit after the mission in Bosnia. From the beginning, therefore, Everts had distributed the new personnel that came from the School Company over his three companies, this in order to blend in the people of the different training groups. He saw the fact that one company had to go to Simin Han as breaking up this approach. He assigned B-Company to Simin Han because Major E. Hoogendoorn had experience as a Company Commander. Like his predecessor Vermeulen, Everts stationed the deputy battalion commander and several members of his staff in Simin Han, so that B-Company could act as an independent unit. Colonel Everts maintained the Dutchbat unit in his dealings with the headquarters of Sector North East in Tuzla: he did not allow direct orders to Simin Han and required that all business with B-Company go through him.[589]

## 17. Dutchbat II: a logistical squeeze and operations on foot

In March and April 1994, the refusal of permits for Support Command convoys from Lukavac to Srebrenica, meant that Lieutenant Colonel Vermeulen had mainly experienced obstruction in the deployment and execution of engineering activities, but the stock level in general had continued to be satisfactory. Dutchbat I even turned out to be able to build up substantial stocks. This was evident, for example, from the 120 tons of diesel that Dutchbat I transferred to Dutchbat II on 21 July.[590] But at Dutchbat II the frequency of refusal of permits for logistical convoys increased, so that the battalion ate into its stocks substantially from late July and the operational effort became hard-pressed as a result.

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[587] Jellema, *First-In*, pp. 100-170 passim gives numerous examples.
[588] Various situation reports. Examples of Vermeulen protests about the stalled resupplying in Def. Situation report Dutchbat, 04/04/94, 13/04/94 and 02/05/94.
[589] Interview P.L.E.M. Everts, 27/09/94, Def. Situation report Dutchbat, 02/08/94 and 24/08/94.
[590] Def. Situation report Dutchbat, 21/07/94.

Dutchbat II Commander Everts reported in late July that the VRS was trying 'to cut off the enclave completely';[591] a week later he feared that the operational level would have to drop through lack of diesel, oil and spare parts for vehicles and YPRs. In August he applied for the first time a new 'concept of operations' that would be used often and at length in the ensuing five months as a 'minimize program' and 'super-minimize program'.[592]

In the presence of Dutchbat II, the logistical situation became more and more problematic. The supply line from Lukavac to Srebrenica was long and went over Bosnian-Serb terrain to an important extent. The VRS authorities used to refuse permits to UNPROFOR convoys for a wide range of reasons. This was done mainly in situations of serious confrontation between UNPROFOR and the VRS, particularly after the provision of Close Air Support and switching over to air strikes elsewhere in Bosnia, as happened during the Gorazde crisis in April 1994 and the crisis in the Bihac in October-November 1994. The VRS also refused road use in reprisal against what it considered a pro-Muslim performance of UNPROFOR. Another much-used argument was that UNPROFOR did not want to pay for road use and the damage it caused. Apart from these centrally employed arguments, the decision of a local commander could also cause the temporary stagnation in resupplying.

Dutchbat was extra vulnerable due to the length of the supply route. Because UNPROFOR could only use a limited number of roads in Republika Srpska, each convoy from Lukavac had to make a big detour via Visoko around Sarajevo to Podromanija, Vlasenica and Zvornik and on to Srebrenica. This was a round-trip distance of 250 km for which a convoy needed four days under normal conditions.[593] Alternative routes were suggested and considered, but they provided no solution to the problem because the gain consisted at most of a shortening of the journey over Bosnian-Serb terrain. A genuine reduction of the distance by driving from Vlasenica via Milici and Bratunac to Srebrenica was ruled out by the VRS: the road had tactical military significance for the VRS and, furthermore, the ABiH would make it unsafe by undertaking subversive activities.[594]

Several weeks after his arrival, Everts proposed developing a new supply route via Hungary through Serbia to Zvornik. His own recent experience was that occasional supply via Hungary proceeded satisfactorily.[595] The VRS proposed an alternative northern route via Zagreb and Serbia, but Dutchbat said this would not be any improvement. Ultimately, Dutchbat concentrated on improving the existing route itself. It asked for the cooperation of Bosnia-Hercegovina Command in safeguarding logistical convoys to Srebrenica via Sarajevo. After a raid on a convoy at Podromanija, Dutchbat requested a YPR escort for logistical convoys between Sarajevo and Podromanija.[596] Aside from taking occasional steps, Bosnia-Hercegovina Command could also do little to improve the resupplying of Dutchbat. As long as VRS headquarters used permits for logistical convoys as a means to put UNPROFOR under pressure, the route did not matter. In that perspective, the problems of the route were of secondary importance.

The consequence was that the resupplying of Dutchbat became a structural problem from the summer of 1994. In August, requests for permits for road use were granted to only 9 of 38 applicant convoys. Only two of these 9 convoys were logistical convoys; the seven others transported soldiers on furlough (three convoys), blood plasma (two convoys) and medical supplies (two convoys).[597] The problems arose particularly with regard to fuel and foodstuffs, because two convoys per week were for the supply of these goods that were needed in normal resupplying. Diesel oil was a primary necessity of

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591 Def. Situation report Dutchbat, 24/07/94, 26/07/94 and 27/07/94.
592 Def. Situation report Dutchbat 02/08/94 and 04/08/94.
593 Jansen, *Dutchbat on Tour*, p. 75. Def., LL OPS BLS Box 4: no.LL/406/48, W. van Dullemen, '*Design, organization and "Lessons Learned" of the Support Command*'. (Lecture for Annual Intendancy Support Group Meeting 1994), p. 4.
594 Def. Situation report Dutchbat, 13/07/94
595 Def. Situation report Dutchbat, 26/07/94.
596 Def. Situation report Dutchbat, 20/07/94, 24/07/94 and 09/10/94.
597 Def. Situation reports, Fax no.067, HQ Dutchbat to Netherlands Army Sitcen, 02/09/94 'Answers to questions for Col. Brantz'.

life for Dutchbat. Under normal conditions, it consumed 4000 litres per day in the enclave, 3000 under economizing conditions. The major part was needed for the use of vehicles ( Mercedes-Benz jeeps, trucks and YPRs) but, because of the lack of electricity in the compounds, diesel was also essential to generate power for all kinds of equipment, for lighting and for heating workspaces and water. According to the UNPROFOR regulations the minimum stock was a two-week supply. Thus, Dutchbat had to stick to a minimum stock of 42,000 litres.[598] Just as problematic was the supply of fresh food and other provisions. A modest part of this problem was solved by an agreement with the VRS about the purchase of soft drinks, beer, fresh vegetables and fruit in Bratunac.[599]

Dutchbat II geared itself up quickly to small stocks of fuel and food and developed an operational concept tailored to this – the already mentioned minimize program. In late July 1994, the use of vehicles became restricted at Dutchbat II. On 10 August the use of vehicles was halted altogether. A small improvement materialized with the arrival of a convoy with diesel oil and spare parts for wheeled vehicles but, nevertheless, the use of wheeled vehicles had to be prohibited for the first time in late August. All patrols were mounted on foot.[600] Thereafter the minimize program took on clearer contours. It consisted of three phases. In the first phase, the use of generators was restricted to several hours per day. That meant cold showers, little electric lighting and no use of washing machines. In the second phase the use of vehicles was restricted to essential trips. All operational tasks such as patrols and resupplying of the compound in Srebrenica were done on foot; visits to and support for observation posts were no longer possible; UNMOs and UnCivPol received only a limited amount of diesel and road repairs in the enclave were halted.

In the third phase the restrictions went a step further. Resupplying of observation posts was restricted to once per week; only the battalion commander and the company commanders were allowed to use their vehicles; the use of personal coffee machines was prohibited and lights had to be used as little as possible. Humanitarian aid was also restricted. For example, during harvest time, the restrictions meant that the transport of threshed grain to the central storage shed could no longer be done automatically. The daily delivery of 135 litres of diesel to the Opstina for the nine mowing and threshing machines in the enclave was carried out as usual between 5 August and mid-September.[601]

Except for small interruptions, the minimize programme was in effect in its different gradations from September until the departure in January 1995. On account of the connection with the poor food resupplying, the self-imposed restrictions drew heavily on the personnel. Almost all distances had to be walked and that required 'a lot of energy'.[602] This could only be taken off the daily menu to a small degree. In late October, an end came to the supply of fresh food and also to the stock of combat rations provided by UNPROFOR – popularly known as the 'French tinned fodder' that did not appeal to Dutch tastes – visibly decreased. Meals were made up from the available supply and the individual ration was temporarily restricted from 26 October.[603] Thereafter the supply of food improved somewhat compared with that for fuel, but there were never ample stocks or a regular supply of fresh food. Dutchbat II pointed out the operational consequences of the minimize programme from the very start. Limited vehicle use seemed rather innocent but soon Battalion Commander Everts made clear in his daily reports that the operational consequences deserved serious attention. The 26 August announcement of the restriction of the operational task to foot patrols was undoubtedly an overly concise picture of the activities. Everts' warning a few days later that the battalion 'will very soon not be

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598 Interview P.L.E.M. Everts, 27/09/01. Def. Situation report Dutchbat, 02/09/94 and 08/09/94. Karremans, *Srebrenica*, pp. 96-97.
599 Def. Situation report Dutchbat, 03/08/94 and 09/08/94.
600 Def. Situation report Dutchbat, 10/08/94, 14/08/94, 23/08/94, 26/08/94 and 28/08/94. For the threshing machines see among others Def. Situation report Dutchbat, 05/08/94 and 17/09/94. The Opstina and the farmers agreed that in exchange for the diesel oil the Opstina would receive 10% of the expected harvest of 1400 tons for general distribution. According to the mayor the Opstina had received 24 tons. Def. Situation report Dutchbat, 05/10/94.
601 Def. Situation report Dutchbat, 15/09/94 and 5/10/94.
602 Def. Situation report Dutchbat, 25/10/94.
603 Def. Situation report Dutchbat, 25/10/94, 27/10/94 and 28/10/94. Interview P.L.E.M. Everts, 27/09/01.

in a position to perform its tasks as required' was followed two weeks later by the statement that the fuel shortage 'leads to a very decreasing performance'.[604] From early October there was sufficient reason to recognize the long-term consequences of a fuel shortage. Mladic decided to block all UNPROFOR fuel convoys in response to Belgrade's closing of the border between the former Yugoslavia and the Republika Srpska.[605]

Dutchbat calculated that without resupplying of diesel it could still be able to function at minimum level until mid-October, and that carrying out its order thereafter would be 'no longer feasible'.[606] Things did not reach that point, but a full resumption of the operational task would also fail to materialize. For the rest, the operational effort was dependent on more than diesel fuel; a shortage of spare parts also began to take its toll. Despite the irregularity of supply Dutchbat could still function somewhat. It had in fact already begun with the change-over to replacement of electricity generators and diesel-fuelled heaters by wood-fired stoves. A substantial stock of wood had been laid up at the observation posts. Chopping and splitting wood was a permanent part of the daily chores.[607] In late November, at the compound in Potocari, construction began on a hydro-electric facility that could generate 8 KW for maintaining the communication links.[608] Under these conditions only minimum task performance was still possible from 25 November 1994: patrols on foot to safeguard Dutchbat positions in the immediate vicinity of compounds and observation posts. After the arrival of a convoy on 5 December some improvement appeared slowly and there was a resumption of the operational tasks.[609] The extremely lame resupply of fuel to Dutchbat was the result of a general VRS blockade. Since the blockade started in October, Bosnia-Hercegovina Command had tried to persuade the VRS to let the fuel convoys through. UNPROFOR refused to go into the demand to transfer a part of the diesel, but was prepared to help in maintaining the roads during the winter.[610] The implementation of this agreement ran aground in mid-November because of the NATO air strikes against the VRS in Bihac. Almost all UNPROFOR and UNHCR transport in Bosnia came to a halt as a result. An emergency situation also prevailed in the other eastern enclaves and UNPROFOR 'largely ceased to function' but, according to Bosnia-Hercegovina Command, the situation in Srebrenica was the worst: UNHCR had run out of stocks and the VRS had begun lightning raids on the enclave.[611] Bosnia-Hercegovina Command also realized that the convoy of 5 December 1994 was just a drop in the ocean and that the UNPROFOR task in the enclave was seriously endangered by persistent VRS attacks, but was unable to do anything about it.[612]

## 18. Observation posts, patrols and mine incidents

The lightning raids and minor attacks of November and December by the VRS within the enclave were not isolated events. Within three days after the transfer of command on 21 July Dutchbat II was confronted with two firing close incidents at OP-F. They were the start of a number of confrontations of the battalion with VRS violence that culminated in mid-August in two serious casualties. On 26 July the compound was shelled and the medical station was also hit.[613]

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[604] Def. Situation report Dutchbat, 26/08/94, 30/08/94 and 12/09/94.
[605] UNGE UNPROFOR Box 120 file: Civil Affairs SNE BHC situation reports 1994: no. CCA/BHC-362, Weekly Political Assessment no. 87, 2 – 8 Oct 94, 08/10/94.
[606] Def. Situation report Dutchbat, 04/10/94.
[607] Def. Situation report Dutchbat, 05/10/94 and 24/11/94. Jansen, *Dutchbat on Tour*, p. 63. Interview P.L.E.M. Everts, 27/09/94.
[608] Def. Situation report Dutchbat, 29/11/94.
[609] Def. Situation report Dutchbat, 05/12/94.
[610] UNGE UNPROFOR Box 120 file:Civil Affairs Sarajevo. Weekly Situation report 05/11/94 and 9/11/94.
[611] UNGE UNPROFOR Box 120 file:Civil Affairs Sarajevo. Weekly Situation report 26/11/94 and 03/12/94.
[612] UNGE UNPROFOR Box 120 file:Civil Affairs Sarajevo. Weekly Situation report 10/12/94.
[613] Jansen et al., *Dutchbat on Tour*, pp. 34-35.

August began quietly. In the neighbourhood of OP-R at Zalazje a YPR armoured car of C-Company's Quick Reaction Force strayed onto Bosnian-Serb terrain during a route reconnaissance: the VRS asked politely that it return to the enclave. On 9 August the first two patrols were shelled.[614] The next day, Dutchbat discovered that the VRS had built a position within the enclave along the road to OP-R and had protected it with sixteen mines. From that vantage point the VRS had a view of the road from Srebrenica to Zalazje and also of the route to the observation posts OP-Q and OP-R. Dutchbat decided to clear the mines and destroy the position. Colonel Vukovic heard about the 'anger and irritation' this provocation caused when, alerted by his own soldiers, he showed up at OP-R.

Dutchbat placed a temporary observation post (OP-Z) at the site of the cleared VRS position. Dutchbat did not rule out that the VRS-provocation was either a conscious attempt to test the reaction of Dutchbat or to bring the observation posts under its control.[615] A week later a jeep en route to OP-R drove over an anti-personnel mine. After the discovery of two anti-tank mines, the detachment of the Explosives Disposal Unit went into action; it was protected by the Quick Reaction Force of C-Company under the command of Sergeant M. Jacobs. After clearance, work was broken off. However, while getting into the YPR, the Quick Reaction Force Commander stepped on an anti-personnel mine and was seriously wounded. Battalion Commander Everts took this incident very seriously; he saw it as a VRS response to the incident a week earlier, 'a deliberate hostility against Dutchbat'.[616]

The next day, a YPR of the resupplying group was heavily damaged on the road to OP-R, but there were no injuries this time. The events at this observation post made a deep impression on Dutchbat II, because it was the first confrontation with wounded people in its own ranks. The same day, 18 August, this impression was further reinforced when the patrol commander of a platoon from the same C-Company was seriously wounded while inspecting ABiH positions during a patrol. Sergeant E. de Wolf survived thanks to effective action by a medic and transport by his own group on an improvised stretcher. His lower left leg had to be amputated.[617]

With strict application of the Rules of Engagement Dutchbat II could have interpreted the VRS action of 10 August as an obstruction to the performance of its task, and the mine incident of 17 August as the use of force against UN personnel. Responding with force was ruled out, however, because retaliatory actions were prohibited according to the same rules of conduct. Dutchbat faced the question of whether serious incidents such as these ought to be tolerated. A 'normal' military response was ruled out by these same Rules of Engagement. A local protest and a request to Bosnia-Herzegovina Command to submit a protest against this attack on UN personnel to VRS headquarters in Pale were, in fact, the only possibilities for reaction against the VRS. It was also relevant to make it clear to the VRS that Dutchbat was keeping a sharp eye on new activities within the enclave. Therefore, a temporary observation post came into use for a week at the site of the accident at OP-R. Later a temporary observation post (OP-G) also went up more to the south in the vicinity of Crni Guber on account of possible new VRS positions within the enclave. With a view to the safety of Dutchbat, the road to OP-R was patrolled every morning from 18 August by an YPR equipped with a so-called sweeper that checked for the presence of mines.[618]

The mine incidents on 17 and 18 August were a climax to personal casualties through action by one of the warring factions. They brought the risks of participating in a peace mission into Dutchbat's own surroundings. Even so, these incidents were an exception in the use of force by the warring factions against Dutchbat II. Shelling of the compound, observation posts and patrols occurred much

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614 Jansen et al., *Dutchbat on Tour*, p. 78. Def. Situation reports (NIOD doss. 331), Milinfo Dutchbat, 05/08/94.
615 Def. Situation report Dutchbat, 10/08/94 and 11/08/94. Jansen et al., *Dutchbat on Tour*, p. 79. Dutchbat was evidently unaware that the VRS had withdrawn from the vicinity of OP-R in April 1993 upon the determination of the ceasefire line. See Part II, Chapter 5.
616 Milinfo Dutchbat, 18/08/94 and Def, Situation report Dutchbat, 17/08/94.
617 Milinfo Dutchbat, 18/08/94 and Def, Situation report Dutchbat, 18/08/94.
618 Def, Situationreports. Fax no.067, HQ Dutchbat to Netherlands Army Sitcen, 02/09/94 'Answers to questions for Col.Brantz'. Jansen, *Dutchbat on Tour*, p. 81.

more frequently. The specific circumstances of many incidents is not easy to detail due to the loss of the 'firing close' reports themselves or by the gaps in the daily reports (Milinfos) saved. In most cases, the situation reports contain no more than a reference to the 'firing close' reports, letting a brief indication suffice. Nevertheless, on the basis of the daily reports a picture can be reconstructed of the seriousness of the incidents and the context in which they took place.

Hardly any 'firing close' incidents occurred in July and August.[619] In September the number rose to nine, as opposed to two in August. October and November were characterized by many incidents, 16 and 14 respectively; December, with 10 incidents, of which two on the same day and at the same location, was somewhat quieter. After the ceasefire brought about by former US President Carter went into affect, the final weeks of Dutchbat II proceeded without any incidents. Other than this, it is difficult to detect a pattern in incidents. Shelling of the compound in Potocari occurred more than once and the medical station was hit several times. Investigation by the Explosives Disposal Unit showed in most cases that the ordinance was fired from within the enclave. That 'people of the enclave are shooting at Dutchbat' aroused 'anger and disbelief' in the battalion, as stated in the situation report.[620]

After the confrontation in August 1994 no further incidents occurred around OP-R on the north-eastern side of the enclave. In general, more incidents occurred around the observation posts in the north-western part: OP-N, OP-A and OP-C. It was in this area that most shelling of patrols took place. Although the incidents were already serious in themselves, the reports create the impression that most were short in duration and caused no escalation of hostilities in the relationship between Dutchbat and the warring factions. In three cases a Quick Reaction Force was deployed without immediately signalling the end of the shelling, it should be said. On 31 October, OP-A was regularly shelled for half an hour. Neither the first response – firing flares – nor the second – firing warning shots over the heads of the attackers – had any effect. Deployment of the Quick Reaction Force also achieved no results. The shelling only ended after NATO warplanes had fired several flares in warning at the request of the Forward Air Control team.[621] Deployment of the Quick Reaction Force met with more success at OP-N in late November: the attackers of a C-Company patrol kept on firing after taking answering fire from the patrol. Only when the Quick Reaction Force appeared did the VRS withdraw.[622]

After each shelling, Dutchbat submitted a protest to the party that it held responsible. Both warring factions were guilty of shelling Dutchbat. Acceptance of responsibility was not common. The VRS regularly attributed the shelling of a patrol or observation post to the undisciplined behaviour or drunkenness of solders in VRS positions and announced punishment of the guilty parties or the issuing of clearer instructions. In most cases, the ABiH attributed incidents to the VRS and to groups that were not under their command. There was one essential difference: protests to the ABiH could always be conveyed; for the VRS it often cost a great deal of trouble to make an appointment with liaison officer Vukovic or Major Nikolic.

The question of whether Dutchbat responded alertly to incidents is difficult to answer in the general sense. In many cases these incidents involved one or several shots. The Rules of Engagement called for utmost care in the use of weapons. Dutchbat generally complied: in a single case, the available reports spoke of warning shots and there was sporadic response with targeted fire. In a small number of cases the Quick Reaction Force was deployed, with varying degrees of success. In exceptional cases, alternative means were also used. Early September 1994, a shelling of OP-M came to an end after a Forward Air Controller team on a Close Air Support exercise asked two F-16s to fly over the area and drop flares. Sometimes the other warring party provided assistance: on 30 December a VRS post

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619 This reconstruction is based on the situation reports and milinfos of Dutchbat II and Jansen, *Dutchbat on Tour* (chronological overviews), passim.
620 Def. Situation report Dutchbat, 30/09/94.
621 Jansen et al., *Dutchbat on Tour*, p. 114; Def, Situation reports. Milinfo Dutchbat, 31/10/94
622 Jansen et al., *Dutchbat on Tour*, 130. Def, Situation reports. Situation report Dutchbat, 29/11/94.

opened fire on two armed Muslims who had taken flight after warning shots from a Dutchbat patrol.[623] Altogether, Dutchbat performance in 'firing close' incidents was very restrained. Each incident was analysed on its own merits. Dutchbat seldom found a link between the incidents. However, this did not diminish the irritation and anger prompted by such incidents, certainly not when, as on 3 November, the transport of a casualty was made impossible by the continuance of the shelling.[624]

The question arises of whether a different interpretation of the Rules of Engagement – with more emphasis on the element of obstructing execution of the mandate and the quicker use of force – would have been of influence on the warring factions and could have reduced the number of incidents. This question reverts back to the idea of some UNPROFOR commanders – such as Bosnia-Herzegovina Commander Rose – that a rapid and clear response to violence against UNPROFOR with the use of weapons would win respect from the warring factions and impress upon them that UNPROFOR was not to be trifled with.[625] Whether such robust action in the enclave Srebrenica would have changed the behaviour of the warring factions is not certain. It is important to see that the robust action called for by Rose and others only had effect in special situations and was never used, for example, in passing through checkpoints. In Srebrenica the ABiH and the VRS had other means at their command to respond to 'robust action' and to hamper Dutchbat in carrying out its tasks. The VRS could obstruct the resupplying of Dutchbat and the ABiH could create serious problems for Dutchbat by inciting the population against the battalion or by provoking the VRS.

There was another side to the coin in the non-'robust' application of the Rules of Engagement in the enclave. In accordance with the fundamentals of a peace mission, UNPROFOR in Bosnia and Dutchbat in Srebrenica adopted a stance as impartial, neutral mediator with a limited task that had been formulated by the Security Council. Other than the name of the peacekeeping force suggests, UNPROFOR in Bosnia was not in essence a 'protection force'. As described earlier its primary task was to facilitate humanitarian aid by international aid organisations such as the UNHCR while, in the Safe Areas, UNPROFOR was there to deter attacks through its presence. The warring factions each interpreted this complicated mandate in their own way. On the Muslim side, the authorities said in general that the task of UNPROFOR was to call a halt to further aggression by the Bosnian-Serbs. In concrete terms, as they saw it, this would mean that UNPROFOR had to respond to every action of the VRS.

From this point of view, non-action obviously meant falling short in the protective task – that is to say, it could be seen as a deliberate attempt by UNPROFOR to abdicate its responsibilities. On the Bosnian-Serb side the conviction prevailed that the United Nations, and particularly UNPROFOR and UNHCR, were prejudiced. All humanitarian aid was directed at the Muslims and UNPROFOR did not take action against Muslim violations of agreements and Security Council resolutions.

In Srebrenica this complaint was divided over two issues: that, on the one hand, the Bosnian-Serb towns of Bratunac and Zvornik continued to be deprived of humanitarian aid and, on the other hand, that the demilitarization of the ABiH in the enclave remained incomplete and the ABiH carried out actions beyond the ceasefire line of the Safe Area. It is fully understandable that the population of Srebrenica interpreted the UNPROFOR presence as an international guarantee against Bosnian-Serb aggression. However, the Muslim authorities in Bosnia at least knew that the UNPROFOR mandate did not contain any such guarantee. This does not alter the fact that they tried to stretch or exceed the limits of UNPROFOR impartiality or neutrality in Srebrenica and elsewhere in Bosnia by demanding action beyond the mandate.[626]

In Srebrenica the ABiH translated this demand into protection of the Muslim enclave mainly through maintaining its terrain according to the ABiH perception, which assumed an area that

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[623] Def, Situation report Dutchbat, 09/09/94. Milinfo Dutchbat, 30/12/94.
[624] Def, Situation report Dutchbat, 03/11/94 and 05/11/94. Jansen et al., *Dutchbat on Tour*, p. 128.
[625] Rose, *Fighting for Peace*, pp. 36-40.
[626] Interview Rasim and Sead Delic, 16/04/98. UNNY, DPKO UNPROFOR coded cables. no. 2995, Annan to Akashi, 14/09/94.

comprised more terrain than the ABiH had held in April 1993. In late 1994 – partly as a result of the refusal of access to UNHCR convoys – rumours, also among the population, sparked fear that UNPROFOR would withdraw. The ABiH blamed Dutchbat for not responding to VRS actions that damaged the integrity of the Safe Area. According to the head of the UNMO team, Major S.G. Donaldson, the population found this 'utterly incomprehensible and inevitably feel that Dutchbat do nothing to protect them' as a consequence of the pressing logistical situation. The VRS would take the non-response of Dutchbat as a licence to continue with actions against the enclave. In the eyes of the ABiH, Dutchbat played along with the VRS's game in not doing anything about these actions. In turn, the ABiH took matters into its own hands by setting up new positions and occupying them with surreptitiously armed men. The critical Donaldson believed that Dutchbat was pursuing a rigid policy of disarming and destroying the positions. This spiral of confrontation could lead to an explosion if, at a certain moment, the ABiH refused to surrender their weapons.[627]

Dutchbat II saw the situation deteriorate in the six months that it stayed in Srebrenica. The talks between the warring factions became bogged down on all fronts and had produced no tangible results except in the area of medical evacuation. The steady decline had a number of causes. First of all, the deteriorating logistical situation had a considerable impact on Dutchbat: insufficient or non-supply of fuel, spare parts and food made an optimal effort impossible and the halting of vehicles resulted in a restriction on performance. A second cause was the deteriorating relationship with the VRS. The majority of the incidents ('firing close incidents', the shelling of buildings, observation posts and patrols) were caused by the Bosnian Serbs. During the crisis in Bihac in November, the VRS increased its activities within the enclave without Dutchbat being able to respond effectively. It was exactly under such escalating tensions that the ABiH expected a more alert performance on the part of Dutchbat and this was not forthcoming. That undermined the already poor confidence among the Muslims in protection by Dutchbat, which was another ABiH reason for a more active response. With the arrival of Dutchbat III in early January 1995, this tendency would manifest itself prominently during the so-called Bandera crisis.

## 19. Dutchbat III: confrontation instead of ceasefire - the Bandera triangle

In late December 1994, former American president Jimmy Carter came up with an agreement between the warring factions in Bosnia that appeared to offer more perspective for an end to the fighting than any mediator had managed to achieve since the start of the war. The Cessation of Hostilities Agreement arranged an end to the fighting during the first four months of 1995 and the resumption of the peace talks. The implementation of the agreement would be in the hands of Joint Commissions at national, regional and local level.[628]

For Srebrenica, too, this development seemed to offer a new perspective. It came several months after the cancellation of a meeting of the Joint Commission for Srebrenica on the determination of the enclave border and on the further implementation of the demilitarization agreement of May 1993. Now the possibility of an arrangement seemed to be coming within reach after all. In early January, Dutchbat sounded out the ABiH and the VRS on their readiness to cooperate with a meeting of the Joint Commission. On the VRS side Vukovic made few objections. But Oric and his chief of staff Becirovic appeared to be less accommodating: they first wanted to consult the Government in Sarajevo. As far as they were concerned, the stationing of a VRS liaison officer in the enclave was still out of the question. Furthermore, they had spotted a serious violation of the agreement: the VRS had set up new positions a short distance from the ceasefire line. Dutchbat had to

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627 MID/Netherlands Army. UNMO team Srebrenica to UNMO HQ BH NE, 13/12/95 'Assessment as at 13 Dec 94 – Srebrenica enclave'.
628 Rose, *Fighting for Peace*, pp. 220-221. Owen, *Balkan Odyssey*, pp. 309-310.

report the violation and ensure that the VRS withdrew. If this did not happen, said the local ABiH leadership, the ABiH would have to solve the problem itself.[629]

While the ceasefire unexpectedly held in other parts of Bosnia - with the exception of Bihac and Sector North East – in Srebrenica, Dutchbat experienced a crisis in its relationship with the ABiH. Naser Oric saw more than just a favourable development in the materialization of the ceasefire agreement. Before the start of its implementation in the enclave, he wanted to restrict the authority of the local or regional Joint Commission and demanded personal consultation with the authorities in Sarajevo. He also made it clear that the departure of displaced persons from the enclave to their former homes in Bratunac, Konjevic Polje and other villages in the surrounding areas could be an option for a peace deal as far as he was concerned.[630] For the time being, however, these matters were not under discussion.

On 11 January Oric informed Dutchbat that the VRS had relocated its positions to 100 metres from the ceasefire line at Podgaj and Osoje on the western border of the enclave (see the map on page #). He demanded guarantees from Dutchbat for a return to the old situation. When he was told that this was ruled out, he handed over a request for retrieving weapons from the Weapon Collection Point: Oric said he feared a VRS attack on the western side of the enclave. Between 4 and 5 o'clock the following morning, there was fierce fighting between the ABiH and the VRS: Dutchbat observed 30 explosions, 94 mortar hits and a great deal of machine-gun and rifle fire. Sector North East did not succeed in bringing about the intervention of the VRS upper command.[631] Bosnia-Herzegovina Command feared that the situation could escalate 'if a solution is not found by negotiations'.[632]

On 12 January the ABiH went a step further and held up a Dutchbat infantry group that was on its way to the temporary observation post OP-B in the area where the fighting had occurred. The ABiH denied Dutchbat access to the region between OP-B in the west, the more southerly OP-C and the area behind it in the south-western part of the enclave. As long as Dutchbat did not guarantee that it would take action against the setting up of new VRS positions, it would gain no access to this area, which was known as the Bandera triangle. The head of the UNMO team, Major S.G. Donaldson, thereupon filed an official UNPROFOR protest with the Drina Corps against the shifting of positions by the Milici Brigade in the direction of the ceasefire line. Lieutenant Colonel Everts presented the request for the emptying of the Weapon Collection Point to Sector North East. For the time being, he took no measures against the restriction of Freedom of Movement and waited for the result of the talks in the Central Joint Commission in Sarajevo on 19 January. The resulting wait made the ABiH impatient.[633]

The confrontation took place during the relief of Dutchbat II by Dutchbat III. After the transfer of command on 18 January 1995, Lieutenant Colonel Karremans and his staff immediately faced a problem that differed essentially from the difficulties that had occurred earlier with the ABiH. As already discussed, the relationship with the ABiH in the enclave had been gradually deteriorating as a result of the fundamental difference in the ABiH view of the UNPROFOR task.[634] Out of conviction, Dutchbat had complied with the impartial stance of UNPROFOR as conceived by Bosnia-Herzegovina Command and wanted to guard against its abuse by the ABiH. Oric, in turn, believed that Dutchbat was remiss in its duty and demanded that the unit respond actively to the relocation of VRS positions towards the ceasefire line.

Several months before, Oric had broken off contact with Dutchbat for several weeks, because the battalion had filled in newly built ABiH bunkers. The ABiH had considered this a hostile, pro-Serb act and now demanded a comparable performance by Dutchbat against the digging of VRS positions.

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629 Def, Situation report Dutchbat, 04/01/95, 09/01/95 and 10/01/95.
630 SMG, 1001. Situatierapporten UNMO Srebrenica 05/01/95 and 08/01/95.
631 UNGE UNPROFOR Box 192 file SNE Daily Infosum: 12/01/95 and confidential information (115).
632 Def, Situation reports Annex A (Milinfsum) to BHC Situation report, 12/01/95.
633 Karremans, *Srebrenica*, p. 45. Def, Situation report Dutchbat, 12/01/95 and 18/01/95. DJZ. Fax Dutchbat Srebrenica to CO-HQ Sector North East, 02/05/95, appendix: Donaldson to Commander Drina corps, 11/01/95.
634 UNNY, DPKO. UNPROFOR coded cables, Z-1449, Akashi to Annan, 21/09/94.

Now the issue was the relocation of VRS positions close to the ceasefire line. Oric believed he had reason to demand UNPROFOR action because the relocation had begun after the ceasefire went into effect. He saw this as a provocation on the side of the Bosnian Serbs. Seeing that Dutchbat did nothing, Oric took matters into his own hands and prohibited UNPROFOR access to the Bandera triangle, the south-western corner of the enclave between the roads from Vasiljevici to OP-A and OP-C. This area was the domain of the 281st Brigade of Zulfo Tursunovic, the only Commander who did not let Oric get his own way. This prohibition was a breach of the Freedom of Movement that UNPROFOR enjoyed on the basis of the Status of the Forces Agreement between the UN and the Bosnian Government and the ceasefire of 31 December 1994. If Dutchbat III, upon its departure from the Netherlands, had cherished the hope that the ceasefire would have a positive effect in Srebrenica as well, that hope was dashed shortly after it relieved Dutchbat II.

Dutchbat assumed that the setting up of new VRS bunkers at OP-B was only a pretext for Oric's measure. Dutchbat therefore showed little interest in the VRS activities on the ceasefire line at Bandera and Buljin or in the intensification of VRS shelling. In the night of 25/26 January the VRS fired heavy artillery at the enclave for the first time in a year. The leader of the UNMO team, Major S.G. Donaldson, considered the restriction on the freedom of movement of Dutchbat as the ABiH response to the inactivity of UNPROFOR. In his view, it was an expression of the genuine fear by the ABiH of a VRS attack on the enclave and the preparation for preventive action.[635] Nevertheless, in Srebrenica and the UNPROFOR headquarters in Tuzla and Sarajevo/Kiseljak, the peacekeepers continued to speculate on the possible ulterior motives for this action. They wondered whether it constituted an independent manoeuvre by the ABiH in Srebrenica, or whether perhaps some connection existed with the blockade of UNPROFOR compounds around Tuzla. Perhaps the military authorities on the Muslim side were trying to use a crisis in Srebrenica to put an early end to the ceasefire in all Bosnia.

When Karremans, after consulting with Sector North East in Tuzla on 24 January 1995, rejected the third ABiH request to take weapons from the Weapon Collection Point, the ABiH further extended the area off limits to Dutchbat: now patrols in the area south of OP-A were also prohibited. In line with the policy of Bosnia-Hercegovina Command, Karremans now decided to compel Freedom of Movement. After a detailed analysis of the situation he decided to send a patrol to the area. In accordance with the Rules of Engagement the patrol was ordered to move with high visibility, operate with extreme care and turn back immediately upon a confrontation with the ABiH. Near Misici around 11 a.m., the patrol led by the Deputy Battalion Commander Franken was ordered by the local ABiH to do an about-turn and stay out of the neighbourhood of ABiH positions for the time being. Around 12.30 p.m. the ABiH blocked a patrol at Zedanjsko (OP-C). Despite this first confrontation, Karremans decided to continue the patrols from OP-A and to send a member of the battalion staff along with each patrol.[636]

By means of the patrols, Karremans wanted to make it clear that he did not accept the closing of the Bandera triangle. Karremans did not have much time to think about his next move. The same afternoon he was ordered by Sector North East to restore Freedom of Movement in the enclave 'at the lowest possible level (…) and to press hard if necessary'. In consultation with his Intelligence and Operations sections, Karremans drew up an operation plan for Saturday 28 January – in retrospect it would turn out that he underestimated how highly impassable the terrain was. He informed ABiH Commander Oric in writing that he had received the order to restore Freedom of Movement.[637]

On 28 January Karremans carried out his plan. A patrol of the 108th Reconnaissance Platoon entered the Bandera triangle from the south. Its order was to scout out a new site for an observation post in the neighbourhood of OP-B and a road going to the new site. Later, this patrol would be

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635 SMG, 1001. UNMO team Srebrenica daily situation report 25/01/95 and 26/01/95.
636 Karremans, *Srebrenica*, pp. 273-277 (Appendix 5).
637 SMG/Debrief. Karremans to Oric, 27/01/95. Interview E. Wieffer, 07/05/01.

followed by a patrol from OP-A in the north and OP-C in the south. The two observation posts stayed at alert phase Orange as long as the patrols were in the Bandera triangle. Medical assistance was at hand in the neighbourhood of the disputed area, all Quick Reaction Forces were on standby and the Forward Air Controller team had taken up positions.

The patrol movements led to a direct confrontation with the ABiH. The patrol of the 108th Reconnaissance Platoon ran into a group of 20 soldiers led by the local Commander Zulfo Tursunovic; the patrol of OP-C under Major Franken was ordered to turn back by a group of citizens armed with sticks and the OP-A patrol was surrounded by 35 unarmed Muslims and forced to go to Vasic. At 1.50 p.m. the ABiH blocked all roads to Vasic and pinned down the patrols between OP-A and Vasic. On the grounds of the accepted interpretation of the Rules of Engagement, the various patrols acquiesced in this. Along with the 10 men who permanently manned OP-C there were an additional 45 Dutchbat soldiers with 13 vehicles; at Vasic there were 11 men in the open field; between Vasiljevici and OP-C there were 21 men with 7 vehicles and lastly at OP-A there was the regular complement of 12 men. Oric demanded to speak with Karremans, a message that reached the Battalion Commander via the Dutchbat radio network.

Karremans spoke with Oric, Ramiz Becirovic and Zulfo Tursunovic in the centre of the enclave in the vicinity of Vasiljevici. The ABiH Commander said he was 'extremely disappointed in UNPROFOR'. He demanded to talk personally with Bosnia-Herzegovina Commander Smith in the enclave the next day. Until then the 99 Dutchbat soldiers had to stay in the Bandera triangle: they were hostages. According to UNMO Srebrenica, which did not take part in the talks, Oric would hold to this demand, although he would probably be satisfied with the arrival in the enclave of the Commander of Sector North East.[638] Karremans briefed Tuzla, Bosnia-Herzegovina Command and the Army Crisis Staff on the events. Despite multiple talks between Karremans, Oric and Becirovic matters did not improve: Oric permitted resupplying of the hostages and the departure of two who were sick. However, as far as he was concerned, release was not up for discussion without compliance with his main demand: withdrawal of the VRS positioned near the Bandera hill. Karremans' arguments about the media effect of the hostage-taking and the loss of sympathy for the Muslims made no impression on him at all.

After a three-day blockade, a solution was forced on 31 January. Oric was ordered by his Government to let the Dutchbat hostages return to their compounds with their equipment and to respect complete Freedom of Movement in the enclave. Execution of the order came a day late because Oric first had to persuade Zulfo Tursunovic - to whose terrain the Bandera triangle belonged – to cooperate.[639] The ABiH soon regretted the release of the Dutchbat hostages. Karremans, after consultations with Tuzla, had promised that the Commander of Sector North East, Brigadier Ridderstad, would come to Srebrenica on 1 February. After the release of the hostages, he informed ABiH that the visit would not go ahead on account of 'lack of BSA [VRS] clearance'. According to the UNMO organisation in Srebrenica the ABiH considered this 'a bitter joke'. It could not imagine that UNPROFOR would let the VRS dictate matters despite its support from NATO on use of the air space above Bosnia. The cancellation 'destroyed any remaining good will between the ABiH and Dutchbat' because, according to the UNMO's Donaldson, the ABiH felt deceived.[640]

The hostages returned to the compound. Although not a shot had been fired, they had undergone a psychological baptism of fire: being taken hostage by Bosnian Muslim soldiers was the last thing they had expected. Naturally, those members of Dutchbat involved received compliments for their performance, via the UNPROFOR line and from The Hague. Everyone was relieved at the good outcome. Nevertheless, something had fundamentally changed. At Dutchbat the hostage-taking in the Bandera triangle made a deep impression: it became unmistakably clear that Dutchbat's interests did

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638 SMG/Debrief. Karremans to Commander HQ BH Sector NE Tuzla, no.TK9511, 28/01/95. Karremans, *Srebrenica*, pp. 47-51 and 280-282 (Appendix 7).
639 Karremans, *Srebrenica*, pp. 51-55.
640 SMG, 1001. Situations reports UNMO Srebrenica, 01/02/95.

not coincide with those of the Muslim leadership in the enclave. Mutual understanding had received a 'heavy blow'.[641] Protection by UNPROFOR and Dutchbat were evidently not appreciated by the population. This created a great psychological distance and promoted the development of a negative attitude, both with regard to the ABiH and Dutchbat's own task. Sergeant-Major K. Koreman phrased this feeling in his diary as follows:

> 'It was a crazy situation, that we here in the enclave had more problems with the population than with the Serbs around the enclave outside. Perhaps it had been too long since they had taken a good beating. They had resigned themselves to this situation at first and now, under the protection of the UN, were busy taking action at our expense. If everything were to go wrong for the ABiH we, as the UN, would again be good enough to pull them out of real trouble in the worst case.'[642]

This experience also promoted the feeling of a double threat: as expected from the Serbs outside the enclave but, surprisingly, also from the Muslims inside. It had the effect that Dutchbat III withdrew into itself and perhaps got along less easily with the population.
The hostage-taking of UNPROFOR units in the Bandera triangle was a unique event. The ABiH in Srebrenica did not make too much of it, Ramiz Becirovic said later: the ABiH mainly wanted to prevent Dutchbat from increasing its checks on ABiH activities by setting up a new observation post, while they undertook no action against the VRS in the Bandera triangle.[643] Bosnia-Herzegovina Command and Sector North East had taken the issue more seriously: true enough, General Smith did not come to the enclave, but the Commander of Sector North East, Ridderstad, would go in his place on 1 February. On 2 February, shortly after the cancellation of that visit, Oric and Becirovic did get the opportunity to talk personally with the Force Commander, De Lapresle, during his visit to Srebrenica. Oric spoke for one hour with De Lapresle about the situation of the population and the tension in the western part of the enclave as the result of 'a BSA encroachment'. The Force Commander wrote in his report:

> 'Obviously, there is a need for a joint commission to delineate the Cease Fire Line. Mr. Oric, who appeared to fear that a kind of 'ground swap' would be agreed on, above him, between Sarajevo and Pale, asked UNPROFOR to transport him to Sarajevo in order to meet his authorities and receive guidance.'[644]

Oric was afraid that the Muslim authorities would bargain away the enclave and he therefore asked De Lapresle to take him in his helicopter to Sarajevo so that he could persuade them personally not to take such action.[645] De Lapresle did not agree. Dutchbat drew little hope from the Frenchman's comment that although the problem was not yet resolved, a repetition of the hostage-taking incident was unlikely.[646] In any case, it was clear that the hostage-taking in the Bandera triangle not only had to do with the situation around the enclave, but also played a role in the broader context of the

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641 Karremans, *Srebrenica*, p. 55.
642 NIOD, Col. Koreman. *Dutchbat III. Dagboek(Diary)*, p.17-22.
643 Interview Ramiz Becirovic, 15/02/98 and 18/04/98.
644 UNGE UNPROFOR Box 77, file 2.2.7. Situatierapporten SNE Feb-May 1995. Interoffice Memorandum FC to DFC et al., 06/02/95.
645 B. De Lapresle to NIOD Director J.C.H. Blom, 09/11/01.
646 *The Inner Circle*, no.4 02/02/95. NIOD, Col. Koreman. *Dutchbat III. Dagboek*, p.18/14.

implementation of the ceasefire and the resumption of peace talks on the basis of the plan of the Contact Group.[647]

The problems in Srebrenica fitted a general pattern that Bosnia-Herzegovina Command and UNPROFOR headquarters in Zagreb recognized in the performance of the ABiH after materialization of the ceasefire on 31 December 1994. As mentioned before, there was an assumed connection between the events in Srebrenica and Tuzla. According to the Military Information Office in Zagreb the Bosnian Government deliberately obstructed the implementation of the ceasefire, because it would not accept the existing situation on the ground as the starting point for peace negotiations. In that regard there was no change with respect to the analysis of Bosnia-Herzegovina Commander Rose at the start of his mission in January 1994. According to Rose, the Bosnian Government wanted to improve its position at the negotiating table by retaking as much terrain as possible and therefore, according to this analysis, was working for a resumption of the fighting, probably even before the end of the ceasefire in late April. That explained why the Bosnian Government blocked the implementation of the ceasefire by setting up a meeting of the regional Joint Commissions.[648] It also systematically rejected placement of VRS liaison officers in the Muslim-Croat Federation area. An offer by Mladic to allow 450 displaced persons to leave the three eastern enclaves turned out not to be open to discussion. The action of the ABiH in the Bandera triangle in Srebrenica appeared to connect seamlessly with this line of action and would not change after the crisis either. The pressure on UNPROFOR continued to be maintained by pursuing the restriction of movement in the Bandera triangle.

The demand for restoration of 'the integrity of Srebrenica Demilitarised Zone 'since the BSA [VRS] had made an incursion' was tabled again by the Bosnians during a meeting between Bosnia-Herzegovina Commander Smith and President Izetbegovic on 20 February.[649] According to the UNPROFOR analysts, Srebrenica played no great role in the general strategy of the Bosnian Government. Sarajevo apparently assumed that the enclaves ran no danger. According to the UNPROFOR analysts, the main attention was concentrated on other parts of Bosnia. Bosnia-Herzegovina Command tried to get the mechanism of the Joint Commissions started. That proceeded with difficulty. The UNPROFOR plan to set up a meeting of the Joint Demilitarization Commission for Srebrenica about the determination of the border, the repair of the electricity and water facilities and the access roads, had the approval of the Bosnian Government, but ran aground on Bosnian-Serb refusal to deal with Srebrenica in a separate commission outside of the regional commission for Sector North East.[650]

According to UNPROFOR analysts, the VRS wanted first of all to maintain the existing situation and, on this basis, negotiate on ending hostilities and cooperating in the implementation of the ceasefire. In the given situation, the VRS could afford to display generosity now and then, as with the offer to allow 450 displaced persons to leave the eastern enclaves. But such an obliging attitude was not to be seen in Srebrenica: the VRS continued to blame UNPROFOR for the failure of demilitarization, as well as for allowing the build-up of ABiH units in the enclave to a strength of 6000 men. According to VRS chief of staff Milovanovic, this had been the reason for moving the positions forward on the

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[647] In a meeting with Owen and Stoltenberg upon resumption of the talks about the Contact Group plan Karadzic said that the Republika Srpska Srebrenica and Zepa would be accepted as Bosnian enclaves, but not Gorazde. Confidential information (96).

[648] Confidential information (97). NIOD: confidential collection (2).

[649] UNGE, UNPROFOR Box 77, file 2.2.7. Situation Reports SNE Feb-May 1995. Interoffice Memorandum FC to DFC et al., 06/02/95; UNGE, UNPROFOR Box 115, file: SNE CVAO fax out Jan-Jul 1995. Memorandum MA to Commander Daniell, 20/02/95 re: Meeting General Smith / President Izetbegovic 20 Feb 95, sub 8.

[650] UNGE, UNPROFOR Box 116, file SNE Memo in Sep 94 – Dec 94. fax Biser to Ridderstad, 03/02/95 'Notes from meeting with Mr. Muratovic'. UNGE UNPROFOR Box 120, file BHC weekly situation reports 1995: fax BH Command Forward to BHC Rear et al., 06/02/95: 'Central Joint Commission Meeting'.

west side of the enclave.[651] UNMO interpreted the open stationing of a battery of artillery as a 'deterrent to ABiH activity/patrols out of the enclave'.[652] Later, Dutchbat and the UNMO team in Srebrenica came to the conclusion that the VRS countermeasures went further than a reaction to the beefing up of ABiH forces in the enclave. The presence of artillery and tanks, the laying in of large stores of munitions and the deployment of several thousand infantrymen 'indicate something more than simple confrontational posturing along the contact line – particularly as the build-up has continued long after the BSA [VRS] has established that the ABiH is incapable of permanently forcing them off the Bandera/Osoje feature.'[653]

The UNMO and Dutchbat did not rule out that the VRS would mount an attack on the enclave along the east-west axis with the aim of taking over the south-western area of the enclave. Controlling that area would enable the use of a large part of the Zeleni Jadar –Milici road and, with it the resumption of production in the bauxite mine. That would be to the benefit of the owner of Milici Bauxite, Rajko Dukic, a supporter of Karadzic. The analysis of the UNMO team and Dutchbat did not go into the possible reaction to a VRS attack on the enclave, but Dutchbat did try to anticipate the consequences for the population. The assumption was that a rapid attack, preceded by artillery shelling, would cause panic in the enclave: the population would not realize that the aim of the attack was a resumption of bauxite production, but would think that the offensive was targeted on the conquest of Srebrenica. The ABiH would then probably claim not only the weapons from the Weapon Collection Point, but 'might possibly wish to take the weapons and ammunition of Dutchbat soldiers as well.' The UNMO in Srebrenica presented this to Sector North East as 'all just guesswork', with the question of whether NATO aerial reconnaissance had come up with additional information.[654]

The UNPROFOR Military Information Office in Zagreb regarded a VRS attack on the enclave as very unlikely. Since the offensive in 1993, the situation around Zepa and Srebrenica had been fairly stable. In its judgement, a VRS action would much more likely focus on isolating the area around Tuzla and retaking Tuzla Air Base.[655] Force Commander De Lapresle did not rule out an offensive against Srebrenica as part of an operation against Tuzla.[656] However, his Intelligence officer believed that the concentration of troops and heavy weapons around Srebrenica was mainly intended 'to demonstrate to the ABiH and UNPROFOR that they maintain the upper hand and the co-habitation of the enclaves within Serbian territory is [dependent] on the good will demonstrated by all involved parties.' Along with this demonstration of military capacity, in the coming period the VRS would also show that it wanted to be the dominant factor in the area around Zepa and Srebrenica by refusing access of humanitarian aid and UNPROFOR. Against VRS predominance, the ABiH could mainly react by reinforcing its equipment position by means of the supply of weapons and equipment by helicopter flights to Zepa.[657]

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651 NIOD, Confidential collection (2): interoffice memorandum Analyst (Mehu to Theunens) to FC, 31/01/95 'Update on the situation in Sector Northeast'. UNGE UNPROFOR Box 214, file BH Command 27 Feb – 3 Mar 95: fax BH Command Fwd to BAC et al., 26/02/95 'Minutes meeting with BSA, 26 Feb 1995'.

652 SMG, 1001 Situation Report UNMNO Srebrenica, 11/02/95.

653 MID/KL. 1995: Unmo team Srebrenica (Donaldson) to UNMO HQ BH NE, 12/02/95.

654 MID/KL. 1995: Unmo team Srebrenica (Donaldson) to UNMO HQ BH NE, 12/02/95.

655 NIOD: Confidential Collection (2): Military Information Estimate by Capt Wallace (G2 Ops), 19/02/95.

656 UNGE UNPROFOR Box 117, file: Commanders Conference 1994-1995: Memorandum of J.H.M. Engelen, 26/02/95 'Notes from Force Commanders Conference, 23-02-95'.

657 Confidential information (98). According to the VRS the ABiH was busy using helicopters to bring military supplies to Zepa and Srebrenica. UNGE, UNPROFOR Box 214, file BH Command 27 Feb – 3 Mar 95: fax BH Command Fwd to BAC et al., 26/02/95 'Minutes meeting with BSA, 26 Feb 1995'. In early February there was great interest in the Security Council in flights of several large groups of helicopters north and north-east of the enclave Srebrenica. UNPROFOR could not give the confirming answer to the question of whether these helicopters flew from former Yugoslavia to the Republika Srpska. The authorities in Belgrade denied any involvement. (UNNY, DPKO UNPROFOR coded cables, no. Z-211, De Lapresle to Annan, 06/02/95. MSC-402, Annan to Akashi, 06/02/95. UNNY, DPKO UNPROFOR coded cables, no. Z-215, De Lapresle to Annan, 07/02/95 Ibidem: MSC-448, Annan to Akashi, 09/02/95. Confidential information (100).

These analyses of the possibility of a VRS attack on Srebrenica had little effect on the situation in the enclave itself. The ABiH continued to refuse Dutchbat access to the Bandera triangle. Karremans, on the basis of his own analysis, had come to the same conclusion as the Military Information Office in Zagreb. He vainly tried to convince Oric that his expectation of a VRS attack was mistaken. Furthermore, he argued, the VRS could penetrate the enclave much more easily without the patrols of Dutchbat. Oric rejected proposals for cooperation with Dutchbat. Nor was the situation changed by the announcement on 23 February of the building of a permanent observation post, OP-B at Podgaj, and three new temporary observation posts.[658] Consequently, Dutchbat continued to be restricted in its radius of operation. As a result, the already limited view on the activities of the VRS remained poor. Furthermore, the VRS had established itself within the enclave border north of OP-A to the west of Ravni Buljin. This also did little to enhance the prestige of Dutchbat among the warring factions.

However, it is unlikely that this situation could have been avoided. Perhaps the relationship with the ABiH would have been less sharp-edged had Dutchbat not so demonstratively ignored the ABiH restriction of movement in the Bandera triangle on 25 and 28 January 1995. However, that would have been against the instructions of Sector North East and, furthermore, created the impression that Dutchbat had resigned itself to the situation. It is not likely that a postponement of several days in carrying out this order would have contributed to moderation at the side of the ABiH. After all, there was no way that Dutchbat have gone along with the demand to undo the relocation of the VRS positions towards OP-B by means of an active response.

However, a full assessment of the situation in Srebrenica in late January 1995 remains difficult because it there was no clear picture of the state of relations within the ABiH. The UNMO team leader Donaldson possibly had greater insight on this matter than the new battalion commander and his staff, but he was not involved in the decision-making process and negotiations. At the time, Dutchbat explained the late release of the hostages as a difference of opinion between Oric and his Deputy Commander in the Bandera triangle, Zulfo Tursunovic, but no confirmation of this statement could be obtained. Although it was known that the relationship between the two men had been tense and difficult since the start of the fighting around Srebrenica, it was and continued to be uncertain whether this divisiveness in leadership was the main reason for the approach taken by the ABiH in Srebrenica towards UNPROFOR and Dutchbat.

Aside from the local dynamic, the performance of the ABiH in Srebrenica fitted the policy of the Bosnian Government to obstruct the ceasefire. It remains unclear to what extent local aspects and motives played a role here. If the latter had been the case, this could have given Dutchbat some room to formulate its own approach to and resolution of the crisis. But the sparse contact there was between Dutchbat and the ABiH in this period proceeded with difficulty and there was no development at all. Beyond this both unclear and problematic local context the situation in Srebrenica was given the requisite attention within UNPROFOR. The UNPROFOR interest manifested itself mainly in following daily developments and in a series of analyses of the intentions of the warring factions. In late February, when the conclusion was drawn that the resumption of hostilities around Srebrenica was unlikely, the old pattern returned, with attention at higher level of command mainly being devoted to the restoration of Freedom of Movement.

## 20. More emphasis on observation from permanent points: new OPs

The restriction of Freedom of Movement in the Bandera triangle and the north-western corner around Bulijm also continued after the end of the Bandera hostage-taking incident, despite the promises of the ABiH to abolish it. The UNMO team also ran into difficulties with its patrols. Karremans avoided a new confrontation by sending no further patrols to the two areas. For reasons of safety, patrols stayed

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[658] SMG/Debrief. TK 9592, Karremans to Commander HQ BH Sector NE, 23/02/95.

out of the adjacent areas as well.[659] Dutchbat also began setting up new permanent and temporary observation posts. However, this was not a consequence of the Bandera crisis. The intention to do so had grown during Dutchbat III scouting of the future area of operation in October 1994.

The plan for a different approach was developed by the Commanders of B and C-Companies, Captains J.R. Groen and C.J. Mathijssen. They had proposed arriving at better performance of the Dutchbat task by setting up more observation posts and altering the movement of patrols. The observation posts were thinly distributed along two parts of the ceasefire line: on the southern border between OP-E and OP-C[660] and in the north-western corner between OP-A and OP-N, where there was an even larger stretch of 10 kilometres. It had been restless in both areas since the arrival of Dutchbat and it was expected that setting up more observation posts could reduce activities in the ABiH-VRS border area. Furthermore, setting up more observation posts met the wish that had been regularly expressed by the ABiH in the past.[661] Groen and Mathijssen believed that making a clearer separation between observation from the posts and patrols would enable more efficient use of the personnel. At the observation posts a smaller group of six men would be sufficient.[662]

The Head of Operations and Major Franken drew up a plan that provided for the setting up of three new permanent observation posts in the area of operation of B-Company (OP-D, OP-H and OP-K) and one in the area of operation of the C-Company by changing OP-M from a temporary to a permanent observation post. The patrolling remained just as intensive, but Dutchbat III came up with a different distribution of tasks and greater coordination. The 108th Reconnaissance Platoon of Captain A. Caris mounted patrols on the enclave border and in several specific areas within the enclave. Unlike Vermeulen and Everts, Karremans expressly prohibited the platoon from running reconnaissance patrols outside the enclave.

B and C-Companies and the staff company and services company began paying more attention to patrols within the enclave itself, and around and between the different observation posts. Compared with the existing approach, the change mainly involved a reduction in the number of patrols between the observation posts. The existing numbers were only maintained for areas that were not covered by direct visual observation. The personnel capacity that became available as a result was used on patrols from posts in the area that lay beyond. The synchronization of the patrols of the three companies and the reconnaissance platoon was done by the Battalion Intelligence Officer. He drew up a patrol plan in consultation with the patrol coordinators.[663]

In addition to its own personnel Dutchbat could command even more specialized personnel for reconnaissance. These were three British Joint Commission Observers (JCOs), soldiers who were part of the Special Forces. They were used on special assignments by the British Bosnia-Hercegovina Commander Rose at special places in his area of command. They were in direct contact with Sarajevo via satellite telephone. The nature of their assignment in Srebrenica remained unknown to Dutchbat. Nor did they give any information their reports to Sarajevo.

Their relationship with Karremans and the battalion staff was not good; according to a Dutchbat soldier, it was 'as if the battalion staff were afraid of the British and that they could cause the Third World War'.[664] In early February – after the Bandera crisis – several JCOs came to Srebrenica. Karremans kept them on a tight rein and prohibited them from going on patrol by themselves: they were only allowed to accompany the 108th Reconnaissance Platoon. The Commander of this unit regretted that the Battalion Commander made no use of the small elite group to obtain extra

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659 SMG, 1001. Situation report UNMO Srebrenica 05/02/95, 06/02/95 and 18/02/95.
660 *Dutchbat in vredesnaam* (Dutchbat in the name opf peace), p. 132. Interview J.R. Groen, 05/07/99.
661 Interviews J.R. Groen, 05/07/99 and E. Wieffer, 07/05/01. Karremans, *Srebrenica*, p. 116.
662 *Dutchbat in vredesnaam* (Dutchbat in the name of peace), p. 132. Interview J.R. Groen, 05/07/99.
663 Interviews E. Wieffer, 07/05/01 and R. Rutten, 25/09/01. CRST. Fax no.263 Karremans to G3 Crisis Staff, 13/03/95 appendix: step plan of Dutchbat III. Karremans, *Srebrenica*, pp. 116-117.
664 *Feitenrelaas*, p.66.

information from Bosnia-Hercegovina Command or to bring special matters to the attention of Kiseljak.[665]

Establishing new observation posts took some time. On 31 January, during the Bandera crisis the temporary observation post OP-G was set up in the enclave along the road from the town of Srebrenica to Zeleni Jadar; Karremans informed Oric and Becirovic about the move. On 9 February, this temporary observation post was abandoned and was never manned again.

During its short period of service, it turned out that the surroundings were stable and quiet. All visible VRS positions had been charted, so it made no sense to maintain the post any longer.[666] A first step in implementing the provisional plan was setting up a temporary OP-D near Bijelo Polje on the southern slope of Mt. Kak, where there were outstanding possibilities for observing the bauxite mine area across the enclave border. On 11 February the post was opened with the positioning of a YPR with an extension tent, five infantrymen and a medic. The post was later made permanent and took on the appearance of a standard observation post with several prefabs for accommodation, a sea container as bunker, a free-standing observation tower and a defence wall.[667] This structure of the observation post complied with the design that Groen had made himself and that he wanted to realize for all observation posts in his area. In his view, the design met the requirements of safety and efficiency much better than the existing posts. However, his construction programme came to a standstill due to the inadequate supply of building material.[668]

The second step in this plan was the conversion of OP-M in the north of the enclave into a permanent post in late February. Setting up new observation posts in other parts of the enclave took more trouble. Here Karremans followed an approach that he had introduced directly after the Bandera crisis; immediately informing the ABiH about his intentions in order to avoid new tension. This approach put him in a difficult position, because it gave the ABiH the opportunity to enter into discussion with Dutchbat about the new plans. Oric first used the argument that ABiH approval was needed for setting up new observation posts and that he therefore had to ask the permission of the 2nd Corps in Tuzla. After UNPROFOR had made it clear that ABiH approval was not needed, there was a fair degree of consultation about implementation of the step-by-step plan. In scouting out suitable sites, attention was also paid to the possibility of doing away with the need for patrols in a mountainous area by establishing an observation post there.

Early in March, Dutchbat decided to set up three more observation posts. The first, OP-H, was situated on a hill east of the town of Srebrenica and looked out over part of the eastern enclave border, an area where the VRS had laid many mines – including inside the enclave border. The site was discovered accidentally during a patrol. In addition to observation along the patrol routes, the six-man complement of this largely underground observation post could observe VRS positions, the town of Srebrenica and the house of ABiH Commander Naser Oric.[669] OP-K was intended to close the gap between OP-D and OP-E in the southern part of the enclave. Establishing this post ran into ABiH resistance. Dutchbat positioned it in the middle of an area that was frequently used for smuggling trips to Zepa and evidently also as a raid route for ABiH actions outside the enclave. After the post went into operation on 29 April it indeed turned out to provide an outstanding view of the armed and unarmed groups that entered and left the enclave.[670] Between OP-D and OP-C Dutchbat established a temporary observation post on Mt. Hrustine.

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665 Interview A. Caris, 03/03/00.
666 Def, Situation reports, Milinfo Dutchbat 01/02/95 and 09/02/95. Karremans, *Srebrenica*, p. 117. Dijkema, *Dutchbat in vredesnaam* (Dutchbat in the name of peace), pp. 160-161.
667 Dijkema, *Dutchbat in vredesnaam* (Dutchbat in the name of peace), pp. 154-155.
668 Interview J.R. Groen, 05/07/99.
669 Dijkema, *Dutchbat in vredesnaam* (Dutchbat in the name of peace), pp. 162-163.
670 Def, Situation reports. Milinfo Dutchbat, 29/04/95 up to 25/05/95. Dijkema, *Dutchbat in vredesnaam* (Dutchbat in the name of peace), pp. 133 and 179-180.

In the western part of the enclave Dutchbat set up a new observation post to replace OP-B. During the Bandera crisis, this post became inaccessible due to the restriction of movement and had been imposed since then by the ABiH. After the crisis the third platoon of C-Company deployed several YPRs at Bukovica to set up a temporary roadblock with the intention of restoring calm to the area by means of this presence.[671] Setting up an observation post on a hill in the vicinity was not an option because of the poor access road. Ultimately, in mid-March, it was decided to establish a new observation post, OP-B-1, at the site of the earlier roadblock. Because permanent manning would draw too heavily on C-Company strength, the post was only manned for a few days per week. Dutchbat saw OP-B-1 as a temporary measure, because it hoped to be able to take over the old OP-B from the ABiH later.[672]

The expansion of the number of observation posts had several positive operational effects. Dutchbat certainly obtained a better view along the ceasefire line in the south, on the positions of the warring factions and could chart the changes there more easily. Since patrols could now focus more on the inner area of the enclave, Dutchbat acquired greater insight into the military activities of the ABiH and the VRS in and around the enclave. In any case, the population of the enclave was positive about the expansion of the number of observation posts. This also applied in a certain sense to the ABiH, which had been informed about the new posts being set up. However, the plan could ultimately contribute little to reducing the tense situation in and around the enclave in February. The tension did subside at the moment that C-Company manned the first new permanent observation post, OP-M. In the months that followed, the situation remained fairly quiet, when viewed as a whole. It is difficult to assess whether Dutchbat III was able to perform its task better as a result of this operational approach, because conditions changed fundamentally in another respect.

First of all, Karremans' battalion began with a very limited stock of diesel oil, a stock that would no longer be supplemented after 17 February 1995. This mainly signified a serious blow to the operational mobility of the battalion but, as the time without provisions became longer and longer, it came to affect all kinds of other facets to an increasing degree. Using vehicles to resupply the observation posts became impossible, necessitating the use of horses and mules. The possibilities for using all kinds of equipment in the logistical sector, e.g. for road maintenance, dwindled and such operations finally became impossible. A second essential change was the reduction of personnel strength caused by the refusal of the VRS to allow Dutchbat soldiers on furlough to return to Srebrenica from 26 April 1995. Ultimately, some 180 men were unable to return to the enclave from Zagreb.[673] The result was a substantial reduction in the number of Dutchbat personnel in Srebrenica. Nevertheless, the manning of 13 observation posts continued to be the basis of operational performance in the ensuing months as well.

## 21. Dutchbat III and the warring factions

The first month of the deployment of Dutchbat III in Srebrenica had a lot in common with the opening of a Shakespeare play : many characters on the stage, a lot of sabre-rattling and verbal fireworks. Shakespeare used these effects to capture the attention of the audience. The confrontation in the Bandera triangle between Dutchbat III and the ABiH had the same effect on Dutchbat III and influenced its attitude towards the ABiH in the enclave. This attitude was less positive than that of the earlier battalions. But it would be rash to link direct conclusions about Dutchbat's performance towards the ABiH to the hostage-taking in the Bandera triangle. It is important to keep in mind that Dutchbat also had to deal with the VRS. It is certainly not the case that Dutchbat III saw the VRS differently or in a more positive light after the confrontation in the Bandera triangle.

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671 Dijkema, *Dutchbat in vredesnaam* (Dutchbat in the name of peace), pp. 121-122.
672 CRST. Fax no.263 Karremans to G3 Crisis Staff, 13/03/95 appendix: step plan of Dutchbat-III. Karremans, *Srebrenica*, pp. 116-117 and 121-124. Dijkema, *Dutchbat in vredesnaam* (Dutchbat in the name of peace), p. 89.
673 Dijkema, *Dutchbat in Vredesnaam* (Dutchbat in the name of peace), p. 204.

Even though the restrictions of the mandate kept the battalion leaders from taking any steps against the relocation of VRS positions towards the ceasefire line in the western and north-western part of the enclave, this did not mean that Dutchbat was indifferent or neutral to this development. In cooperation with the UNMO team, it took the reinforcement of VRS forces in the area of the Milici Brigade very seriously and came to the conclusion that a VRS attack on the enclave was among the possibilities. It maintained this assessment of the situation until late February 1995. In the judgement of the battalion leaders, the VRS activities formed a real threat to the application of the Safe Area concept in Srebrenica. This raised fears of a resumption of the fighting that had ended in April 1993. The action of the VRS also differed fundamentally from the attitude that the Bosnian Serbs had adopted since the arrival of Dutchbat in March 1994.

Through the changes in the stance of the two warring factions, Dutchbat III ended up in a different position than its two predecessors. This was evident in a variety of ways. Contact with the ABiH and the VRS continued to go via the same route as for Dutchbat I and II. The liaison team, together with the UNMO team, maintained the normal contacts and Battalion Commander Karremans took part in the talks in special cases. The meetings were less frequent than in the preceding period. The Dutchbat III liaison team had weekly meetings with both the ABiH staff and the Opstina. But it was clear in the enclave that something was awry. The relationship with the Opstina did not go well from the beginning. On 2 February 1995 at the end of talks about improvement and expansion of cooperation between the Opstina Srebrenica and the international organisations, Mayor Fahrudin Salihovic had characterized these organizations as 'just tourists' who would do best to leave the enclave, as far as he was concerned. Karremans refused to accept this. In a letter to Fahrudin Salihovic he characterised the tourist remark as a 'rather bold accusation', the suggestion about leaving the enclave as 'quite unprecedented'. The Battalion Commander took the view that the situation of the population of Srebrenica had improved since the arrival of the international organizations in the spring of 1993. He asked for clarification and an apology. He got the latter. On 27 February, the air had cleared to such an extent that a follow-up meeting was possible.[674]

In February and March, after the Bandera crisis, Karremans tried to improve relations with the ABiH through talks with Oric and Becirovic, but after a few meetings it became clear a deadlock had been reached: Oric made no promises about lifting restriction of movement in the Bandera triangle; Karremans rejected the need for approval by the ABiH for setting up new observation posts and he could not convince Oric that increasing the number of observation posts and more intensive patrolling within the enclave would provide effective protection against the VRS threat. The meeting on 12 March ended with the agreement to continue cooperation, but nothing more would actually come of it.[675]

The contacts with the VRS had an occasional character in which intervals of several weeks were not unusual. The liaison officer Colonel Vukovic and Major Nikolic were often difficult to reach. The UNMO team also had to contend with more difficult contact with the VRS. In the few talks that took place, Dutchbat tried to parry VRS criticism of the failing execution of its mission with the obstruction of the mission by the VRS itself, through restriction of Freedom of Movement outside the enclave, the refusal of convoys of fuel, food and medical supplies, and a series of other matters. The VRS said that resumption of talks with the Bosnian Muslims in Srebrenica about the ceasefire line and other matters was not possible: any talks would have to take place in the context of the regional Joint Commission for Sector North East.

The only thing for which Nikolic could evidently still summon up a great deal of energy was bringing about regular trade between Bratunac and the Opstina, with Dutchbat serving as intermediary. Although Karremans had fundamental objections to this – he saw that Nikolic enriched himself by abusing his position – he did not offer any opposition. The Dutchbat liaison team realized the risks of a meeting, because the civil authorities of Srebrenica and Bratunac had had no contacts with each other

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674 Karremans, *Srebrenica*, pp. 119-120 en 288-289. Def. Situation reports, Milinfo Dutchbat 28/02/95.
675 Def. Situation reports. Milinfo Dutchbat, 13/03/95. Karremans, *Srebrenica*, pp. 120 en 290-291.

since 1992. After a period of fits and starts in the talks from early March, a basic agreement seemed to have been reached in late May. However, the hostage crisis and the NATO air strikes against Pale blocked implementation on the VRS side.[676]

The overall reduction of contacts with the warring factions made it more difficult for Dutchbat to interpret the developments in and around the enclave. One source of information more or less dried up: the complaints by the ABiH and the VRS about breaches of the status of the enclave by the other side. Dutchbat III had to base its assessment of the situation on its own observations. The relative calm of 1994 had vanished. In its daily reports, Dutchbat III increasingly had to qualify the word 'calm' with 'but tense' on account of the strained situation in a part of the enclave. In the concise reporting to Sector North East and the more detailed internal Milinfos of Dutchbat, several general developments can be observed. On the instructions of Sector North East at the time of Dutchbat II, a refinement was introduced on reporting ceasefire violations. It made a distinction between salvos within the enclave and so-called 'battle noise' on and behind the ceasefire line.

Dutchbat registered several hundred small calibre salvos per day, as well as one hundred or more shots with machine guns and the firing of at least a few mortar or artillery rounds. The majority of the salvos were fired by the VRS; the machine-gun and mortar fire seldom came from the ABiH. This pattern fitted in with the arms arsenals of the two parties around Srebrenica: the ABiH possessed mainly small calibre weapons and a small number of mortars; the VRS commanded an ample number of machine guns, mortars, artillery pieces and tanks. This was evident once again during and after the Bandera crisis. Using battle noise as criterion, it was not always possible for Dutchbat to determine what was going on between the ABiH and the VRS around the ceasefire line. The majority of the confrontations and exchanges of shelling came after darkness fell, when Dutchbat was manning its observation posts and not sending out any patrols. The number of incidents increased from April onwards.

A second activity that emerges from the daily reports concerns improvement of ABiH and VRS positions and trenches along the ceasefire line. This was not an ongoing activity, but it did take place with a certain regularity. Work was carried out carefully at the observation posts and charted by the Ops rooms. They focused on two locations; in the west in the vicinity of OP-A and in the north around OP-M and OP-N. The VRS dug trenches, but also set up positions for machine guns, mortars, artillery and tanks. On a few occasions, a Dutchbat patrol spotted a tank. Generally speaking, it was clear that the VRS was preparing itself for the battle around the Bandera triangle. The significance of the field reinforcements in the north is more difficult to explain; it could have been a reaction to ABiH activities in this area or the preparation for a possible offensive.

From its observation posts and by means of patrols, Dutchbat could follow the build-up of reinforcements by the ABiH more closely than the VRS activities, but it certainly did not have a complete view. The ABiH, after all, was continuing to deny the battalion access to the Bandera triangle. It also expanded the prohibited area around elevation 699 on the western enclave border and the village of Misici, where trenches were dug and positions set up. Dutchbat attempts to send a patrol to this village continually ran into ABiH blockades, whereupon there was nothing to do but withdraw.[677] The improvement and reinforcement of positions were less intense in the southern and eastern parts of the enclave. In mid-March, the VRS cut down trees in the south-western corner and near the new OP-D.[678] In April VRS artillery was observed south of the enclave.[679] In late April the VRS dug a trench near OP-Q in the west.[680] Dutchbat hardly ever observed the reinforcement or setting up of ABiH positions in these areas.

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[676] Karremans, *Srebrenica*, 120 en 292. *Dutchbat in vredesnaam* (Dutchbat in the name of peace), pp. 178-179. Def. Situation reports, Milinfo Dutchbat, 15/04/95.
[677] The preceding is based on the situation reports and Milinfos of Dutchbat, February – May 1995.
[678] Def. Situation reports. Milinfo Dutchbat, 17/03/95 up to 19/03/95.
[679] Def. Situation reports. Milinfo Dutchbat, 23/4/95.
[680] Def. Situation reports. Milinfo Dutchbat, 24/4/95.

However, it did observe other, disturbing developments in the enclave. In the time of Dutchbat I and II, armed men were occasionally observed. Dutchbat took them to be soldiers of the ABiH. The weapons were seized in many cases. Dutchbat III spotted men with weapons much more frequently, individually at first, but later in groups as well – and not always in the vicinity of positions. Attempts to seize the weapons did not generally succeed, because their owners took flight. From April, it was no longer the exception for ABiH men to carry weapons openly: Dutchbat noted the presence of groups of men with guns. In early May, there was the additional factor that the ABiH had set up 50 training sites in the enclave for exercises and giving instruction.[681] The setting up and reinforcement of positions was thus supplemented by information about refresher training for ABiH men in the enclave.

From April, there were also an increasing number of indications that arms and ammunition were coming into the enclave via Zepa. Almost daily, OP-K noted groups of men coming into the enclave with heavily packed rucksacks and sometimes openly carrying weapons. Dutchbat had no doubt that the rucksacks contained weapons too.[682] Another indication of the growing stock of munitions in the enclave was the regular discovery of ammunition by patrols or by civilians. Sometimes a projectile had already disappeared before a team of the Explosives Disposal Unit arrived on the scene to disarm it.[683] In late April, Dutchbat soldiers were warned not to accept munitions offered by the population, but have them deposit these munitions at a spot along the road at least 100 metres from the observation post, where the Explosives Disposal Unit could detonate them expertly.[684]

Dutchbat was mainly an observer in these developments, but certainly not a welcome observer. Instances of the ABiH sending back patrols has already been mentioned. Shooting at patrols and observation posts also occurred with a certain regularity. This mostly happened in the northern part of the enclave around OP-M and OP-N and in the western part around OP-A. Both warring factions, particularly the VRS, used this tactic as a deterrence against Dutchbat. The shooting came from their own positions, but also from VRS patrols in the enclave. Both parties were familiar with the gist of the Rules of Engagement, which seriously restricted Dutchbat's possibilities to respond.

Mines were laid as well; in two cases, this had terrible consequences for Dutchbat III soldiers. On 13 February Private M. Boonman drove over an anti-tank mine. He suffered head wounds and a broken heel bone and calf bone. Five days later, in the south of the enclave Lieutenant J. Verplancke stepped on an anti-personnel mine. His lower left leg had to be amputated.[685]

## 22. Conclusion

After the Dutch Government took the decision to deploy Dutchbat in November 1993, an Airmobile Brigade reconnaissance group determined that the mission to Srebrenica (and Zepa) was feasible provided a number of conditions were met. The reconnaissance group made no pronouncements about whether these conditions were indeed met. In their approach, it was up to their superiors to make that determination and draw their own conclusions. The main conditions were full Freedom of Movement and a guarantee of regular resupplying. At the start of the mission, it was already clear that there were extensive shortcomings in this respect. Naturally, it was not determined in advance that the mission was infeasible, but it was at least clear that it would not be undertaken under optimal conditions. This came in no way as a surprise to Dutchbat, nor to the responsible authorities: the Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army, the Chief of Defence Staff and the Minister of Defence.

Two elements played a role from the start of the mission. Dutchbat was split into two operational components and, other than foreseen, deployed in two different areas of operation: the main force in the enclave Srebrenica and one company in the Sapna Thumb in the vicinity of Tuzla.

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681 Def. Situation reports. Milinfo Dutchbat, 25/04/95 and 27/04/95.
682 The preceding is based on the situation reports and Milinfos of Dutchbat, February - May 1995.
683 Def. Situation reports. Milinfo Dutchbat 17/02/95, 10/03/95, 10/04/95.
684 Def. Situation reports. Milinfo Dutchbat 25/04/95.
685 Dijkema, *Dutchbat in vredesnaam* (Dutchbat in the name of peace), pp. 101-102.

This split operation had not been foreseen and despite the fact that both areas were situated in Sector North East, there was no central execution of operational command. The second element involved the isolation in which the main force had landed in Srebrenica. On his first visit there in mid-March 1994, the Chief of Defence Staff had the distinct impression that the task of Dutchbat was that of a 'guard in a concentration camp'. This characterization of the work in the enclave would remain in circulation at all levels in Dutchbat: Srebrenica was an 'open-air prison' and Dutchbat was in fact also locked up inside. This experience of the work environment also had its effect on the way of thinking and this was noted by outsiders: Dutchbat suffered from a 'siege mentality'.

From the beginning, that aspect exerted a strong influence: Dutchbat felt locked in by VRS encirclement of the enclave and limited in its operational possibilities by the VRS restriction on Freedom of Movement. This had had its repercussions during the deployment of Dutchbat I and led to delay in the building of the compounds and the observation posts. The restriction of Freedom of Movement – a phenomenon UNPROFOR was confronted with everywhere in Bosnia – was also felt in the regular logistical resupplying of Dutchbat from its arrival in March 1994. In fact, the VRS determined what resupplying occurred and when.

Although a certain arbitrariness existed in the disruption of the logistical flow from Support Command in Lukavac to Dutchbat in Srebrenica, tensions between UNPROFOR and the VRS were a factor of significance: every crisis between the peacekeeping force and the Bosnian-Serb authorities meant the logistical tap was turned off. The Bosnian-Serb response to the use of NATO airpower in Close Air Support or air strikes against the VRS, was full cancellation of all permits for road use for the longer or shorter term. Both the political isolation of the Republika Srpska in the second half of 1994 and the VRS perception that UNPROFOR was no longer impartial but a tool in the hands of the Muslim Government encouraged the turning off of the logistical tap.

This pattern of deteriorating relations between UNPROFOR and the Republika Srpska had direct consequences for Dutchbat in Srebrenica. Resupplying deteriorated throughout the entire period of the mission. This stemmed in large part from the previously mentioned developments at higher level, but developments around the enclave also played an important role under Dutchbat III. After the Bandera crisis, the VRS saw Dutchbat as no longer capable of fulfilling its function of 'prison guard' very well. Thus, for the VRS, the deteriorating logistical situation was a means of exerting influence on Dutchbat's operational capabilities. Because Dutchbat appeared increasingly less able to keep the ABiH under control, the squeeze on resupplying was an effective means of making that clear. However, it would be a fallacy to provide only this explanation. Naturally, the VRS conducted its own policy with regard to the three eastern enclaves and it is safe to say that this policy was not focused on the continuation of their existence. But upon the arrival of Dutchbat I in March 1994 that did not appear to be the top priority in VRS policy.

In early 1994, the VRS had shown interest in talks about the problems concerning the enclave. It therefore utilized the services of Dutchbat and the UNMO team and both had invested heavily in settling the issues that had dragged on, such as determination of the ceasefire line, completing demilitarization and possible use of the Zeleni Jadar – Milici road. This active approach was clearly related to the new policy of Bosnia-Hercegovina Commander Rose on the improvement of contacts between the warring factions through UNPROFOR. Although a settlement in the form of an 'agreement in principle' seemed possible in early April, the success achieved quickly evaporated. This had two main causes. Further agreements were essentially hampered by a basic mistrust of each other's intentions. It also became quickly clear that progress on these politically sensitive issues was only possible on the basis of agreement at the central political and military level.

In that respect Dutchbat felt left out in the cold: Bosnia-Hercegovina Command did nothing noticeable to move the Bosnian Government and the Bosnian-Serb authorities to action. The mistrust between the two parties made it impossible to reach agreements or implement agreements about exchange of the bodies of the dead, family reunification and the departure of students from the enclave. Dutchbat also had insufficient weight to close these dossiers as a way of bridging this substantial gap, not even through bilateral talks with each of the parties. After September 1994, the

mediation that had begun so enthusiastically dried up through a lack of results and the exhaustion of arguments. Due to the escalation of military confrontation between the VRS and ABiH in January 1995 it seemed just as impossible to create a local Joint Commission in the context of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement.

The end of the talks meant an impoverishment of Dutchbat contacts with the warring factions. From September, they concentrated mainly on military matters. This was an essentially different role, because it saw Dutchbat acting as an enforcer of the mandate and as controller, in which it made an appeal to the activities and responsibilities of the parties. Another part of this task – entirely in accordance with the policy of Bosnia-Hercegovina Commander Rose – was the conveyance of VRS complaints to the ABiH and vice versa and, if possible, checking the information they provided. This not only involved violations of the ceasefire agreement, but also the activities targeted at the peacekeeping force itself. This did not produce much in the way of satisfactory results. In the view of Dutchbat, both parties were masters at giving evasive answers or passing on unreliable information. In most cases, Dutchbat could not do much more than guess as to the real facts – and certainly not when it came to confrontations between the VRS and ABiH. Their own interpretations remained unsubstantiated due to the lack of reliable information. This was also a consequence of the lack of Intelligence. This was a handicap that Dutchbat had noted itself at the very start of the mission and that continued to exist, because the Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army did not consider this operational resource suitable for a UN peace mission – an out-of-date view that was not in the least shared by the other troop-supplying NATO countries.

Initially, breaches in the status of the Safe Area were mainly perpetrated by the VRS. Dutchbat later noted similar breaches on the part of the ABiH – as it stepped up its military activities in the autumn of 1994 and began to operate more openly. A consistent Dutchbat response to these actions led to a cooling off of relations with the ABiH. After the Bandera crisis of January 1995 a downright frosty atmosphere continued to prevail between Dutchbat and the ABiH. In fact, a situation arose in which not only the VRS but also the ABiH believed that Dutchbat was not comporting itself in accordance with the UN mandate for the Safe Area Srebrenica. The ABiH took the view that the peacekeeping force had to keep the VRS out of and at a distance from the enclave, and essentially act as an ally to the ABiH. In the perception of the VRS, Dutchbat had to disarm the ABiH units, keep them from leaving the enclave and from undertaking any military action. These perceptions did not correspond with the task of Dutchbat and, furthermore, could also not be realized by Dutchbat in practice. In the view of the warring factions, this Dutchbat shortcoming emerged more and more clearly as military activities increased.

Generally, however, it cannot be maintained that Dutchbat therefore fell short in carrying out its task. From its arrival in March 1994, the Dutch battalions tried to carry out their task according to a fixed operational concept: observation of the ceasefire line and patrolling along the ceasefire line, and later also in the enclave itself. Dutchbat made a contribution to the improvement of the living conditions of the population. The fact that this was not always done optimally was primarily the consequence of the fuel shortage that resulted from the squeeze on resupplying by the VRS.

The lack of authority, manpower and means to properly respond to the activities of the warring factions in and around the enclave would become an increasingly weighty factor. Dutchbat could not resort to disarmament of the ABiH nor respond actively to its increasingly frequent training activities. Meanwhile the battalion lacked the resources for an effective response to VRS actions within the enclave. Dutchbat was caught between the far-reaching demands of the warring factions on the one hand and the lack of authorization, potential and – to a lesser degree – resources on the other hand. Due to the deteriorating conditions, Dutchbat simply became less and less able to perform its task.

# Chapter 7
# Dutchbat in the enclave – the local perspective

## 1. The Canadians relieved by the Dutch

On 3March1994 the Canadians officially handed over the torch to Dutchbat. As discussed previously in Chapters 5 and 6, the rotation took place anything but smoothly: the Bosnian Muslims did not allow the Canadians to depart, and the Bosnian Serbs also refused to allow the rotation to take place normally by denying the buses for the Canadians access to the enclave.

The Serbs also took advantage of the situation by moving their positions forward and seized the arrival of Dutchbat to cut off the connecting road between Srebrenica and Zepa for the Muslims. For the Bosnian Serbs it was of the utmost importance to obtain permanent control over the road between Milici and Skelani running through that area without Muslims continuously wandering through there. The VRS succeeded in isolating the two enclaves of Zepa and Srebrenica from each other on the first day that Dutchbat was there. To prevent any further Serb territorial gains, the Muslims organized night patrols which led to incidents, for example at Suceska. The events have been described above from the Dutchbat perspective; this chapter provides the local perspective and focuses on the living conditions of the population and the role of the various parties during the presence of the Dutch peacekeepers.

All of one day after the arrival of Dutchbat, Muslims blocked the compound in Srebrenica; the Canadian battalion was accused of having allowed the VRS to advance its lines.[686] In the Swedish Shelter Project, there were even a number of shooting incidents in those days, which according to the Canadians and Dutchbat were intended to disrupt the rotation. It could not be ascertained, however, whether the fire had come from the Serbs or Muslims. First, on 3 March the Swedish personnel of the Swedish Rescue Services Agency came under fire, and then on the evening of 4 March a local police officer was hit by gunfire whilst another disappeared. Panic broke out among the population and many fled from the Swedish Shelter Project.

However, when the inhabitants saw that the Swedish NGO staff members stayed, they slowly returned. Due to the incidents, the local personnel of the Swedish Shelter Project refused to show up at their workplace. It appears otherwise that this was not an entirely spontaneous decision; evidently, they were urged by the municipal administration to ensure that the southern border of the enclave was secured.

After the incidents, UNPROFOR increased surveillance near the Swedish Shelter Project; two Swedish staff members decided to return to Sweden.[687]

On 5March Muslims hemmed the Canadian unit in the compound in Srebrenica again, this time with more than 2,000 people. The Commander, MajorY.Bouchard, was accused of handing over to the Serbs the area that the VRS had captured by moving their lines forward. People held up banners demanding that UNPROFOR remove the VRS out of the area between the two Muslim enclaves of Srebrenica and Zepa and declare the entire area a demilitarized zone. These demonstrations, too, took place upon the instigation of, or in any case with the approval of, the local authorities.[688]

It was clear that the authorities placed little faith in the Canadian battalion by then, and for this reason the arrival of Dutchbat was welcomed. The administrators expected better relations with the Dutch peacekeepers, as well as real protection of the Safe Area and more freedom of movement.[689]

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[686] UNGE, UNPROFOR, Sitreps. Declassified by DND, Briefing Note for COS J3, 07/03/94; 'Serbs stall Canadian withdrawal', in: *The Toronto Star*, 04/03/94.
[687] NIOD, Coll. SRSA. SRSA Srebrenica (Svärd) to SRSA Karlstad/Belgrade, Security report, 818838, 05/03/94.
[688] 'Bosnian Muslims want Canadian troops to stay', in: *The Toronto Star*, 07/03/94; Interview Yvan Bouchard, 15/11/99; NIOD, Coll. SRSA, SRSA Srebrenica (Svärd) to SRSA Karlstad/Belgrade, 06/03/94.
[689] Interview Fahrudin Salihovic, 04/02/98.

Chapter 6 describes how the arrival of Dutchbat gave the population new hope and that the Bosnian Serbs were also originally happy with the arrival of the Dutch, who were better equipped and greater in number than the Canadians. The VRS expected and demanded that the Muslims in the enclave would be finally disarmed for good. They threatened to resume shooting if that did not happen.[690]

More than one month later, the Serbs carried out their threat elsewhere by attacking and threatening to overrun Gorazde. This Gorazde crisis in April 1994 (see Chapter 10) also resulted in a great deal of uncertainty in the Srebrenica enclave. Orders came from on high in the ABiH to strengthen Muslim positions on the edge of the enclave, because the ABiH was uncertain that UNPROFOR could provide protection.[691] Most of the ABiH soldiers favoured resuming hostilities.[692] On 18 and 19 April 1994, two large mass meetings took place in Srebrenica, during which the mayor spoke to the population in an attempt to reassure it.

The hope of the population that the arrival of Dutchbat would bring about an improvement in their living conditions was quickly dispersed, because the Bosnian Serbs simply continued to shoot at and keep an iron grip on the enclave. The Muslims believed that Dutchbat did too little to change this situation and also did not appreciate that they continued to confiscate their weapons.[693]

In short, the Serbian encirclement of Srebrenica – with the objective of isolating the enclave as much as possible and starving it into submission – was maintained and even intensified. That fact had not only a major influence on the operational actions of Dutchbat, but also on everyday life in the Safe Area. The Bosnian Serbs continuously thwarted efforts to provision the enclave, regularly refusing even the Dutch convoys right of passage.

## 2. Living conditions in and around the enclave

Although life for the Displaced Persons in the enclave was very hard, conditions on the Serb side were similarly anything but easy. Since the beginning of the war, there was tremendous dissatisfaction with the lack of humanitarian aid for and international coverage of the afflicted Serb population. The prevailing opinion was that the Muslims wrongly obtained all the coverage and aid. The Serb chronicler of the war in Bratunac and Srebrenica, Milivoje Ivanisevic, for example, writes that between April and August 1993, in the initial months that the Safe Area existed, the Muslims received more than eighty kilograms of food aid and other aid goods per person (based on his estimate of the total population of 30,000). This estimate did not include the unknown amount of aid which they had received by way of airdrops. The approximately 20,000 Serbs, who lived in Bratunac, Skelani and Milici during the war, most of whom were driven out of their homes, received only fourteen kilograms of aid per person in the same period.[694] The Serbs felt that the international community had let them down, that is with the exception of the Greeks. The Greek-Orthodox church, for example, arranged for sick and feeble Serb children from Bratunac, Milici and Skelani to recuperate for a number of months in Greece.[695]

Although the situation for the Serb population in Bratunac was anything but prosperous, their problems were by far less urgent than in the enclave. Aid always managed to find a way in, if not via the UNHCR, then from Serbia or abroad, organized by Serbs in the diaspora. The Serb complaints were in part even misplaced: after all, the UNHCR had continuously supplied the Serbs with aid for almost six months (between the end of June and the middle of December 1992), whilst the afflicted Muslim population in Srebrenica remained almost entirely without such in the same period. In the middle of December 1992, the UNHCR stopped supplying the Serbs in Bratunac, when they refused to grant

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690 MID/KL. *Dutchbat Srebrenica / Lukavac / Tuzla Milinfo*;July1994; annexed reports of discussions with BSA inFebruary1994.
691 NIOD, Coll. SRSA. SRSA Srebrenica (Svärd) to SRSA Karlstad/Belgrade, 19/04/94 and 20/0494.
692 NIOD, Coll SRSA, SRSA Srebrenica (Svärd) to SRSA Karlstad/Belgrade, 19/04/94and 20/04/94.
693 Interviews Ibrahim Becirovic, 05/08/97 and Abdulah Purkovic, 04/02/98.
694 Ivanisevic, *Hronika*, pp.117-118.
695 *Nasa Rijec*,April1994, p.5; Ivanisevic *Hronika*, p.119.

UNHCR convoys access to the Muslim enclave. This organization resumed supplying aid to the Serbs in Bratunac in March 1993, when the convoys finally received permission to enter the enclave again.[696]

In addition, other western aid agencies made a contribution, such as the Norwegian People's Aid. In the second half of 1994, with the financial backing of the Governments of Norway, Sweden and Hungary, this organization built a refugee village of pre-fabricated housing in the largely destroyed Serb village of Kravica. In January 1995 Norwegian People's Aid officially handed over the keys to this village to the mayor of Bratunac.[697] As regards the Serbian diaspora, one of the most active persons was Miodrag Stevic, a businessman from Berlin who succeeded in securing large sums of money for humanitarian aid for the Serb population in Bratunac.[698]

In Srebrenica itself the oncoming spring led to a slight improvement in living conditions after the hard winter of 1993-94. But everything was very relative, as a doctor of *Médecins Sans Frontières* wrote: 'there was always a serious lack of everything, in particular soap and shampoo; whereas there may have been enough food, it was usually of poor quality; and people used the paper of the letters delivered through the International Red Cross to roll cigarettes. There was no electricity; water mills for small hydroelectric power stations were built in the river, forests were felled, and firewood was piled up for the next winter. The thought that there was no future was very depressing for a large part of the population, particularly for the refugee population.'[699]

Near the end of the year the food situation worsened seriously due to the continuing Serb blockades, particularly at the end of November and the start of December 1994. People went out to beg for food in front of the warehouse in the city, where the UNHCR aid supplies were stored. The authorities started to request airdrops again, although this option had been dismissed in the past by practically all parties operating in the enclave (in particular by the NGOs). Relying on rumours that airdrops would in fact be carried out, people stoked fires in the hills to guide aeroplanes to the right places. Even in the spring of 1995, the supply of food, fuel, building materials, medicine, soap and other hygienic products remained a major problem for the NGOs. The lack of diesel and construction materials resulted, for example, in serious delays in the construction activities of the Swedish Rescue Services Agency.[700]

The uncertain supply situation forced the population to bring goods into the enclave through other channels. For example, there was lively trade in contraband between Zepa and Srebrenica. An important part of the goods which were traded in Zepa originated from Serbs who resold them to the Muslims through the Ukrainian UN battalion. In the beginning, the Bosnian Serb besiegers turned a blind eye to the smugglers, that is as long as it concerned contraband in small amounts per backpack. Later, when horses were used, the Bosnian Serbs routinely ambushed them. It often came to skirmishes between VRS troops and armed smugglers who wandered through Serbian terrain to reach Srebrenica.[701] Some of them were wounded or killed, others disappeared. Given that in this manner other goods were also smuggled into the enclave, such as weapons and munitions, Dutchbat set up OP-K to intercept people coming from Zepa.

According to a Dutchbat document, the contraband routes between Srebrenica and Zepa were primarily controlled by a certain 'Yusuf, alias Tarzan', who seemed to have connections with the Head of Srebrenica police Hakija Meholjic. Meholjic was a rival of Naser Oric. Whereas he collaborated with Oric to a certain degree, he could still be regarded as the so-called 'opposition' in the enclave. After the elections of November 1990, Hakija Meholjic's brother Malik Meholjic had been mayor of Srebrenica for a short period of time, but he was removed by hardliners from the SDA (the party of Izetbegovic),

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696 See the interviews with the head of the Red Cross division in Bratunac, Cedomir Pavlovic, in the local Serbian paper *Nasa Rijec*,March1993, p.2; *Nasa Rijec*,October1993, p.5.
697 Miljanovic, *Krvavi Bozic*, p.121.
698 Gajic,'Miodrag Stevic'; Jovanovic, 'Dezinformacije'; Simic, 'Zbog istine'.
699 Thorsen, *MSF*, pp. 53-54.
700 Thorsen, *SRSA*, pp. 24-25.
701 Confidential information (74) and interview Bob Patchett, 19/11/99.

with whom Oric collaborated at that time. Malik had then left the SDA and established a local chapter of the moderate and more liberal MBO party, of which Hakija had also been a supporter. From that time on, Hakija (whose brother disappeared in Montenegro in the early stages of the war in 1992) could not stand the SDA hardliners and their accomplices who had brought the situation to a head in the city, and in particular the relations with the Serb inhabitants. Meholjic genuinely believed in peaceful co-operation and coexistence with the Serbs, although he himself was also one of the first to take up arms to defend the city and organize the local resistance against the ethnic cleansing by the Serb paramilitaries and the Yugoslav Army. Later, as head of the police, he would personally offer protection and help to the small group of Serbs who remained in the enclave.[702]

Oric and his men tended to side with the Muslims, although Oric, said a Serb inhabitant who remained in the enclave, certainly could not be described as a someone who hated Serbs. Oric had a Serbian girlfriend with whom he had radio contact and to whom he also sent money.[703] The conflicts with Meholjic revolved around the reins of power in the enclave; due to his efforts to maintain a minimum of law and order in the enclave, Hakija Meholjic made life miserable for the municipal administrators who tried to enrich themselves along with Oric. The conflicts between Meholjic and Oric and the municipal administrators came to a head, when Deputy Mayor Hamdija Fejzic appropriated the car of Meholjic and gave it to Oric. After this incident Meholjic refused to communicate any longer with the municipality, aside from complaining about its corruption and lack of organization. During meetings of the Presidium, of which he was a member, he could not resist continuously reminding Oric and his accomplices of the damaging effects of their corrupt practices.[704]

According to Katrine Ommang, a Norwegian People's Aid staff member, it was an open secret that the civil and military authorities were corrupt:

> 'Apart from deliveries of flour and rice, very few things actually reach those they were intended for. Andrei [Kazakov], the UNHCR representative, said that they no longer imported toys and similar equipment because it always ended up with those who already had a store of it and there was no alternative way of distribution. Furthermore, it is an "official secret" that Naser Oric "gets" a part of whatever is sold and bought [sic.] inside the enclave and money which is smuggled in to private persons.'[705]

Part of the goods which the UNHCR convoys brought into the enclave were channelled by the authorities to the ABiH to provide the troops with provisions. Another part was resold on the black market, and here too the military leaders exerted their influence.[706] On the other hand, Meholjic and 'Tarzan' tried to keep open the contraband routes to Zepa against the wishes of the authorities. The authorities were not pleased with any form of trade by third parties with the Bosnian Serbs or with trade in contraband by the Displaced Persons, because that affected their monopoly as the only supplier of goods. Given that Hakija Meholjic's police protected the Swedish Shelter Project on the south-side of the enclave, he was in a relatively good position to supervise and guarantee the trade in contraband with Zepa. The ABiH had, as such, little control over the trade in contraband.[707]

On the frontlines 'unofficial' contacts between Serbs and local Muslims took place on a regular basis, which not surprisingly occasionally led to direct trading activities with the Bosnian Serbs. The trade across the demarcation lines, often between people who still knew each other well from prior to

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[702] Interview Djuka Micic, 10/06/98.
[703] Interview Dana Ristanovic, 22/09/98.
[704] NIOD, Coll. NPA. NPA (Ommang) to NPA, end of mission report, 10/03/95.
[705] NIOD, Coll. NPA. NPA (Ommang) to NPA, end of mission report, 10/03/95.
[706] Mrkic, 'Predsjednistvo', p.7-8. Interview Ilijaz Pilav, 31/01/98.
[707] MID/KL. Dutchbat Srebrenica / Lukavac / Tuzla Milinfo;July1994; Chapters 6 and 10, and annexe 'BIH commanders in Srebrenica enclave'.

the war, largely circumvented the control of the authorities. This was a thorn in the eye for the ABiH and the authorities in the enclave, as well as for the Bosnian Serb authorities, and people were punished if they were caught.[708] However, serious money could be earned: goods which were relatively cheap to buy from the Bosnian Serbs could often be traded at a multiple of the original price on the market in Srebrenica. Salt, coffee and oil were often brought into the enclave in this manner by means of the trade with the Bosnian Serbs in Bratunac.[709] The Serbs were occasionally taken for a ride in the process. During a 1994 transaction involving salt, cigarettes and coffee worth DEM16,000, the Muslims robbed the Serb traders of their merchandise by overpowering them with a large group.[710]

It also occurred regularly that the convoy drivers brought in scarce goods, such as salt, which they sold at extravagant prices on the black market. This happened, for example, with a Norwegian People's Aid convoy in May 1994. The local Swedish Rescue Services Agency project leader Richard Svärd was particularly concerned about this and decreed that this was no longer allowed to take place, since this involved tremendous risks for the Swedish Rescue Services Agency.[711] People tried all kinds of ways to smuggle money from outside into the enclave; to this end, NGO staff members and Dutchbat personnel were also occasionally approached, if they were at home or on leave. This often involved substantial sums, even in the magnitude of more than DEM100,000, which, for example, were hidden in food parcels (such as in tins). Couriers who brought money in in this way generally demanded a certain percentage.[712] Certain political heavyweights, such as the chairman of the SDA Hamed Efendic, were suspected by Dutchbat of bringing in large sums of money into the enclave and illegal trade on the black market.[713]

During the Dutchbat period the NGOs largely continued their humanitarian activities, as described earlier in Chapter 4. In general the collaboration between the NGOs and Dutchbat was good. In a daily meeting in Srebrenica Dutchbat kept members of the other UN organizations (such as UNHCR or UNMO) and the NGOs abreast of incidents and warned them of certain security risks. Only the Swedish Rescue Services Agency staff members were not present initially, as they were busy building the refugee village on the south side of the enclave (the Swedish Shelter Project). They started, however, attending regularly from June1994, when they moved to Srebrenica town. The NGOs provided each other with a lot of practical assistance, and when goods were scarce, they helped each other out. Electricity, for example, had to be generated by means of generators, and given that there were not enough of them, generators were lent back and forth between *Médecins Sans Frontières*, the International Red Cross and the Swedish Rescue Services Agency.[714] A number of projects continued to be carried out in mutual consultation and collaboration, such as the construction of the so-called 'psy-center' (a kind of psychiatric and geriatric nursing home) which was mutually established by the de Swedish Rescue Services Agency and *Médecins Sans Frontières*.

According to *Médecins Sans Frontières* sources, Dutchbat did much more than the Canadian battalion to assist this organization. Dutchbat had a surgical team which was primarily intended for its own people, but which could also be deployed if possible for people in the enclave. As a matter of fact, *Médecins Sans Frontières* also occasionally had surgeons in the enclave. Dutchbat also had six ambulances at its disposal which were often used for the population. The entire Dutchbat medical team offered substantial assistance to *Médecins Sans Frontières*. According to a *Médecins Sans Frontières* report from July 1994, the workload of *Médecins Sans Frontières* was reduced by one third as a result of the assistance of

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708 Interview Vahid Hodzic, 04/07/97, 05/07/97. MSF, Brussels. MSF, interview Dzema, aunt of Emira, 18/10/95; MID/KL. Dutchbat Srebrenica / Lukavac / Tuzla Milinfo;July1994, annexed report of meeting with Naser Oric and Ramiz Becirovic, 18/02/94.

709 NIOD, Coll. NPA. NPA (Ommang) to NPA, end of mission report, 10/03/95.

710 Confidential interview (80).

711 NIOD, Coll. SRSA. SRSA Srebrenica (Svärd) to SRSA Karlstad/Belgrade, 07/05/94.

712 Interviews J.R. Groen, 14/01/00; Nijaz Masic, 25/10/00; Omer Subasic, 14/06/98; Emir Suljagic, 20/09/99; and Hatidza Hren, 02/02/98.

713 KMar. Uncivpol incident report no. BO5-94/040 (Aalders), 12/04/95.

714 NIOD, Coll. SRSA. SRSA Srebrenica (Svärd) to SRSA Karlstad/Belgrade, 21/04/95.

Dutchbat. However, as the situation in the enclave became more difficult, particularly in the spring of 1995, Dutchbat scaled down its level of assistance. During the last weeks prior to the actual fall, the Dutchbat command even stopped assistance to the hospital.[715]

*Médecins Sans Frontières* sources also reveal that Dutchbat collaborated with the authorities when, for example, the river had to be cleaned and car wrecks removed. During the winter months Dutchbat ensured that the asphalt road in the city was cleared of snow.[716] The sanitary and hygienic situation in the enclave remained extremely precarious, as the Bosnian Serbs kept blocking the supply of cleaning agents and disinfectants. Still, efforts were continuously made to keep the city as clean as possible, and Dutchbat regularly assisted these efforts. However, the fact that the members of Dutchbat took photographs near the garbage dump of people who combed through the garbage led to tremendous indignation among the Muslims.[717]

During the summer of 1994 Srebrenica was hit by a heatwave which resulted in a new epidemic of lice and scabies. The city was also afflicted by other insect plagues against which it was difficult to do something given the scarcity of available cleaning agents. *Médecins Sans Frontières* organized large campaigns to disinfect the hospital and some refugee centres, but they fought a losing battle. In July *Médecins Sans Frontières* talked of an emergency situation and called on the international aid agencies to lend assistance. The *Médecins Sans Frontières* team wrote how crying mothers knocked on their office doors, because their children could not sleep at night, as they were incessantly beset by fleas, cockroaches and other vermin. *Médecins Sans Frontières* sent pressing letters to the outside world that the need for the supply of large amounts of insecticides was now extremely urgent. *Médecins Sans Frontières* finally received a shipment of lice shampoo and other disinfectants, and it started immediately disinfecting buildings and the population, which made the suffering a little bit more bearable. The campaign, however, was not complete, so that, for example, residential housing could not be treated sufficiently. Insect and vermin plagues remained a continuous source of worry for the population and the humanitarian organizations.[718]

After the Swedish Rescue Services Agency had completed the refugee village in Slapovici, the Swedish team moved to Hotel Domavia in the city of Srebrenica in June 1994, where they continued repairing schools, public buildings and private homes. The authorities had requested the Swedish Rescue Services Agency to do so in May 1994.[719] At the top of the wish list was the renovation of the school which had been hit by a grenade. In addition, the authorities wanted to request the Swedes to assist in renovating destroyed or gutted residences. In August 1994 the Swedish team started repairing the school in Srebrenica as well as other schools and public buildings throughout the enclave. The activities of the Swedish Rescue Services Agency included building a roof on a flour storage facility, repairing the roof and windows of the school in addition to supplying school furniture. These activities stopped in December 1994, when the Swedish personnel left, partly due to the difficult circumstances in the enclave, but also because the Swedish Government still had not come up with a new subsidy for the work the Swedish Rescue Services Agency performed in the enclave.

Local members of the personnel continued getting ready to renovate almost eighty residences in Srebrenica selected by the municipality pending the return of the Swedish personnel. The renovation of these houses would not only improve the living conditions of the more than 200 families already living in the residences, it would also create extra living space for an additional 1,230 persons who could move into the houses after the renovation was complete. In the end, this project could only be partially carried out. The Swedish staff members and the local personnel remained on very good terms with the

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715 Thorsen, *MSF*, pp. 65-66. Interview Ilijaz Pilav, 22/10/97. See also Chapters 8 and 9 of Part II and the annexe to Part III 'Dutchbat III and the population: medical issues'.
716 Thorsen, *MSF*, p. 96.
717 Omeragic, 'Nakon 10 hiljada ubijenih', p.14.
718 MSF, Brussels. MSF Srebrenica, monthly report, July 1994. Thorsen, 'MSF', pp. 98-99.
719 NIOD, Coll. SRSA. SRSA Srebrenica (Svärd) to SRSA Karlstad/Belgrade, 10/05/94. Thorsen, *SRSA*, p.7. For the work of SRSA in Srebrenica, see also the interview with Svärd in *Ljiljan* (Becirovic, 'Zivjet cu').

rest of the population, as confirmed by the reports. The Swedes were taken good care of in Hotel Domavia; as project leader Richard Svärd wrote: 'Our only problem here is that we have to make sure that we do not become too fat. As soon as we open our mouths, the hotel personnel try to fill them with food and drink'.[720] The Swedish Rescue Service Agency staff members had good contacts with the personnel of the hotel as well as with the head of police Hakija Meholjic, who had his police headquarters in Domavia. The personnel and Meholjic invited them regularly to parties and dinners.[721]

## 3. The internal political relations in the enclave

When Dutchbat arrived in the enclave, the civil municipal administration consisted of the War Presidency, headed by the War President, also referred to as the mayor by the NGOs and the international organizations, and an executive council chaired by the deputy mayor. The Presidium replaced the municipal council which was suspended at the start of the war, because a large number of municipal councillors had fled from Srebrenica. No meeting of the municipal council had been convened since then. For this reason, the affairs of the council were first looked after with effect from 1 July 1992 by the War Presidency, which consisted of seventeen members, representing all the parts of the enclave. Generally speaking, it took all the important decisions in the enclave. Hajrudin Avdic was appointed as the first War President of this administrative body. At that time the reins of power were already firmly in the hands of a group of people who were loyal to Naser Oric.[722] From the moment that the enclave was declared a Safe Area, the title War Presidium was changed to Presidium at the insistence of UNPROFOR, but the term War Presidency remained in vogue. On 9 July 1993 Avdic was replaced by Fahrudin Salihovic. This change was due to formal reasons – the term of office of War President was limited to one year in accordance with the municipal statute – although it would later become evident that Avdic would adopt a critical attitude toward Oric, which was likely an additional reason why he was sacked. At that time, political parties were still forbidden in the enclave.[723]

The executive council, headed by Deputy Mayor Hamdija Fejzic, was formally directly responsible for the municipal affairs and all kinds of practical matters, such as civil defence, the fire department, employment, healthcare, education, the police, the courts and the prison. During the war a number of executive council committees were created which focused on distributing humanitarian aid, housing (in particular for Displaced Persons) and repairing war damage. The head of the executive council, Hamdija Fejzic, was the liaison officer for the international organizations and the NGOs in daily consultations.[724]

None of the senior administrators came from the city itself. They had little experience in administration, and the allocation of their tasks was not surprisingly often rather vague, which led more than a few times to confusion among the NGOs and the other international organizations. According to the staff members of the NGOs and the UN organizations, a lot of time was wasted on unnecessarily long consultations with the authorities on subjects which were not really relevant in terms of resolving the most urgent problems.[725] Although the authorities formally held the most important positions in the municipality, the reins of power were in fact held by the military. The key figure behind the scenes was and remained Naser Oric, who, as Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces, had the greatest influence in Srebrenica. A *Médecins Sans Frontières* staff member wrote in March 1994 that:

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[720] NIOD, Coll. SRSA. SRSA Srebrenica (Svärd) to SRSA Karlstad/Belgrade, 13/06/94.
[721] Thorsen, *SRSA*, pp. 18-19.
[722] MID. DIS/94/021/2424 - Supintrep Enclave Srebrenica, p.23.
[723] Interview Fahrudin Salihovic in the paper *Srebrenicki glas* which was printed in the enclave during the war, 20/12/93, pp.6-9. Interview Ilijaz Pilav, 31/01/98.
[724] MID. DIS/94/021/2424 - Supintrep Enclave Srebrenica, p.23. Masic, *Srebrenica*, p.28. Oric, *Srebrenica*, p.154. Thorsen, *NPA*, p.16. Interview Hamdija Fejzic, 03/02/98.
[725] MSF, Brussels. MSF Srebrenica (Wilmart), mission report January-July 1994, 21/07/94.

> 'The king of the place is without competition Commander Naser (…) Without his official consent, nothing can be done in this town! (…) He controls the black market, the prostitution and Opstina. All of this, of course, under the cover of the official authorities.'[726]

As the Canadian battalion found out right from the beginning, the War President and the deputy mayor never wanted to take a position on anything without first having consulted with Oric.[727]

It was not until the spring of 1994 that the political parties were permitted again and efforts were made to restore the pre-war political structures. The SDA also resumed its activities. In April 1994, at a meeting of the local SDA party chapter of Potocari, in which Naser Oric also had a seat, the former local SDA heavyweights Hamed Efendic, Ibran Mustafic, and Hamed Salihovic were relieved of all their positions in the party.[728] The municipal council was reactivated in the summer of 1994, but because a large number of the original members of the council were no longer present, a so-called Interim municipal council was established, consisting of 55 of the original 70 seats, of which 45 were held by the SDA and the remaining 10 by the opposition parties (the SDS seats remained vacant). The places of municipal councillors who were no longer in the enclave were awarded to others on the list of candidates. The interim council was chaired by Osman Suljic and convened once a month. With his inauguration, Suljic became the War President of the municipality instead of Fahrudin Salihovic. This changing of the guard appeared to be politically motivated: Suljic seemed to be more on Oric's leash than Salihovic.[729]

Known as one of the more honest administrators, Salihovic seemed to have been sidelined, but not for long. On 17 September 1994 he was appointed Head (*Nacelnik*) of the municipality; this was by all appearances a new position next to that of the War President and the Head of the executive council. This position was apparently the result of internal political differences. After all, in September 1994 there was a great deal of agitation at all levels, not only in the SDA, but also in the municipal administration, regarding the on-going exodus from the enclave. Able-bodied men tried to escape the enclave, often taking their weapons with them, because they placed little faith anymore in the authorities.[730] The civil and military authorities were criticized, in particular Oric and the small group of persons who managed the UNHCR warehouse, in addition to those who enriched themselves with the UNHCR aid supplies. For this reason, the morale of many ABiH fighters fell to a new low in the course of 1994.[731]

During meetings of the SDA and the municipal council prior to the appointment of Fahruding Salihovic in September 1994, people such as Hajrudin Avdic and Hakija Meholjic heavily criticized Oric and his accomplices. They insisted on a more honest distribution of aid supplies, as well as a reduction of the size of the black market in UNHCR goods. They expressed their fear that, otherwise, even more able-bodied men would leave the enclave. Meholjic denounced the fact that at the start of the war the city's civil authority was subordinated to the military and pointed to this as one of the most important

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[726] MSF, Brussels. MSF Srebrenica (Godain) to MSF-B (Tocker), MSF-F (Laoubbia, Salignon, Genevier), activity report (mission report), 25/03/94.
[727] Interviews Yvan Bouchard 15/11/99, and Thomas Geburt, 18/11/99.
[728] Minutes of this meeting can be found in NIOD, Coll. Ivanisevic, a diary of SDA activist Zulfo Salihovic, which was found by the Serbs after the fall of the enclave.
[729] Taljic and Becirovic, 'Srebrenica', p.5. Interview Fahrudin Salihovic, 04/02/98. Masic, *Srebrenica*, p.28. Oric, *Srebrenica*, p.154; NIOD, Coll. Ivanisevic. Minutes of memorandum book of Zulfo Salihovic.
[730] This view is confirmed by UNHCR sources, which reported on groups of men who succeeded in escaping and pressed on to Kladanj which was under the control of the Muslims. NIOD, Coll. SMG, UNHCR Tuzla to UNHCR Belgrade BH Desk, 15/09/94, 'movement of people from Srebrenica to Tuzla'; Protection Unit UNHCR FO Tuzla, 16/09/94, 'escape from Srebrenica'. UNHCR Tuzla to UNHCR Belgrade BH Desk, 22/09/94, 'movement of people from Srebrenica'.
[731] This was also apparent from a number of ABiH documents which were seized by the Serbs, such as: NIOD, Coll Ivanisevic. Masic to all deputy commanders for the morale of the units in the enclave, ABiH, 8 OG, No. 130-28-83/94, Srebrenica, 22/06/94.

causes of the problems. The appointment of Salihovic as Head of the municipality was a direct result of these discussions and seemed to be a compromise which nevertheless was meant to set the house in order. In most sources, he is referred to as the Mayor from that time on.

Demands were also made in the municipal council for the establishment of a military court and military police which would bring an end to the crime, the abuse of power and the arbitrariness of the members of the military.[732] But nothing had yet been done about this by the start of June 1995. Meholjic threatened at that point to resign, as the civil police could accomplish nothing in matters concerning ABiH members. Meholjic felt like he was on his own in the battle against crime.[733]

The district court, which was reopened in July 1993 and headed by Mensud Omerovic, also could not perform properly, because the judges were constantly exposed to all kinds of pressure and threats which were occasionally even life-threatening. In March 1995, for example, judge Smail Klempic was threatened and shot at by ABiH Commander Ejub Golic, forcing him to flee from his own home. Due to the absence of military police and a military court, little could be done against such threats and actions of members of the ABiH.[734]

On 24 October 1994 the police arrested two members of the warehouse personnel after large quantities of humanitarian aid were found at their home. They were fired and the Committee for the distribution of humanitarian aid was set up. This also seemed to involve Hakija Meholjic paying back the mafia and Deputy Mayor Hamdija Fejzic.[735] The members of the warehouse personnel were indicted, which was greeted with approval by the population and the ABiH troops. Nijaz Masic, Commander for the morale of the ABiH troops in the enclave, reported on 16 November 1994 that the imminent exodus of ABiH troops and civilians which had already slowly started in September had been averted.[736]

There had been a hard core of opposition against Naser Oric and the sitting administration which came in particular from the former SDA heavyweights Ibran Mustafic, Hamed Salihovic and Hamed Efendic. They were the ones who at the outbreak of the war were completely marginalized, although Naser Oric, as chauffeur and right-hand man of Mustafic, had been on familiar terms with them. Mustafic led the opposition from the moment he returned to the enclave in December 1992.[737] He had been sent to the enclave by the SDA in Sarajevo, which attempted to regain there through Mustafic some of the influence it had lost at the start of the war. In many of those parts of Bosnia where the war had been fought the fiercest, the SDA had had to relinquish its position to local warlords who turned out to be much better in organizing the local defences.[738] In Srebrenica, the reins of power had been taken over by local hoodlums, such as Naser Oric and Zulfo Tursonovic, who originally could not be bothered by the politics of the SDA, except when Izetbegovic personally called from Sarajevo to consult with Oric.

Mustafic tried to gain some influence on the local civil administration in Srebrenica, but that turned out to be idle hope. Mustafic made no headway, just as little as the former SDA chairman Hamed Efendic, who, after Srebrenica had been declared a Safe Area, was jailed several time by the local rulers. Both of them were accused of having done nothing to prepare the population for war and having adopted a passive, wait-and-see attitude. Moreover, they were accused of having enriched

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732 NIOD, Coll. Ivanisevic. Minutes of these meetings can be found in the diary of Zulfo Salihovic.
733 NIOD, Coll. CD-ROMs. SJB Srebrenica (Meholjic) to MUP-R BiH and CSB Tuzla, Depesa br. 36/95, Srebrenica, 01/06/95.
734 NIOD, Coll. CD-ROMs. President of the district court (Omerovic) to the Ministry of Justice BiH, SU-28/95, Srebrenica, 24/05/95; NIOD, Coll. CD-ROMs. President of the district court (Omerovic) to the regional military court Tuzla, SU-25/95, Srebrenica, 20/04/95.
735 NIOD, Coll. CTKL, Kazakov to Tall, 31/10/94 re: theft of humanitarian aid from warehouse.
736 NIOD, Coll. Ivanisevic. Masic to all deputy commanders for the morale of the units in de enclave, ABiH, 8 OG, No. 130-28-176/94, 16/11/94.
737 Interview Ibran Mustafic, 18/09/01.
738 Interviews Mehmed Pargan, 16/06/98, and Almir and Zahira Ramic, 06/11/99-10/11/99.

themselves by gunrunning.[739] Mustafic could claim to hold a special position as the only politician from Srebrenica who was a representative in the Parliament in Sarajevo, a fact he repeatedly underscored in discussions with the UN. Nevertheless, the local rulers simply ignored him.[740] He was blamed in particular for having 'fled' to Sarajevo at the start of the war; he had not joined in the fight. Mustafic, in turn, alleged that Oric had staged a coup and installed a military junta in Srebrenica; he also accused Oric and his accomplices of mafia practices.[741]

Mustafic's objective was to reactivate the municipal council, but he did not succeed as a result of the resistance of the sitting rulers, who did not decide to do so until the summer of 1994. Mustafic was supported by approximately twenty former leading SDA members, including Hamed Efendic (the former local SDA chairman), Hamed Salihovic (previously head of the police) and Ahmo Tihic (a well-known SDA activist originally from the region near Drina). In the three years prior to the fall of the enclave, this group formed the most important 'opposition' which attempted to restore its own rule (on the basis of the electoral victory of November 1990). Mustafic claims that during that entire period he strenuously opposed the attacks on Serb villages, as they would inevitably lead to a Serb backlash. This might explain in part why he was one of the very few who survived Serb captivity after the fall of the enclave. Another reason for his survival could lie in the fact that the Serbs knew that he was not in the enclave in the period from April to December 1992 when most of the attacks were carried out, and that he was an opponent of Oric, and for this reason might be useful at some point in the future. When Mustafic was captured, he was still recovering from the wounds he had sustained in the attack on his life which had taken place in May 1995 in the enclave.[742]

In his fight against Oric's 'military junta' Mustafic appears to have also sought support particularly among the regular ABiH troops and the large group of Displaced Persons. The ABiH leadership in Srebrenica accused the former SDA heavyweights Ibran Mustafic, Hamed Efendic and Hamed Salihovic of undermining the morale among the ABiH troops by spreading 'lies' and 'incorrect rumours'.[743] Mustafic and his associates also sought support among the Displaced Persons, as their relations with the local administration and the original inhabitants who dominated it had never been particularly good. The Displaced Persons were constantly kept out of the decision-taking process by the local administration and the mafia, who by all appearances were absolutely ruthless. In May 1993, when UNHCR representative P. Ollier designated a number of representatives among the Displaced Persons to control how the convoys were unloaded, one of them, a refugee from Vlasenica, was murdered on the very same day. The rest of the representatives who had been designated by the UNHCR no longer dared to show up. This clearly showed once again that the warehouse and control over the delivered aid supplies were crucial for exercising power in the enclave.[744]

What also bred bad blood among the Displaced Persons was that Oric's troops tended to treat Muslim fighters who had fled from elsewhere to the enclave as their inferiors, as they had failed, so to speak, to defend their villages. Consequently, they were often forced to do the dirty work, which also contributed to the decline in morale. According to a *Médecins Sans Frontières* source, Oric always sent them first to the frontlines, when the situation was clearly dangerous.[745] It is rather plausible that the soldiers concerned tried to desert the army from such positions on the edge of the enclave. Such problems were noted concerning Zepa, where the original population treated the Displaced Persons poorly and male Displaced Persons were recruited against their will and sent to the frontlines. Of the 5,000 Muslims trapped in Zepa, 70% were Displaced Persons.[746]

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739 MID/KL, *Dutchbat Srebrenica / Lukavac / Tuzla Milinfo*; July 1994; Chapter 1, section D5.
740 Interview Ibran Mustafic 16/04/98 and 18/09/01.
741 MID. DIS/94/021/2424 - Supintrep Enclave Srebrenica, p.24.
742 Interviews Ibran Mustafic 16/04/98, 18/09/01. See also Mrkic, 'Predsjednistvo', p.6.
743 NIOD, Coll. Ivanisevic. ABiH, 8 OG, No. 115/94, Srebrenica, 10/03/94.
744 CTKL, Sitrep Srebrenica from P. Ollier, 21/05/93. Interview Hans Ulens, 16/06/98.
745 MSF, Brussels. MSF, interview Dzema, aunt of Emira, 18/10/95.
746 Sudetic, *Blood,* pp.113-114, 117-118, 131.

Mustafic probably thought he could capitalize on the poor treatment of the Displaced Persons in the enclave, thereby gaining support for the opposition he led. This was a logical strategy. It is a fact that from the moment the enclave filled up with Displaced Persons the local rulers and the ABiH heavyweights were apprehensive of the large numbers of Displaced Persons, more so since they brought in an unknown quantity of weapons with them. In one of the first discussions the military authorities had with Dutchbat in the enclave, it did not take long for them to incriminate the Displaced Persons as the ones responsible for the incidents in the border area in the east. This clearly showed even at that stage that the relations between the Displaced Persons and the authorities were not great, and that the authorities probably attempted to get Dutchbat to do their dirty work for them, keeping the Displaced Persons under their thumb in this way. Dutchbat was also requested to set up OPs outside the enclave's perimeter on the road to Zepa, so that the contraband route used by the Displaced Persons could be monitored better.[747]

After having returned to the enclave, Mustafic survived two attempts on his life. The first attempt took place on 25May1993 involving the use of a weapon to which only Oric could have had access, Mustafic said. The attempt failed. During the second attempt, which took place just before midnight on 19May1995, Mustafic sustained serious injuries, whilst fellow party member and former head of police Hamed Salihovic was killed. The former SDA party chairman Hamed Efendic remained unscathed.[748] This attack was not an isolated event: in the spring of 1995 it had come to even more incidents and attacks aimed at the 'opposition'. The UN Civilian Police (UnCivPol) reports reveal that on 12April1995 an explosion occurred which was likely aimed at Ahmo Tihic, a SDA activist from the very beginning who sided with Mustafic. In a discussion with UnCivPol just days after the incidents, three SDA members complained about mafia practices and the corruption among the local police who had done nothing in response to a number of earlier incidents which had been aimed at these former SDA heavyweights. Other members of the SDA opposition had apparently even been threatened that they would be killed.

Hamed Efendic requested a meeting with Dutchbat Commander Karremans, which was arranged for 19April. However, as soon at the authorities got wind of the discussions between UnCivPol and the former SDA heavyweights, as well as the planned meeting with the Dutchbat command, they protested strenuously. The mayor made it clear that the discussions were not appreciated. On 17April an ABiH spokesman forbade Dutchbat to be involved in discussions with 'local people', adding that he could not guarantee the security of the UN personnel, if Dutchbat went ahead with the discussions. On 19April, the municipal administration also forbade Dutchbat to speak with the expelled SDA leaders. The planned meeting between Dutchbat and the former SDA leaders was subsequently called off.[749]

It was clear that due to the siege, the departure of the majority of the pre-war political and economic elite, the scarcity of goods and the large numbers of Displaced Persons, the Safe Area was a breeding ground for a rugged social and political climate in which the primary task was to survive. It should be noted that less than one week after the Canadian battalion departed from the enclave, the Secretary-General of the UN, Boutros-Ghali, stated that the Safe Areas in Bosnia had become breeding grounds for crime, prostitution and despair.[750] It was obvious that the municipal infrastructure was absolutely unprepared for the large numbers of Displaced Persons and the enormous problems this entailed. Right from the start of the Canadian period, there were numerous reports of violence, illegal

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747 MID/KL. Dutchbat Srebrenica / Lukavac / Tuzla Milinfo; July 1994; annexed report of discussion with Ramiz Becirovic and Smajo Mandzic, 21/02/94.
748 NIOD, Coll. CD-ROMs. SJB Srebrenica (Meholjic) to CSB Tuzla, MUP-R BiH Sarajevo, Depesa br. 31/95, 20/05/95. Interview Mustafic 16/04/98; see also: Anonymous, 'Glasna sutnja Ibrana Mustafica'; Mrkic, 'Predsjednistvo', p.8. Oric's brothers in arms later denied that he was behind these attacks. See Mandzic, 'Zlatni Ljiljani', p.37.
749 KMar. Incident report no. BO5-94/040 (Aalders), 12/05/95.
750 'Bosnia's Safe Areas appalling', in: *The Toronto Star*, 16/03/94.

trade, prostitution and other problems.[751] Some of the local SDA heavyweights, such as Ibran Mustafic and the former mayor of Srebrenica, Besim Ibisevic, who had fled from the city in April1992, consequently depicted the rule of Naser Oric as a black period in the city's history in which violence, murder, rape and large-scale fraud with humanitarian aid were commonplace.[752]

However, this is ultimately a somewhat oversimplified depiction which ignores the apparently inevitable processes involving the blurring of moral standards and the vulgarization of manners which always occur in such a war situation.[753] Outsiders present in the enclave, such as the project leader of the Swedish Rescue Services Agency Svärd, recognized this. In an interview with the Bosnian paper *Ljiljan*, he pointed out that, among other things, the normal rules of behaviour no longer apply under such severe conditions. This problem was also recognized by company Commander Groen of Dutchbat III in an interview with the NIOD; he also pointed out that the ambience was substantially friendlier in the villages, where considerably fewer Displaced Persons were located.[754] In fact, Oric's colleagues admitted after the war that a number of commanders under Oric had been in trouble with the police prior to the war and could therefore not be considered the most mild-mannered characters. Whereas they distinguished themselves on the battlefield through their exceptional bravery, they were occasionally very difficult to control. Only Oric was able to keep them in check, and sometimes with great difficulty. For example, Oric had to return from Zepa in March1995, because one of his Commanders, Ejub Golic, had attacked the Srebrenica police station and liberated two of his associates from jail.[755]

In the opinion of many outsiders Oric and the clique surrounding him which ran the municipality (in particular Hamdija Fejzic and Osman Suljic) were one big mafia gang. The situation reports of the NGOs and Dutchbat refer to 'the mafia' or 'mafia practices'.[756] As early as the Canadian period, a major increase in internal armed fights in the enclave had been observed which, Canadian Battalion Commander J.Champagne said, primarily revolved around Oric's mafia practices which regularly led to conflicts and power struggles.[757]

Some people who belonged to this so-called mafia also had nasty practices in other areas. Some ABiH heavyweights, such as Oric himself, used the prestige and power they enjoyed among a large part of the population to get young girls, often no older than 14 or 15 years old, to provide sexual services. They often had a number of brief relationships with girlfriends, whilst their wives were outside the enclave.[758] There was a lot of prostitution and sexual abuse. From the moment the Canadian battalion arrived, reports came in of girls offering themselves to Canadian soldiers or being offered by their fathers or brothers in exchange for food, cigarettes and the like. Later, during the Dutchbat period, Oric's own soldiers appeared to be their most important clients.[759]

At the start of April1994 the Serbs in Bratunac were surprised by the arrival of two teenage Muslim girls who had fled from the enclave, claiming that they had been raped repeatedly by Oric and his men. One of the girls was pregnant. They declared that they had reported the rapes to the Muslim police in Srebrenica who had not taken their complaints seriously, saying that they had consented

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751 Confidential information (191).
752 See for example Ibisevic, 'Nisam pobjegao'. See also the interview with Besim Ibisevic in the Dutch daily *Het Parool*, 10/07/99.
753 See for example the interview with the SRSA project leader Richard Svärd in *Ljiljan* (Becirovic, 'Zivjet cu') who observes that under such severe war conditions the normal rules of behaviour no longer apply. In the villages, where there were considerably fewer refugees, the ambience was much friendlier.
754 Becirovic, 'Zivjet cu'; interview J.R. Groen 14/01/01.
755 Mandzic, 'Zlatni Ljiljani', p.37.
756 MSF, Brussels. MSF (Germain), mission report, 12/05/94.
757 Interview Jerry Champagne, 12/11/99.
758 MID/KL. Dutchbat Srebrenica / Lukavac / Tuzla Milinfo; July 1994 ; appendix 'BIH persons in Srebrenica enclave'.
759 NIOD, Coll. NPA. NPA (Ommang) to NPA, end of mission report, 10/03/95. Interviews Emir Suljagic, 20/09/99, Nijaz Masic, 25/10/00, Hans Ulens, 16/06/98. The existence of a prostitution problem was also recognized in the paper *Glas Istine*, which was printed in Srebrenica during the war, 08/02/94, pp.6-7.

willingly. Both girls returned to the enclave later that month after having made a few statements in front of the local press and Bosnian Serb television.[760] Even though there was the long succession of negative characterizations which can be found in the documentation of the NGOs and the UN, some people also reported otherwise, such as the Canadian unit Commander, Major Bouchard. Despite the fact that Oric controlled the black market and prostitution, earning a lot of money in the process, Bouchard also described him as an outstanding military leader. What is more, Oric took good care of the population, Bouchard said; no one died of starvation.[761]

It appears as if the local police, under the leadership of Hakija Meholjic, attempted to suppress crime and mafia practices and combat prostitution, which often brought him into conflict with Oric. However, taking a real stand against the mafia seemed to be a hopeless task, as Meholjic's own officers were often indebted to Oric for their jobs or, if they had the courage to act, were intimidated and subsequently left the force scared for their lives. The local police consisted of more than 150 persons, of whom 15 had actually been police officers prior to the war. Many police officers used to be Oric's brothers in arms.[762] They were clothed in blue jeans suits and could be recognized by the green armband with the text 'Srebrenica police' which they wore on their left arms. Although their performance was generally regarded as rather amateurish, they did provide the population with a minimum of order and security. In addition to the head office, which was located in the old police office 200 metres from the UNHCR warehouse, there were auxiliary branches in Potocari, Suceska and in the Swedish Shelter Project. The situation reports of the Swedish Rescue Services Agency show that the Swedes were generally satisfied with the collaboration with the police which did everything in its power to solve the thefts which had occurred on the site of the Swedish Shelter Project. The Swedish Rescue Services Agency was also very pleased with how the police had responded when there were shooting incidents in the Swedish Shelter Project at the beginning of March1994. The officers had been scared, but had not left their posts.[763]

*The activities of UnCivPol*

The activities of the local police were monitored by a team of UnCivPol observers, consisting of police officers of various nationalities who tried to give guidance to the local police as best they could.[764] These observers reported regularly to UnCivPol headquarters in Zagreb on events in the enclave and assisted the local police in solving incidents and serious offences, such as the murder of Hamed Salihovic on 19May1995.[765] Sometimes UnCivPol intervened where the local police did not dare, for example when there was an attempt on someone's life at the end of November1994. A UnCivPol policeman and a UNMO arrested the perpetrator, after it turned out that the local police did not dare to intervene.[766]

Approximately six UnCivPol monitors were always present in the enclave, and the UnCivPol station was located in the post office in Srebrenica town. Even though the collaboration between the local police and the UnCivPol team was generally good, Dutchbat suspected an unknown number of police officers of being black marketeers, and the head of the police Hakija Meholjic was also referred to by Dutchbat as the 'king of the black market'.[767]

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760 *Nasa Rijec*, April 1994, p.7. Interviews Zoran Jovanovic 03/11/99 and 19/10/00, Ivanisevic 03/02/98, Jovan Ivic 20/10/00. NIOD, Coll. SRSA. SRSA Srebrenica (Svärd) to SRSA Karlstad/Belgrade, 25/04/94.
761 Interview Yvan Bouchard, 15/11/99.
762 MID. DIS/94/021/2424 - Supintrep Enclave Srebrenica, p.11, section 14.
763 NIOD, Coll. SRSA. SRSA Srebrenica (Svärd) to SRSA Karlstad/Belgrade, 05/09/95and 09/03/95.
764 MID/KL. *Dutchbat Srebrenica / Lukavac / Tuzla Milinfo*; July 1994; Chapter 1, section F5; MID. DIS/94/021/2424 - Supintrep Enclave Srebrenica, p.24.
765 KMar. Uncivpol memo (Aalders), 29/05/95, log no. 4160.8-436-95.
766 NIOD, Coll. SRSA. SRSA Srebrenica (Svärd) to SRSA Karlstad/Belgrade, 30/11/94.
767 MID. DIS/94/021/2424 - Supintrep Enclave Srebrenica, p.24.

Although the local police complained about the lack of actual support when it came to combating the mafia in the enclave, and as a result could not accomplish much against organized crime, they did perform effectively in other matters, in particular with regard to curbing small crimes and protecting non-Muslims in the enclave. There was a lot of theft, for example on the construction sites of the NGOs and in Dutchbat's compound. In 1993 the plastic water pipes which *Médecins Sans Frontières* and the International Red Cross used to repair the water supply of the city were repeatedly stolen.[768] In April1994 several incidents involving the petty theft of construction materials of the Swedish Shelter Project led to the police patrolling there more intensively. The head of police also imposed a curfew on the construction site, and officers were permitted to shoot at anyone who was found there after the end of work. Several thieves were arrested and nails and glue returned, whilst a number of officers were fired.[769] In addition, food and clothes were often stolen from the Dutchbat compounds for which people were occasionally arrested. The theft of an Uzi alienated from the Dutchbat site around that time was solved by Oric himself. The weapon was returned, and Oric brought the perpetrator in personally.[770]

Aside from a number of Croats and gypsies, there was a handful of older Bosnian Serb inhabitants in the enclave, who enjoyed extra attention from the NGOs. The UNHCR, the International Red Cross and *Médecins Sans Frontières* furnished them with packages of foodstuffs and other articles. Staff members of the International Red Cross and UnCivPol paid weekly visits to them, on which occasions the Serbs sometimes reported threats by Muslims, for example by Displaced Persons, to evict them from their living quarters. However, the local Muslim police led by Hakija Meholjic attempted to take action against this type of threats. Serb inhabitants interviewed for this report were generally quite happy about the protection and help they received from Hakija Meholjic.[771]

Nevertheless, the UnCivPol reports contain a few complaints about the lack of protection for the Bosnian Serb inhabitants of the enclave.[772] Given the circumstances, however, these Serbs encountered fewer problems than one would have expected at first glance. Their Muslim neighbours often came to their aid, even though they had to be constantly on the alert for militant Muslims. Nevertheless, a number of Bosnian Serbs were killed in incidents. One of them was Slobodan 'Zec' Zekic, a relative of the local Bosnian Serb leader, Goran Zekic, who was killed at the start of the war. Zekic had stayed behind in the enclave together with his mother. Although he had many friends among the Muslims and the ABiH commanders, Zekic and his mother were killed at the end of 1994 by a drunk Muslim. Many other Muslims grieved his death, and Hakija Meholjic did his best to arrest and try the perpetrator, who was picked up and sent to Tuzla by helicopter. Meholjic handed over the two bodies to the Serbs.[773] In the course of 1993 and 1994 a number of Bosnian Serbs were evacuated from the enclave with the aid of the International Red Cross.[774]

## 4. Conflicts between the NGOs and the authorities threaten the continuation of the humanitarian aid programmes

The frictions between the NGOs and the authorities would continue during the period that Dutchbat was present in the enclave. In the spring of 1994 this led to a serious conflict during which the NGOs even decided to drastically reduce the scope of their aid programmes. The problems primarily

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768 Thorsen, *MSF*, p. 94.
769 NIOD, Coll. SRSA. SRSA Srebrenica (Svärd) to SRSA Karlstad/Belgrade, 21/04/94.
770 NIOD, Coll. SRSA. SRSA Srebrenica (Svärd) to SRSA Karlstad/Belgrade 05/06/94.
771 Interviews Djuka Micic, 10/06/98, Dana Ristanovic, 22/09/98, and Boban Vasic, 06/07/98. This depiction is confirmed in UNHCR sources. NIOD, Coll. SMG, Loera to Linstad, 28/06/93, 'Sitrep Srebrenica'.
772 NIOD, Coll. UNCIVPOL. Incident report (Gaardsøe & Hansen), 03/03/95
773 Interviews Hakija Meholjic, 12/11/98, and Vasic, 06/07/98. Ivanisevic mentions the names of several Serbs and a Macedonian who were killed in the enclave. Ivanisevic, *Hronika*, p.65.
774 Interviews and conversations Hatidza Hren, 18/06/98, Boban Vasic, 03/09/98, and Marinko Sekulic, 11/11/98.

concerned members of the local personnel employed by the NGOs. The Swedish Rescue Services Agency in particular complained about the fact that the municipality did not keep its commitments concerning the care and remuneration of members of the local personnel. In March1994 the local personnel of the Swedish Rescue Service Agency who were helping to build the Swedish Shelter Project threatened to go on strike, because they had received absolutely no form of remuneration from the local authorities. They were fed up with empty promises, as project leader Svärd wrote. Despite promises from the authorities that local personnel would be given priority when clothing, shoes and food were distributed, the problem was still not resolved later that month. Svärd then decided to do something for members of the personnel: he distributed a batch of rubber boots. The Swedish Rescue Services Agency also asked Dutchbat in May1995 whether they were willing to give up something from their stocks for members of its local personnel. After endless rounds of meetings (in particular with Major Boering, who was in charge of civil-military contacts), a shipment of seven-kilogram pork steaks was delivered. As is well known by now, this led to bitter reproaches: 'Such an anti-climax and such ignorance of the Muslim culture,' said a bitter member of the Swedish Rescue Services Agency personnel.[775]

The fact that the municipality organized matters poorly and continued to delay keeping its commitments resulted in a great degree of impatience and irritation among the NGOs. It also did not go down well that the authorities requested things which did not in fact fall within the scope of the NGOs' responsibilities. For example, Salihovic wrote to the Swedish Rescue Services Agency asking whether it could rid the city of all the car wrecks.[776] The Swedes responded that this was not one of their responsibilities. There was also resentment about the fact that the municipality neglected to have the necessary contracts drawn up which set out the mutual responsibilities. In November1994 Svärd wrote to Belgrade in a fit of pique: 'It is evident that they do not want any help, they are just doing everything to counteract us. (…) My suggestion is we pack our things and go home if they continue to make hell'.[777]

The relations between *Médecins Sans Frontières* and the authorities did not improve either. In November1994 there was a falling out because the authorities attacked one of the staff members *Médecins Sans Frontières* who had arrived in the enclave in October. She was accused by War President Osman Suljic of, among other things, drunkenness, drug abuse and unfriendly behaviour towards the local personnel.[778] Although it was possible to resolve this problem, the tensions which arose from various matters between *Médecins Sans Frontières* and the administrators continued. *Médecins Sans Frontières*, for example, tried to exercise strict control of the distribution of the goods it delivered, because the organization was afraid that otherwise the goods would end up in the pockets of the wrong people. *Médecins Sans Frontières* always requested the authorities to give precise account of the needs they formulated, for example plastic and construction materials for the repair of houses, because materials would otherwise disappear. Subsequently, a check was carried out to see whether each address or breakdown was correct.[779]

In the spring of 1995 the largest crisis in the relations between the municipality and *Médecins Sans Frontières* and the other NGOs developed. The monthly Civil Affairs meeting became a platform for non-stop accusations, insinuations and insults addressed to the NGO staff members instead of a working meeting where commitments were made. For example, during a meeting on 2February Dutchbat was accused of stealing materials from the battery and of destroying the building, whilst the UNHCR was told that since the food it handed out was always inedible, it had better leave. The

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[775] NIOD, Coll. SRSA. SRSA Srebrenica (Andren) to SRSA Karlstad/Belgrade, 09/05/95.
[776] NIOD, Coll. SRSA. SRSA Srebrenica (Andren) to SRSA Karlstad/Belgrade, 18/05/95.
[777] NIOD, Coll. SRSA. SRSA Srebrenica (Svärd) to SRSA Karlstad/Belgrade, 19/11/94.
[778] MSF, Brussels. Opstina Srebrenica (Suljic) to MSF Belgrade, MSF-B, MSF-F, 13/11/94.
[779] MID. DIS/94/021/2424 - Supintrep Enclave Srebrenica, p.25.

foreigners working for the NGOs were labelled tourists or spies. Karremans sent a letter to the municipality demanding and explanation; a new meeting was never agreed.[780]

The continuation of the projects was threatened by these tensions, and *Médecins Sans Frontières* and the other NGOs drastically reduced the scope of their activities. The problem revolved, in fact, around the issue of who could hire the local personnel. The municipality really wanted UNPROFOR and the NGOs to hire local personnel through them.[781] Right from the very beginning, however, *Médecins Sans Frontières* had selected and hired its local staff directly. The organization had spent a great deal of energy in finding good and trustworthy employees. The collaboration with the local personnel was generally good, and *Médecins Sans Frontières* staff members appreciated them tremendously. They were usually very trustworthy and loyal, and formed the collective memory of *Médecins Sans Frontières* at the site given the high turnover in foreign personnel.[782] However, the municipality wanted them to hire its own people to gain more influence on the work of *Médecins Sans Frontières* and the other NGOs. The municipality became increasingly obstinate in its attempts to replace the local staff members and demanded furthermore that local members of the *Médecins Sans Frontières* personnel be registered in the army, making them eligible to be immediately drafted for military service.

This conflict only became only more exacerbated in the following period. *Médecins Sans Frontières* was notified in February that the municipality was planning on replacing all NGO staff members before 1May1995. *Médecins Sans Frontières* responded to the authorities' pressure by reducing the scope of its activities. The supply of fuel to the municipality was limited, the distribution of sanitary and hygienic products was suspended and the supply of electricity for the school was cut off, because it was also used by the mayor. In the end *Médecins Sans Frontières* had to accept the municipality's measures: in March and April1995 the local staff was replaced and their total reduced. In April the authorities sent a letter to all NGOs and international organizations regarding the rotation of local personnel, upon which *Médecins Sans Frontières* decided to suspend its logistics programme entirely and limit its medical activities to life-saving interventions. A letter was sent to the municipality and the population to inform them. *Médecins Sans Frontières* enjoyed the full support of the higher levels of the NGOs and the other international organizations, as well as of Dutchbat and the local doctors. *Médecins Sans Frontières* described the situation as psychological warfare.[783]

The situation appeared to improve slightly after brief visits by a number of high ranking officials of the UNHCR, the International Red Cross and *Médecins Sans Frontières* to Srebrenica. The local authorities indicated that they were prepared to reach a compromise, after the International Red Cross threatened to stop providing postal services. However, their willingness to reach a compromise did not last long: they had reassumed their old uncompromising attitude by May. Even though *Médecins Sans Frontières* continued suspending its activities, it achieved little success. The municipality persisted in its policy, no compromise was achieved and this situation continued until the fall of the enclave in July1995.[784]

The political tug-of-war with the municipality led to the majority of aid agencies reducing the scope of their activities. Aside from the Serbs sharpening their blockade – which made it even harder for the population, as well as for Dutchbat, the other international organizations and the NGOs, to come by anything – the ruined relations between the municipality and the aid agencies and the suspension of their activities contributed to a further deterioration of the situation.

Adding to the worsening situation was the flooding at the end of May1995 after the heavy rainfall which ravaged the enclave. The entire town turned into one large mud bath. Houses were damaged and crops which had been planted in the spring were destroyed. Most of the small electrical turbines were swept away, leaving the town darker than usual. Even the entire Swedish Shelter Project

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780 NIOD, Coll. NPA. NPA Srebrenica (Vindheim &n Ommang) to NPA Oslo (Øen), sitrep week 5, 14/02/95.
781 Interview Osman Suljic 04/03/98.
782 Thorsen, *MSF*, pp. 39-40.
783 MSF, Brussels. MSF Srebrenica to MSF Belgrade, sitrep 15, 09/04/95.
784 Thorsen, *MSF*, pp. 34-36.

was inundated.[785] At the start of the summer of 1995 the Srebrenica enclave had fallen prey to a general malaise as a result of all these factors.

The first chapter of Part III covers the issue of how the strategic situation developed around the enclave in the midst of these difficult circumstances; the next chapter focuses on the Dutch battalion in the enclave once again.[786]

[785] MSF, Brussels. MSF Srebrenica to MSF Belgrade, monthly report May1995; NIOD, Coll SRSA, SRSA Srebrenica (Andren) to SRSA Karlstad/Belgrade, 28/05/95.
[786] Srebrenica, p. 154. Thorsen, *NPA*, p. 16. Interview Hamdija Fejzic, 03/02/98. NIOD, Coll. SMG, Loera to Linstad, 21/05/93, 'Overall report on Srebrenica'.

# Chapter 8
# Peacekeeping and humanitarian action

## 1. Peacekeeping in theory and practice

Peacekeeping is one of the instruments at the United Nations' disposal for acting in times of international crisis. Since the organization's foundation in 1945, peacekeeping has been concerned with supervising compliance with an agreement between two warring factions. Chapter 4 of Part I discussed the forms that keeping or enforcing peace has taken since the foundation of the UN. This chapter will first present a number of main themes in order to view the description of Dutchbat's peace duties in the Srebrenica enclave in the context of the history of peacekeeping operations. Attention will then be given to the training of the Dutchbat members who were to serve in Srebrenica.

Peacekeeping operations were originally intended as a temporary measure, on the basis of which neutral soldiers could be positioned between the warring factions, with their assent, as part of a ceasefire or a peace accord.

This traditional form of peacekeeping involved unarmed or lightly armed UN peacekeepers observing whether the parties were complying with the agreements, and if necessary acting to secure compliance. In the meanwhile, diplomats would have the opportunity to search for a more durable solution for what was ultimately a political and not a military problem. From its foundation until the end of the Cold War, the UN would only undertake peacekeeping missions if a number of conditions were complied with. In essence, the UN could not impose peace, but only resort to action following the prior consent of both parties. In this connection, there had to be a substantial, identifiable buffer zone and a ceasefire.

After the Cold War ended, the superpowers' grip on potential local centres of conflict weakened. Consequently, many small-scale conflicts arose, often of an ethno-political nature, which led to increasing calls for peace-supporting intervention. In 1992, the Secretary-General of the UN, Boutros-Ghali, issued the memorandum 'an Agenda for Peace', which formed the basis for a new peacekeeping concept.[787] The point here was a more active and more comprehensive form of action. Boutros-Ghali argued for more opportunities for, if necessary, the armed imposition of peace (peace-enforcing), and for more opportunities to maintain the peace in the longer term (post-conflict peace-building). According to this report, UN missions would be carried out in a wider variety of ways than before.[788]

The execution of peacekeeping operations changed in practice when, in the early 1990s, the international community decided to intervene in bloody conflicts that culminated in humanitarian disasters in Yugoslavia, Somalia and Rwanda.[789] The traditional points of departure for peacekeeping missions, such as the consent of the parties involved and a ceasefire, appeared no longer to apply in this sort of conflict. The fact was that in Yugoslavia and Somalia there was no peace arrangement to safeguard. It was said that a 'more robust' approach would have to be taken (discussions on this subject will be covered in detail in Part III), which would have an impact on the structure of the peace missions and also on the participating soldiers, who would be confronted with a completely different set of experiences. Participants in such operations, for example in Bosnia, were confronted with humanitarian

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[787] In 1995, however, he tempered the expectations that it created in his 'Supplement to an Agenda for Peace'.
[788] In 1992 and 1993, the British army also started to develop the 'Wider Peacekeeping' idea, better known as the 'Dobbie-doctrine' after Colonel Charles Dobbie, who set down the basic ideas for Wider Peacekeeping in his book 'A Concept for Post-Cold War Peacekeeping'.
[789] There are missions with more of a humanitarian orientation (often also with an emphasis on human rights) such as in Cambodia, Mozambique and Haiti, and missions with a more military orientation, such as in Somalia and Yugoslavia, or a combination of the two, as in Rwanda, Liberia and Angola.

dramas, war-like actions, threats to their own safety, and furthermore with war crimes and crimes against humanity. These soldiers were to operate in a dangerous environment and ran far greater risks than hitherto because of ambushes, mines, and exchanges of fire between the warring factions.

This new category of peace operation, referred to as second generation peace operations, comprised far broader terms of reference than traditional peacekeeping, such as guarding a buffer zone on Cyprus.[790] Now, in Bosnia, disarming, protecting Safe Areas, escorting aid convoys and much else besides were also involved. The practical situation in which Dutchbat found itself actually called for a change of the mandate from traditional peacekeeping in the direction of armed intervention, with an agreement being imposed by means of military action (peace-enforcement).[791] Different sorts of action obviously demanded different preparation. Concepts such as peacekeeping, peace-enforcing, and armed action in combat situations each pose specific requirements on the preparation of participating soldiers.[792] There was much discussion on a more robust form of the peacekeeping mandate at a high level, but in practice the mandate did not change: it remained limited to traditional peacekeeping.

After peacekeeping in conflicts such as in Yugoslavia, in the short term the intervention may also involve 'after care' for the area to which the mission is oriented, which is referred to as peace-building. This involves putting an emphasis on social reconstruction through activities such as restoring the legal system, organizing elections, priming economic life, clearing mines and providing aid to war victims. The scope of peacekeeping therefore comprised more than strictly military matters, but also had the character of an economic, social and political intervention.

The Austrian author Franz Kernic raised the question of whether there is a correlation between the sort of mission and the sort of soldier that performs it. He asks whether there has been a shift from unarmed or lightly armed blue berets to the more recent warriors for peace. Kernic indeed considers that the traditional concept of peacekeeping had more to do with the diplomat in uniform or the peace angel, and that currently there is more need for a type of soldier that can be described as a global policeman or as a warrior for peace.[793]

Because the practice of peacekeeping changed, it also imposed other requirements on the preparation and training of participants in peacekeeping missions. The question is whether this was also evident in the practice of the training and further preparation of participants in peace missions. In any case, because of the situations with which they could be confronted, their task acquired more dimensions: they were confronted far more with combat situations and their consequences, in other words, with real war. Successful action in the changed practice of peacekeeping operations demanded not only the usual military skills and knowledge, but also an understanding of the extremely varied political, social, cultural and economic backgrounds of the conflict.

*Blue and green*

Although peacekeeping was assigned to soldiers, it is of great importance for an understanding of the UN action in Bosnia and elsewhere to recognize that peacekeeping ('blue' action, referring to the UN colour) differs fundamentally from the regular (or 'green') military action. The most important objectives, guiding values and activities of the two types of action are different: in contrast to 'normal' soldiers, peacekeepers are not partial, but attempt to be strictly neutral. Their presence on the spot is not the consequence of their power to use force or to threaten it, but generally comes about through

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790 Some authors use the term 'Strategic Peacekeeping' for this type of operation, for example, James Gow and Christopher Dandeker in 'The Legitimation of Strategic Peacekeeping: Military Culture, The Defining Moment' in '*Aspects of Peacekeeping*' D.S. Gordon and F.H. Toase (ed.) (London, 2001) The Sandhurst Conference Series

791 See 'Military Culture and Strategic Peacekeeping' by Christopher Dandeker *in 'Military Sociology: Global Perspectives*' Leena Parmar (ed.) (Jaipur, 1999) pp. 117-138

792 See for example 'Psychological Aspects of Peacekeeping on the Ground' by Christian Harleman in '*The Psychology of Peacekeeping*' Harvey J. Langholtz (ed.) (Westport/London, 1998) He used the term 'more robust performance'.

793 'Peace Angels' versus 'Warriors for Peace' in '*Military Sociology: Global Perspectives*' Leena Parmar (ed.) (Jaipur, 1999) pp. 187-223

the consent of the warring factions. And in so far as peacekeepers do use force, it is only allowed in self-defence.

Peacekeepers in the traditional sense are expected to perform their mission as 'guests' and not as 'occupiers'. Their mere presence (showing the flag or deterring by presence) is even one of their primary duties. The nature of their mission means that their activities must be completely visible to all parties. This means a transparent mode of action, such as the establishment of clearly visible observation posts and action in white and blue colours as opposed to camouflage green.

The problem with action within the framework of a 'second generation' peace operation, which entailed more robust action, is that the potentially hostile environment makes it difficult to oblige soldiers to act as peacekeepers. Robust action is difficult to combine with neutrality. The task of peacekeepers is to prevent conflicts and to act to de-escalate the situation, as opposed to imposing the solution to a conflict by military means. Instead of confrontation, they therefore were to strive for collaboration, negotiation and mediation in other people's conflicts. Because of the need to remain impartial, and, where possible to bring about a de-escalation, soldiers on a mission such as in Bosnia are also expected to postpone the use of weapons as long as possible.

The action as peacekeeper in such an obscure conflict demands of soldiers a drastic change in thinking and attitude, and in daily practice this can easily lead to feelings of uncertainty and vulnerability. There is no longer an enemy, and neither is there a campaign to be won or lost. Company Commander J.R. Groen of Dutchbat III described the problem as follows:

> 'In many fields you are working in an extremely unnatural way. The men are aware of this too. You are going to make yourself very visible. You are deliberately going to patrol in a very open way. You are going to openly set up an OP. It is totally counter-intuitive for a soldier who actually always wants to find cover. These lads have been trained from the outset to respond to firing with immediate aggression'.[794]

Precisely in the practice of conflicts in which peacekeepers have been involved in the last decade, the peacekeepers need a large degree of professionalism and flexibility and have to be able to stand firm.

The difference identified here between 'green' and 'blue' action imposes particularly stringent requirements on the training and preparation of the units. Combat units and individual soldiers must be 'retrained' from professional combat soldiers into peacekeepers in a conflict that is less clear-cut than at the time of the Cold War. Psychological preparation is at least as important in this as physical training. Even before departure, soldiers must be prepared for the local situation and the de-escalating and monitoring role that is expected of them. Moreover, detailed information on the mission and extensive knowledge of the background to the conflict are necessary, because soldiers have to be able to deal with all warring factions. The essence of the peacekeeper in Bosnia was actually in the balancing function between the warring factions.

Military professionalism still remains indispensable for the execution of the task. The possession of skills such as observation, security, arms control and moving through poorly negotiable territory remains necessary. There are risks for the soldiers' own safety, and they must be trained to deal with the situation. They must therefore also receive 'green' training to be able to act effectively in dangerous situations. This was certainly true in Bosnia, where there actually was no ceasefire. The willingness to run such risks depends on the perception that the deployment serves a useful purpose; the situation in which peacekeepers find themselves must be such that soldiers have no cause to doubt the usefulness of the deployment. It is therefore impossible to put too much emphasis during the preparation on the central objective of the mission, with all the associated practical implications. If this fails to happen, there is a risk that soldiers will only perform tasks for which they have received explicit

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[794] Interview J.R. Groen 14/01/00.

orders. Such an attitude would be problematic especially for 'second generation' missions, because the conflicts associated with such missions, which are characterized by a high degree of unpredictability and uncertainty, make much greater demands on the personal understanding and judgement of individual soldiers than the familiar 'green' action.

During such a mission, the acquired professional rules and reflexes can be relied on far less than usual. For example, dangerous situations must be dealt with in a far different way during 'blue' action than during 'green' action. Because the mandate in Bosnia remained limited to peacekeeping, the application of force had to be avoided as much as possible. Instead of normal weapons, 'blue' action rather demands intellectual weapons, such as knowledge of the local population, of their culture, of warring factions and their conflict and, last but not least, self knowledge. Self knowledge in these operations is necessary because they must be able to control their own reaction to operating in a hostile environment.

A peacekeeper would ideally therefore be as much of a thinker as a doer. Without a thorough preparation on the sort of conflict in which a peacekeeper finds himself, there is a significant probability that the soldiers will continue to respond in their 'green' manner, which is diametrically opposed to the 'blue' objectives. Normal 'green' reactions to threatening situations, such as the shoot first, talk later reflex, are actually potentially harmful, because they can produce a spiral of violence. The escalation of violence is part of the normal military business, but precisely during this mission it has to be avoided at all costs, because it could endanger the painstaking peace talks and the humanitarian aid to the suffering population.

*Peacekeeping under Dutchbat III*

The deployment to Bosnia was unmistakably a peace mission of the 'second generation'. In the light of the specific requirements that this deployment imposed on the participants, it was of great importance for the composition of the Dutch battalions to be matched to the task. Given the fact that it was the Airmobile Brigade that was to supply the battalions, the composition was partly influenced by the way in which the recruitment was organized by the Brigade. The core of the unit consisted of an airmobile battalion, to which supporting units were added. The manning of Dutchbat I went fairly smoothly in this regard, because sufficient soldiers were available and the leaders were able to make choices, but 'recruiting problems' already occurred in the case of Dutchbat II. Dutchbat III - as described above in Chapter 5 - then had to be 'raked together' under great time pressure, which was particularly true for the supporting units. Many platoons were originally incomplete and had to be augmented with men from elsewhere. Batallion Commander Karremans recalls that they were mainly regular personnel on a fixed-term contract (BBT personnel), and that it was the first deployment for many regular soldiers: 'none of them had any idea. An additional complication was that the manning of the units was the result of pulling together as many as eighty different units'.[795]

At the start of the deployment of Dutchbat III, there could therefore be no question of a coherent unit and *esprit de corps*. This situation was reinforced because the Airmobile Brigade, with its red beret, considered itself to be an elite unit. The men received pure 'green' training in combat situations, with a strong emphasis on physical and combat skills. The self image matched the image of a new type of global elite soldier that was being cultivated and presented to the outside world (among other things through a cinema advertisement of the time, which had the slogan 'the time of your life'). They were modelled more on the commandos than on normal infantry units, although many ex-conscripts who applied for the 'Airmobile' had been in the infantry. 'They were proud to wear the red beret, and so to be an elite soldier within the Royal Netherlands Army'[796].

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[795] Interview Th.J.P. Karremans 25 and 26/10/00.

[796] Quote from *'Denkend aan Bosnia'* by the chaplain N. Meurkens, p.5, private collection.

Another factor was that it was a new unit, which, while it had no experience nor tradition, did have high expectations of its own performance. The training reinforced this expectation of their own performance. Many of the members of the battalion that became known as Dutchbat III expected to go on patrol each day and certainly to return fire if someone should dare to fire on Dutchbat. Dutchbat III Company Commander Groen describes the initial situation as follows:

> 'We started on the normal training programme. The exercises that were planned were carried out as normal. But we did not choose the path of least resistance. Which was a conscious decision! It is always the case: a contest is always heavier than training. You have to undergo stiff training. You just know: an Airmobile unit does not exist to guard the gates, but is intended to be a sort of fire brigade for difficult assignments.'[797]

Dutchbat III's assignment would indeed be particularly difficult on all fronts.

With hindsight, Lieutenant Colonel Karremans thought that the majority of the battalion, in view of the 'blue' duties, were far too young and inexperienced: 'Experience of life 0.0. (...) they had only been through the School Battalion training'.[798] This lack of experience of life could cause problems, precisely because the need for the associated self knowledge was so great. Furthermore, the recruitment and training were not demonstrably selective. Karremans had to make do with whatever personnel he was given, which meant a fairly difficult start for a Commander. Unlike his predecessors, neither was Karremans able to assemble his own battalion staff. Another problem for the three battalions was that the pressure of time left hardly any room for team building. Even during the special Psychological Care conference, officers were unable to attend because there were too many other matters to be dealt with.

In order to gain a deeper understanding of precisely what expectations Dutchbat members took with them to Bosnia, we will now - following on from the previous chapter - deal with specific aspects of the action that were oriented to the population as part of the peace mission.

## 2. Training and preparation of the three Dutchbat battalions

Broadly speaking, the training of an airmobile soldier consisted of general infantry training (the School Battalion), followed by a special airmobile training, which were both unrelated to the deployment. This was followed by special training for the mission in Bosnia, which was concluded with a final exercise. Members of the attached units underwent training in the Centre for Peace Operations (CVV) that existed at the time, and then took part in the final exercise.

There were significant differences in the training of the three Dutch battalions. In preparation, Dutchbat I was trained in Hohenfels (Germany) by Americans, where they were informed of all manner of cultural characteristics of the former Yugoslavia and of the tricks and traps they could expect from the side of the warring factions. In the first weeks, the battalion leaders felt that the reality in the enclave corresponded well with the scenarios that they had rehearsed in Hohenfels.[799] Dutchbat I was also advised by the Military History Section (SMG) on the history of the Balkans, the conflict in the former Yugoslavia and the UN. Dutchbat II and III had to make do without the instruction from the Americans and the staff of the Military History Section. Instead, the lack of time and logistics complications meant that they were brought up-to-speed by talking with the previous battalion. Otherwise they instructed themselves with equipment from the earlier period.

The additional training period in the Netherlands was distinctly 'green' in nature, in accordance with the prevailing idea that the Airmobile Brigade would regularly be involved in military action. A

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[797] Interview J.R. Groen 14/01/00.
[798] Interview Th.J.P. Karremans 25 and 26/10/00.
[799] K. Bais, *'De eerste commandant'* ('The first commander'), *De Opmaat* 5 (1999) 4, pp. 4-6.

strict distinction was also drawn between soldiers and civilians. This emphasis on 'green' was also endorsed by some of the battalion leaders. Company Commander Groen of Dutchbat III stressed the necessity of practical exercises and opposed an overdose of 'theory'. With hindsight, Groen thought:

> 'Too much information was thrown at the battalion, you could not see the wood for the trees any longer. Certainly all those soldiers. They all had to take theory lessons. Soldiers usually just want to 'do', certainly the ones we had. They were all lads who had consciously opted for Airmobile. They were all fanatics. It is also perfectly possible to give a great deal of theory on site. It otherwise often just goes in one ear and out the other. (...) You may be able to send somebody into a situation with a blue hat on, but this does not mean that he is automatically able to perform his duty. They are actually only soldiers who are supposed to be able to do it. Now, their training has given them a certain attitude and outlook. You can't just switch this on and off.'[800]

Such scepticism about the non-green elements of the training, which were considered to be 'theoretical', was also shared, or at least perceived, by others within the Defence organization. Chaplain Meurkens had this to say about the attitude:

> 'Information on the country and culture was an afterthought. Something along the lines of: we have a couple of hours left. Unless we have to clean our boots now, we can talk about it. It was not properly integrated into the entire package of training.'[801]

One could ask whether the expectation expressed by Groen, that the personnel could have been taught the blue action in practice on the spot, was not too optimistic. The nature of the preparation meant that they arrived on site with few clear ideas on the nature and background of the conflict, and with stereotypes and images of the local population that could seriously undermine their performance as peacekeeper.

*The Centre for Peace Operations (CVV)*

All attached units went for training and preparation to the Centre for Peace Operations (CVV) in Ossendrecht, which was set up to provide administrative support to units that were on a peace mission. Furthermore, the centre provided supplementary training for all categories of personnel to be deployed to the area of the peace mission. The CVV also took charge of the total personnel care (contact with the home front, counselling on return and suchlike). The CVV was emphatically not responsible for the initial building of the unit and making it operational: this was the task of the Army Corps. For professional soldiers, the supplementary training at the CVV took from one to two weeks. This part of the preparation prompted fierce criticism. The medical specialist H.G.J. Hegge of Dutchbat III was afterwards particularly critical of what was offered in Ossendrecht: 'You are then given an explanation of the historical and political situation. You are given a lecture about drugs. I have to be honest with you: I learned nothing there'.[802]

However, the information presented at the CVV actually did have a greater degree of reality than that of the Airmobile Brigade itself when it came to teaching something about the situation in which Dutchbat would find itself. It was stated clearly in the CVV's lesson on culture that Islam was

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[800] Interview J.R. Groen 05/07/99.
[801] Interview N. Meurkens 24/03/00.
[802] Interview H.G.J. Hegge 02/02/00.

not strictly observed among the Muslims in Bosnia, and certainly not in the cities.[803] What the CVV information officials did identify as a serious issue in the Balkans was what was known as 'the tradition of violence'. It was said in the lesson block on culture 'that the Balkans have always had a primitive element', and that violence was palpable under the surface of daily life. This was followed by an explanation of vendetta and associated acts of mutilation. 'Violence in the Balkans has therefore long been a cultural expression, and the consequences were now clear for everyone'. By way of illustration, the information officers showed slides of mutilations and murders in World War II, mainly with pictures of the Croatian Ustashe concentration camp Jasenovac. The short Culture slide show contained nineteen slides of mutilations, cruelty and murders from World War II. The culture lesson ended with the warning that the 'violence there would severely tax their powers of comprehension'.[804]

The main themes of the training programme of the Airmobile Brigade itself were artillery exercises, first aid, information provision, mine-awareness and assistance to comrades. Lieutenant Colonel Karremans thought afterwards that the programme was too brief and incomplete in the first place; he particularly identified too little attention to immunity to stress and negotiating techniques. According to him, such a course would have been valuable to the group commanders especially. Furthermore, there was no time to practice under 'poor' conditions and to reflect calmly on the differences between 'green' and 'blue' action. Karremans said that the negotiating course at the Clingendael Institute in The Hague was good in principle, but unfortunately not appropriate for the circumstances. As a consequence, negotiation was only practised during the final exercise.[805] The Airmobile training was rounded off with a final exercise, with an important place being given to the simulation of practical conflict situations. For Dutchbat III, the final exercise took place in Vogelsang (Germany).

Starting with Dutchbat II, the information components of the 'blue' training were 'self administered' and no longer followed at the CVV. For the second battalion, the Military History Section compiled a ready-made information package, which could be presented by any Warrant Officer or Sergeant Major. This package consisted of a video tape (lasting approximately 25 minutes) on the history of the UN, including the Dutch participation in UN operations. A text was also included as a commentary to the slides. This part was supposed to be rounded off by a discussion, which in practice did not happen because no one had sufficient background knowledge of the conflict.

This change in the structure gave the 'blue' education of Dutchbat II and III the form of a pre-programmed instruction, although Military History Section members had earlier observed that 'Yugoslavia' and 'the Balkans' were almost unknown quantities for most Dutchbat members, and that they lacked the most elementary relevant historical knowledge and insight. It was also true that for most Dutchbat members - except those who had been there on holiday - when they were shown the map of Yugoslavia it was often their first acquaintance.[806] Under the 'self administration' of the brigade, this lesson programme also became steadily shorter: whereas for Dutchbat I it was still eight hours, it later became four, and finally two hours, because the instructors concerned spontaneously shortened it.[807] This was a result not only of a lack of time and conflicting priorities, but also because of the background of the instructors. Whereas the soldiers were able to enter into discussion with the Military History Section trainer, or ask for additional background information, with their own instructors it was mainly a matter of listening to them grinding out their story.

It is clear that there was a strict separation between the 'green' and the 'blue' training sections. The 'green' action first had to be mastered, after which, if time permitted, the 'blue' aspect followed. In

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[803] CVV. Text of the lesson on Culture of the CVV by Section 2 CVV Lesson Block 3.
[804] CVV. Text of the lesson on Culture of the CVV by Section 2 CVV Lesson Block 3.
[805] Interview Th. J.P. Karremans 24/06/98.
[806] Actually, they were not alone in this respect. When members of the investigation team in East Bosnia asked an American soldier if he had any idea why he was there, he answered that there was 'something going on at the border between Yugoslavia and Spain'.
[807] Interview C.P.M. Klep 18/02/99.

this, there was a particular emphasis on the necessity of controlled action. A part of Dutchbat III adopted the position that the 'blue' aspects of the training would only lead to confusion in the battalion. For example, this was the opinion of the Deputy Company Commander of Dutchbat III, Major R. Franken. According to him, 'the normal operational thinking was cancelled out by blue fads'. According to him, this was apparent immediately at the start of the deployment, when in connection with the crisis in the Bandera Triangle - see Chapter 6 - Dutchbat was ordered by headquarters in Tuzla to 'press hard'. According to Franken, this order was totally incompatible with the 'blue, softie image' that the battalion had of its duties; the problem, however, was that the battalion actually had a 'blue' (UN) task. Franken and Karremans wanted to gain access to the area with military show: according to him, in the action in the Bandera Triangle there was no shooting only because Dutchbat 'had been drained through the blue colander'.[808] In reality, however, Dutchbat was not allowed to use force to gain access to the area pursuant to the Rules of Engagement: force was actually only permissible in self-defence. What Tuzla meant by 'press hard' was that Dutchbat must make clear that UNPROFOR would tolerate no limitations imposed on its freedom of movement, and not that force should be used to exact it.

## 3. Stereotypes and 'Balkan Man'

It can be stated with hindsight that many stereotypes played a role in the training of Dutchbat, which did not materialize out of thin air, nor were reserved to the training and to the Armed Forces in general. It has already been stated in Part I that international politicians and diplomats viewed the Balkans, (ex) Yugoslavia and the population from oversimplified, stereotypical, and historically often incorrect standpoints. It is still a remarkable fact, at the end of the twentieth century, in which Europe had two world wars with tens of millions of victims, including six million deliberately exterminated Jews, and in which various European states fought bloody colonial wars, that so much emphasis was given to the notion that the Balkans had a 'different' way of dealing with violence.[809]

It is the utmost irony that, during the preparation at the CVV, reference was made to the pictures of the concentration camp Jasenovac to explain how extraordinary the violence was in the Balkans, while scenes had been played out everywhere else in Europe that were certainly not surpassed by the horrors in Jasenovac. In her book *Imagining the Balkans*, the author Maria Todorova criticizes the double standard by which these horrors, and in particular the Holocaust, are not attributed to the West's own culture and society.[810] On the other hand, the cruelty in the former Yugoslavia was too easily seen as an obvious outcome of 'a warrior ethos, deeply ingrained in the psyche of Balkan populations'.[811]

The Belgian General F. Briquemont on his arrival as Bosnia-Hercegovina Commander was informed of 'the Yugoslav traditions and the Slavic atmosphere' by means of songs, folk dances, films about significant acts of resistance with a great deal of brutality and a summary of the most gruesome passages from Andric's book *Een brug over de Drina* (A bridge over the Drina). This illustrates the image with which UN soldiers had to mentally prepare for the deployment. He wondered whether nothing had changed in the Balkans at the end of the twentieth century. Even though he knew 'that was the way in Yugoslavia', he said he had not expected it. Briquemont had done his best to prepare with history books on the southern Slavic peoples, but in his memoirs he constantly returns to Andric. Even beforehand, he viewed his stay in Bosnia as 'a baptism in an atmosphere of unbridled hatred, and life

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[808] Interview R. Franken 04/05/01.
[809] 'Considering the record for violence of the members of the European Community in this century and the fact that one of them developed the art of ethnic cleansing to its perhaps ultimate degree of technical efficiency, the association of the Balkans with extreme violence is ironical at best', Robert Hayden 'Use' p. 216.
[810] Todorova, *Imagining*. pp. 130-140.
[811] Todorova, *Imagining*, p. 137

surrounded by the terrible zeal of the Bosnian people.'[812] With these words he was literally quoting the introduction written by the translator of *Een brug over de Drina*.

The Deputy Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army at the time, Major General A. van Baal, referred likewise to the category of 'Balkan Man' in a discussion with General Couzy in 1995. According to Van Baal, it was usual, for example, for action to be covered pro forma with a signed report, as he explained to General Couzy in 1995: that 'is in these people's genes, regardless of whether you are talking about Serbs or Croats. They all do it and then they wipe their backsides with it. It is a standard part of their culture.'[813]

The conviction that conflicts in the Balkans were always particularly violent and barbaric affairs, is also often encountered in the literature and in the media, and also in the training of the Dutch battalions. The step from a tradition of violence, to violent nature, to 'Balkan Man' was made quickly. The sociologist Bart Tromp refers to the psychological effect of this stereotype. He considers that it has a reassuring function, by feeding the idea that the war was taking place because 'the population of these areas are different from us. They are Balkan people: primitive, uncivilized, cursed with an age-old, barbaric attitude'. Tromp talks of 'the safe fence between us and them' - they, the Balkan people, are different from us, and therefore something of this nature can fortunately never happen here.[814]

The information given to the men of Dutchbat III in their preparation for the situation in the enclave was received mainly from Dutchbat II personnel on leave, who were invited to say a few words and show some photographs. The staff members and company commanders did not have the analyses of the Military Information Service on the state in the former Yugoslavia at their disposal.

The information that Dutchbat III received from predecessors usually related to conflicts; during the final exercise in Germany, as usual in this sort of exercise, conflict situations were dominant, so that Dutchbat III was given the expectation that the atmosphere would be hostile. In the conflict simulations, their predecessors enthusiastically played the role of troublesome Muslims and Serbs. For earlier battalions, actors were hired in, who played their role in a somewhat more 'neutral' way.

An important aspect in the representation of the local situation for Dutchbat III was the information from the military security officer Major De Ruyter. According to Warrant Officer W. Dijkema, he taught the classes during the training course that the population in the enclave consisted of 'pure scum'. It is completely different in the Balkans from at home, and 'Balkan Man' was literally depicted as 'the Other'. An element in this was that De Ruyter was concerned that military safety would be compromised if there were too many contacts with the population. Dijkema: 'He said how we would be tricked.' De Ruyter therefore advised against contacts with the local population, because then Dutchbat would lose its impartiality and be open to blackmail: 'His talk really convinced us that we would have a hard time.' The rule against contact with the population was 'grimly adhered to' in the preparation. In practice, the boundaries would turn out to be 'absolutely fuzzy', however.[815] This made no mention of what chance of success a peace mission would have if the participating soldiers were to limit their contacts with the population to the bare minimum.

The Psychological Care meeting in Camp Lauwersmeer prior to the deployment of Dutchbat III, had the characteristic title: 'Stay in one piece'. During the conference, the subjects included the motives for volunteering for the deployment. To earn money, to gain experience, to help people, to get to know yourself and 'to find adventure' were given as important motives. The programme consisted otherwise of discussions, a more detailed acquaintance and stress prevention. A video was also shown of a traumatized Gulf War veteran. The buddy system was discussed, as well as the related problems.[816] In the last phase, the purpose of the presence in Bosnia was raised for discussion. Their personal

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[812] Briquemont, *General,* p. 34
[813] Couzy, *Bevelhebber*, p. 128.
[814] Tromp, *Verraad*, p. 147.
[815] Interview W. Dijkema, 21/09/98.
[816] This system was adopted by the marines. Every soldier chose a 'buddy' and the two of them kept an eye on each other, and could, at least in theory, always rely on each other.

standards and values were discussed, as was the necessity of respecting the standards and values of the population.

During the five day final exercise (*Noble Falcon*), two days were devoted to practising the moving and preparing of the equipment. This was followed by three days in which about thirty to forty incidents per day were acted out under tight control. The examples were derived from the experiences of the previous two battalions:

> 'They told us that the Muslims were scum, more or less. That you would do well to have nothing to do with them. That actually the women and children were always nice. They were always helpful. But the men with their big mouths, you should have nothing to do with them. The lads told us that Serbian men were better to deal with than Muslim men. They were much better disciplined.'[817]

The examples related, among other things, to demonstrations at the gate, shooting incidents, the removal of the severely wounded, border transgressions, yellow and red alarm phases, thefts, discovery of booby-traps and mines, and negotiation situations with the various parties. Exercises that included contact with the local population generally involved Muslims at the gate begging for food and suchlike. Dutchbat I officers played the local population, and tried to behave as irritatingly as possible. They took up positions in front of the fence and called out 'Hey mister, we want food for bambino' or they asked for the 'medical chief'. All this was supposed to prepare their colleagues as well as possible for the reality.

During the exercise, the medical personnel were told that it was 'forbidden' to treat civilians, and that they were only allowed to carry out life and limb saving treatment. It is noteworthy that this 'prohibition' contrasted with the information in the situation reports of the earlier battalions in Srebrenica: they made clear mention of (medical) assistance to the population. In practice, Dutchbat III would also provide such assistance.

There are video recordings of the final exercise, which offer valuable information on the manner in which an image of the enclave was presented. The roles of Muslim men were played in white robes and with turbans on their heads. Furthermore, the pictures invariably show them holding prayer chains in their hands, while shouting 'Allah' and reciting texts such as 'You are disturbing our prayers!' and 'Allah will punish you'. Another striking aspect is that during the practise negotiations there is always an element of conflict. A regular ingredient is conflicts about punctuality, with texts such as 'three o'clock is not five o'clock' and suchlike. Serbs were usually portrayed screaming, lashing out and stamping their feet. Muslim soldiers appear mostly in a smart uniform with a Palestinian shawl, and the Bosnian Serb soldiers walk around in a variety of uniforms, but are always wearing a Russian fur hat. This portrayal of matters is the more remarkable because the Dutchbat I 'actors' knew from their own experience in the enclave that it was inaccurate.

According to Franken, Dutchbat III departed for Bosnia with the idea that in Srebrenica heavily veiled women walked around, the imam regularly called the population to prayer from the tower, and that a patrol would have to stop to avoid disturbing them. Afterwards he concluded that there was actually never any noticeable praying and the women often went around in Western clothes. It was also only clear to him on the spot that there were significant differences between Muslims from the town and from the mountain villages. However, there was hardly any question of clarifying the image on the basis of the experiences of the first two battalions, rather the contrary.

The Standing Orders to the battalions also show that the Defence Organization paid little attention to information on the local population. It may have been the case that most soldiers never cast their eyes on these Standing Orders, but they do show how scant the attention for the civilian

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[817] NIOD, Coll. Koreman. Diary Koreman, p. 3rd week 2.

population and its culture was. Under the heading of 'Local Customs', they state that a large part of the UN area in the former Yugoslavia was Muslim. Dutch UN women must therefore not wear offensive clothing, must keep their upper bodies covered, and avoid eye contact with Muslim men. Male soldiers were instructed to avoid eye contact with Muslim women, not to speak openly to Muslim women, nor to shake hands with them.[818] These orders sooner evoke associations with the situation in Iran or Sudan than that in ex-Yugoslavia and Bosnia in the 1990s.

In general, the order was that the Dutch soldier must treat all local customs with respect. This order overshot the mark, because the actual problem was that the soldiers were poorly informed, if at all, about the local customs. Moreover, the Field notebook for the former Yugoslavia, which was issued to all the personnel to be deployed, offered little relief. The section on aspects of local culture stated that 'the population of the former Yugoslavia is extremely proud (...) Many are short-tempered. Although they are basically friendly, they easily take offence.'

Furthermore, 'the various factions all have their own ideas about the presence of the Dutch UN units. But in principle they are all aiming to get the UN do their dirty work for them'. Furthermore, 'alcohol abuse is an everyday phenomenon in Yugoslavia. Prevent it yourself!' There was also an extremely generally formulated recommendation for the men soldiers about association with the local women: 'show respect for women, do not automatically assume that they appreciate your attention'![819]

This incorrect and oversimplified representation of the former 'Yugoslavia' and the warring factions conveyed certain stereotypes and a corresponding outlook to the soldiers to be deployed. These were not to be without consequences, because the manner in which people define reality to a large degree determines their actions, even though some in Bosnia discovered that reality is more subtle than the stereotypes suggested.[820]

The question now is to what extent the influence of these stereotypes was self-fulfilling. Much investigation has been carried out into the influences of stereotypes on social interaction.[821] The same applies to one of the possible consequences of prejudices, namely that people will tend to remember information that is consistent with existing ideas.[822] In this way, people uphold stereotypes - in other words: stereotypes can reinforce each other as a consequence of lack of experience (such as in the case of soldiers who almost never left the compound), but experiences can also reinforce the stereotypes.

The expectation expressed during the preparation that the Dutch soldiers would form their own view of the situation on arrival in Bosnia, and would therefore be able to put the coloured information about the population that had been presented in the training course into perspective, was greatly naive. It would actually have required a disabling of psychological mechanisms, which - certainly under the conditions of deployment - could not be expected of the people. Is also normal for people to divide the world into categories in which stereotypes are simple rules of thumb for coping with the complexity of the social information in everyday reality.[823] In the case of the deployment to Bosnia, the following step in the process was involved: the attribution of characteristics to the categories. Then the stereotypes appear on the horizon together with the associated risk of assigning negative characteristics, which can impede an open approach to problems and conflicts. This is precisely what a training course or information programme should take account of, and not encourage stereotypes.

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[818] SMG/Debrief. Standing Order 1 (NL) UN InfBat Chapter 1: Personnel Subject 1/14: Discipline p. 32.

[819] Field notebook for the former Yugoslavia 1.9, 1.10

[820] This insight is known in sociology and anthropology as the 'Thomas theorem': 'Whatever people define as real, is real in its consequences'. Talking *about*, dealing *with* and giving shape *to* social reality go hand in hand with each other. In the 'new cultural history', this insight is usually referred to by the terms 'representation' or 'discourse'.

[821] See, for example, the article by Mark Snyder, Elizabeth Decker Tanke and Ellen Berscheid, 'Social Perception and Interpersonal Behavior: On the Self-Fulfilling Nature of Social Stereotypes' in *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* Vol. 35(1977)9, pp. 656-666.

[822] See, for example, Jack Fyock and Charles Stangor, 'The role of memory biases in stereotype maintenance' in *British Journal of Social Psychology* (1994)33 pp. 331-343.

[823] This description is used by E.J. Doosje' *Stereotyping in intergroup contexts'* Ph.D.thesis University of Amsterdam, 1995, p. 101.

The Dutch soldiers were fed with prejudices through the training, without those who were responsible for the training being aware of the dangers. According to the security officer of Dutchbat III, Sergeant Major A.E. Rave, the prejudices often originated in the terminology (in Rave's words: 'slogans') and the degrading stereotypes that were carried over from earlier battalions.

There had already been transport and liaison batallions in Bosnia. The experience that these units conveyed, for example following the presence in the Kiseljak pocket, was that the Croats were far more Western than the other groups. The Muslims, conversely, were said to wear clothes that were completely different from what the Dutch were used to. Even before they were deployed, the Dutchbat members were already talking about a 'goat path', as opposed to a sand path. Children 'begged', men 'were unreliable and told sob-stories'; all Muslim women wore 'pyjama trousers' and headscarves, and had 'moustaches' and 'typical Bosnian teeth'.[824]

Biased use of language plays an important role in propagating and maintaining stereotypes,[825] and this shortcoming also crept into the training. Dutchbat members were told by their predecessors all sorts of stories there from Central Bosnia, Lukavac or Vitez, and stories about the 'real war'. For instance, group behaviour and 'coping' strategies for the individuals to develop an attitude and to protect themselves were conveyed through the training. Dutchbat III departed with certain ideas in their minds, and were better able to remember or process the observations that were consistent with them.[826] This attitude subsequently leads to behaviour that corresponds with the earlier information, which is how self-fulfilling prophecies are created.

The Canadian researcher Donna Winslow points to such mechanisms in her study into the Canadian Airborne troops in Somalia. According to her, their cause was that combat soldiers are encouraged to hate the enemy during their training. This hostile image with respect to the Somalis in general, the us-them thinking, led in Somalia to the local population being viewed collectively as the enemy:

> 'Once people perceive an individual or group as an enemy, biases enter their processing of information in regard to the actions of that individual or group. Enemy image leads people to focus attention on and to remember the negative and threatening characteristics of an enemy rather than the positive and peaceful characteristics.'[827]

Winslow concluded that as a response to the hardships and uncertainties, the Canadian soldiers constructed negative stereotypes of Somalis and started to view them as enemies. This was to have extremely serious consequences for the Canadian mission in Somalia. Dutchbat members started to reproduce the prejudices that they had heard from their predecessors and trainers, without having much opportunity to refine them in practice. One may wonder whether it was sensible to allow predecessors to provide information to the departing groups without any supervision or control. It would appear that empirical experts are not necessarily more suited to being providers of information. The selection of experiences from colleagues in Bosnia appeared to be arbitrary, depending mainly on coincidence and personal relationships. For instance, it was a missed opportunity that someone such as the Dutch UNMO Major Zoutendijk, who had witnessed the entire establishment of the Safe Area of

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[824] An example was also the term 'local' that was used to refer to the residents of the enclave. Because of the negative, degrading connotation, this term was forbidden in the Dutchbat III dressing station. Interview A.E. Rave, 13/12 and 14/12/00.

[825] D.H.J. Wigboldus '*Stereotyping, Language and Communication'* Ph.D. thesis *Vrije Universiteit*, Amsterdam, 1998, pp. 122-123.

[826] In psychology, this is known as stereotype-consistent information.

[827] B. Silverstein and C. Flamenbaum 'Biases in: the Perception and Cognition of the Actions of Enemies' *Journal of Social Issues* Vol 45(1989)2 pp. 51-72, quoted in Donna Winslow 'Should Combat Soldiers be Peacekeepers'.

Srebrenica from day one, and was very familiar with the local situation, was never engaged for information activities.[828]

A poem by a Dutchbat III soldier, which was read out during the stay in Srebrenica in a Radio Dutchbat programme, demonstrated that one individual at least recognized the 'transfer mechanism' for what it was:

> Ossendrecht
>
> You are going to have a hard time
>
> Said the captain.
>
> Everything is cold there, in every field a mine.
>
> With a blue beret
>
> To keep the peace.
>
> Murder and death are all around,
>
> Here and there a bomb is dropped.
>
> Contact with the population is taboo,
>
> They misuse you, and how.
>
> But when you get here, it's not so bad,
>
> With thanks to the information officers of the CVV.[829]

Humanist counsellor Major B. Hetebrij observed afterwards that Dutchbat III departed to the enclave with a false expectation that the Muslims would actually be pleased to see them.[830] Only a few were able to explore the enclave for themselves, and they propagated divergent assessments and expectations.

Neither was much benefit gained from a major investigation carried out by the C Training Department of the Netherlands Army itself in 1993 into the experiences of officers returning from the former Yugoslavia.[831] Under the heading 'Points for attention in the training' it mentions a number of aspects to be given attention, or to be stressed, in the preparation for deployment, in the training courses for supervising officers. This list includes such matters as discussion techniques, local culture, team building, improved communication of the task and duties, and the use of dictionary and language proficiency.[832]

Investigation into the experiences of officers with the CVV also produced recommendations to pay more attention to an elementary understanding of the language, information on the country, backgrounds to the conflict, the attitude of and example given by the commander, and the significance for his leadership and negotiating strategies. An orientation visit in September 1993 to UNPROFOR

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828 According to Zoutendijk, the Netherlands Army had no overview whatever of the positions of UNMOs. Interview J. Zoutendijk 06/04/01.
829 Dijkema, *Dutchbat,* p. 213.
830 Interview Bart Hetebrij included in the article 'Dutchbat verdient beter' ('Dutchbat deserves better') in: *Panorama,* autumn 1995 p. 20.
831 DOKL/OZ. Army Staff COKL no. 7484/2556 10/01/94 from Staff COKL (signed by J.P. van Baal) to DPKL subject: Investigation into leadership in crisis and war conditions.
832 DOKL/OZ. Investigation into leadership in crisis and war conditions, p. 19 and appendix 2 p. 2.

likewise produced a clear recommendation to the Army Crisis Staff that 'unit commanders must be trained in negotiating techniques'.[833] It was also necessary to make the upper echelons aware that it was not sufficient merely to visit the unit deployed, but an attempt must also be made to give some substance to such visits.

As it happens, attempts were made through the newspaper *Tell-Joe* to meet the need for information among the soldiers. This publication was provided by the Intelligence section of the staff of the Airmobile Brigade. Although the intentions were good, the texts were fairly inaccessible, however: they contained a great deal of information, especially of a historical nature, and the newspaper was probably only read by highly motivated battalion members.

Looking at the training as a whole it can be seen that all the material assumed the fundamental difference between Dutchbat and its environment, whether this was concerned with the civilians in the enclave, the population of ex-Yugoslavia and the Balkans in general, or the warring factions between which they had to act, the ABiH and the VRS. No place whatsoever was reserved for the question of how the duties in the enclave could be carried out by means of forms of collaboration with people in the enclave (or with the warring factions). A significant role was played in this by the negative representation of 'the others'. It made Dutchbat members feel that they more or less had to rely on their own resources, which in some cases led to xenophobic behaviour.[834]

In the time in the enclave, the counsellors especially did their utmost to turn the tide, and they constantly tried to emphasize the similarities between the Muslim population and the Dutch soldiers, but this was to have hardly any influence the time. Otherwise, not all Dutchbat members were prejudiced against the Muslim population: one soldier would explain how different 'those people' were, and another would provide examples to show that 'those people' were actually exactly the same as themselves. This usually gave rise to divergent attitudes towards the population. Another point is that people can only be relieved of negative stereotypes (prejudices) if they are suitably motivated.[835]

## 4. Conclusion: was the training deficient?

The Netherlands Army paid little attention to the possible effects of stereotyped views with respect to the environment in which they would have to work. This also had a low priority in the training in view of the nature of the military undertaking in general and the Airmobile Brigade concept that was discussed in Chapter 5 in particular. Demanding criteria of military proficiency were set on this unit and on the men, which resulted in the Brigade being thought of as an elite unit. And this is how the soldiers thought of themselves. If you were in the Airmobile Brigade, you were special. This collective attitude also entailed the risk that the people involved would start to apply stereotypes to the outside world.[836] However, the positive training objective of promoting group cohesion, team building and self-confidence can also involve negative phenomena, such as intolerance towards other groups. This impeded the power - once in the enclave - to respond openly to situations, which appeared to be highly relevant to performing the task in Srebrenica.

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833 CRST. Appendix A to internal memo 101 Gngevgp, 27/09/93 no. 10929.

834 One of the leading articles in this area is 'The Social Identity Theory of Intergroup Behavior' by Henri Tajfel and John C. Turner in: *Psychology of Intergroup Relations*, S. Worchel and W,G, Austin (ed.) 1986, pp. 7-24.

835 Moreover, it is harder to relieve people of negative than of positive stereotypes. See e.g. The article by Anneke Vrugt and Annette Rijkeboer, *'Het veranderen van stereotypen: zijn negatieve stereotiepe eigenschappen moeilijker te ontkrachten dan positieve stereotiepe eigenschappen?'* ('Changing stereotypes: are negative characteristics harder to counteract than positive stereotype characteristics?') in: *Nederlands Tijdschrift voor de psychologie* (1998)52, pp. 196-204.

836 In his book ' *The Warrior's Honour'*, the British author Michael Ignatieff elaborates on Freud, who links intolerance with narcissism and comes to the rapid and practical conclusion that 'We are likely to be more tolerant toward other identities only if we learn to like our own a little less. Breaking down the stereotypical images of others is likely to work only if we also break down the fantastic elements in our self-regard. The root of intolerance lies in our tendency to overvalue our own identities. 'M. Ignatieff , *The Warrior's Honour*, p. 62.

The training did not encourage a willingness to see the population of the enclave in particular as a collection of separate individuals - with extremely divergent personal backgrounds and experiences.[837] This again arose because, in the case of Dutchbat III, only superficial attention was paid to the cultural backgrounds of the conflict in which the battalion was to become involved. The training cut back on precisely this part, and the stereotypes regarding the Muslim population were carried over from the earlier battalions. This would obstruct a clear understanding of the local situation. It must be borne in mind - as was observed in Chapter 5 - that the Airmobile soldiers themselves were in the first place interested in the 'green' sides of their training (the combat duties). This too made room for forming stereotypes with respect to the cultural backgrounds to the conflict.

Many Dutchbat members ignored individual differences. The distinction between 'us' and 'them' was paramount; making a distinction according to individuality would complicate the image of the Muslim population, so that it would be more difficult to cling to ready-made views and prejudices, which under difficult circumstances actually offer more of a foothold in interpreting the social reality.

The emphasis that the training placed on team building, team-spirit and group discipline in military operations was detrimental to the willingness to see 'the others' as separate individuals. This certainly applied to the red berets, who, according to Franken, were trained in an atmosphere of 'one for all, all for one'. This created a strong mutual bond, but it also caused them to react against outsiders.

## 5. The arrival of Dutchbat I, II and III in the enclave: an impression of the atmosphere

The way in which Dutchbat acted in the Srebrenica enclave and maintained contact with the authorities and population was not determined by the training and preparation for the dispatch alone. The battalion's first impressions on the journey from Zagreb and the arrival in the enclave were also important. The sight of the devastation, the wretched living conditions of the civilians, including countless Displaced Persons, not to mention the constant smell, was a powerful and shocking experience for many Dutchbat members. The battalion leaders quickly saw how difficult it is to prepare soldiers for such a situation. The confrontation with the misery in the enclave was absolutely the hardest aspect for the soldiers of B Company, who were stationed in the compound in Srebrenica town. The rest of the battalion came to see less of the Displaced Persons and the humanitarian emergency, because they were stationed either in the rural Potocari compound, or on Observation Posts (OPs).

In the winter of 1994, Dutchbat I C Company departed from Lukovac to Srebrenica, which was the start of one and a half years of Dutchbat in the enclave. At the confrontation line between Croats and Bosnian Muslims, close to Gornji Vakuf, the soldiers were deeply moved by the visible consequences of the war on the people and the environment. One of the men expressed his experience as follows: 'You can see this a hundred times on TV, but it means nothing'. According to the accompanying reporter, it was striking that no one waved at the UN soldiers. The hope that the white UN vehicles would be received like the allied soldiers in the Netherlands in 1945 was shattered immediately. On the contrary, the convoy was jeered at because almost nothing was thrown out of the vehicles.[838]

A Dutchbat II soldier wrote to his girlfriend:

> 'We arrived after 45 hours. It only became clear in the final kilometres what has happened. Ruined houses, cars with coffins on the roofs. Close to the compound, the people are happy to see the five UN buses on the move. It was

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[837] For the problem surrounding individuality, see also Ignatieff, *Warrior's Honour,* p. 63, who searches for an explanation for ethnic wars, such as in the former Yugoslavia.

[838] E. Brouwer, *'Indrukwekkende route langs the poort van the hel'* ('Awesome route along the gates of hell'), *Defensiekrant,* 07/04/94, p. 2.

> different up to *Yellow Bridge* (in Bosnian-Serb terrain). They spat, threw stones, made obscene gestures, which they did in the enclave too, for that matter.'[839]

And social worker Dijkman described how the mood among the members of Dutchbat III changed when the battalion finally arrived in Srebrenica:

> 'When we left Zagreb towards Bosnia we were checked by the Russians. It took forever, and then the grumbling about the UN started. In the vicinity of Zvornik we also lost some property to the VRS, so that the mood did not improve. It fell quiet in the bus after the first confrontation with the shelled-out villages. After a time, the hum of voices returned, the music started again, and there was an atmosphere of 'they only have themselves to thank.'[840]

For Dutchbat III, the sense of powerlessness and humiliation therefore already started at the border of the Bosnian Serb controlled area, where the battalion members had to line up and wait endlessly to be checked. All their baggage was unloaded and the Bosnian Serb soldiers sought out whatever they fancied at their leisure. A consequence of this was, for example, that the Bosnian Serbs at the Zvornik bridge were all wearing Dutch Sam Browne belts after a short time. Bags, boxes and chests, everything had to be opened.

The same was true of convoys of soldiers on leave. If nothing special was found, it might not be so bad, but it could also happen that everything had to be opened. With a leave convoy of one hundred men with baggage and more than one hundred postbags, that could take a long time. Postbags were popular, because they contained parcels from family members for the Dutchbat members, and they were also opened at random. The battalion even had to permit, while waiting at a checkpoint, a VRS soldier siphoning off a few litres of diesel from the tank of a Dutch vehicle into his own Jerry can.[841] Similarly, the Dutchbat members were confronted immediately on arrival with the practical - and for them extraordinarily annoying - consequences of the UN Standing Operating Procedures and the Standing Orders derived from them, which prescribed extreme restraint in the event of confrontations.

The leaders of the first Dutch battalion in the enclave were aware of the precarious situation that Dutchbat had entered. The Commander of Dutchbat I, Lieutenant Colonel Vermeulen, expressed this afterwards as follows:

> 'In the first place we were busy surviving. You had to cover a logistical route of a hundred kilometres through Bosnian Serb terrain, where you could be fired on at any moment. You were constantly being stopped by Bosnian Serbs. They checked your papers for names, dates of birth and even weapon numbers. You had to have permission for everything. The UN had agreed to this, and in so doing had therefore already taken away an important instrument, Freedom of Movement. As a soldier, asking for permission is not something you look forward to eagerly. As a commander, you were constantly put to the test. From the outset I knew that deploying soldiers in Srebrenica could only be a temporary solution. General Morillon was right to jump in, but everyone knew that a monster had been created for the future. Any solution must be wanted by the two parties. I tried to make the parties negotiate, but the negotiations always ground to a halt. We were only postponing the inevitable.'[842]

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839 Confidential collection NIOD (14).
840 Interview E.B. Dijkman, 29/07/99.
841 NIOD, Coll. Koreman. Diary Koreman, 19e week 23.
842 'De eerste Nederlandse commandant', *De Opmaat* 5 (1999) 4, pp.4-6.

Lieutenant Colonel Everts, Commander of Dutchbat II, assessed as early as the first reconnaissance that the entire enterprise was hopeless in military terms. His experience was that everyone had to stick to the rules of the Bosnian Serbs and that otherwise Dutchbat could not even enter the enclave. What is more, when he eventually arrived after a day's journey via Hungary and many difficulties, he saw that Dutchbat I hardly left the enclave any more.[843] The same was to happen to Dutchbat II and III.

Major Franken recalled clearly the feeling that came over him when he first drove into the enclave: 'How close the mountains were. Are the Serbs up there? Now if things get out of hand here, we are in for a real treat'.[844]

## 6. Contacts with the population of the enclave: an impression of the atmosphere

In the enclave, the three Dutch battalions found a population that had been rendered largely apathetic by mental and physical exhaustion. Ever since 1992, the people had to try to survive under extreme war conditions. Chapter 7 describes how a deep chasm existed between the Muslim part of the original population of Srebrenica town and the surrounding villages on the one hand, and the tens of thousands of Displaced Persons on the other hand. Individual civilians concentrated primarily on self-interest and survival, and there was very little enthusiasm left over for a 'general interest' such as cleaning, public works and reconstruction.

At the outset of his stay in Srebrenica, Commander Vermeulen of Dutchbat I met the leading figures in the enclave. In a poorly lit hotel he found the mayor, the UN observers and the military commanders. The initial contact was awkward: 'The military commander of the Muslims originally did not want to talk to me. Only when I showed signs of leaving did he rapidly move towards me'[845] The mood was problematic, but it did improve later, thanks in particular to the efforts of the liaison officer, Major Derksen, and the Dutch interpreter Paul Lindgreen.

Neither was the initial contact with the Displaced Persons particularly smooth. On arrival, the B company compound was blocked by approximately one thousand Muslims. In his preparation, Vermeulen had learned that the population had respect for older people, and he removed his helmet to show his grey hair. After that, the crowd of people moved aside, and he answered their many questions through the interpreter, after which the situation became more relaxed.

Afterwards, Commander Karremans of Dutchbat III thought that his men knew roughly what to expect, but were utterly unprepared for the poor state of the population. The Dutchbat members thought they would be moving into a military situation, but in the first instance they were confronted with a humanitarian emergency. They would be unable to solve the situation with military resources, and, at the outside, would perpetuate it. At least, the humanitarian emergency could not be approached in terms of their tasks and duties. The fundamental problem that the Dutchbat soldiers were confronted with was the question of how their military task related to the humanitarian task, and what practical consequences this had.

The contact with the civilian population did not generally pose any great problems: the Dutch soldiers generally perceived the population as friendly, although the younger and male Muslims were more surly than the older and female section. The difference between old and young showed itself in such situations as when a Dutch soldier drove over a mine. Older people stood watching in tears, but young people clearly gloated.[846] Older people appear to be happy with the presence of the Dutch soldiers. There was certainly also a difference between the town and the countryside, where the population of the countryside were friendlier to Dutchbat than the town population.[847] The good relations with the

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[843] Interview P.L.E.M. Everts, 05/04/01.
[844] Interview R. Franken 04/05/01
[845] 'De eerste commandant', *De Opmaat* 5 (1999) 4, pp. 4-6.
[846] Debriefing statement P.M. Sanders, 13/09/95.
[847] Information based on confidential debriefing statement (4).

Muslim population usually deteriorated temporarily in the event of incidents. Again, it was then often younger Muslims, who verbally abused Dutchbat members or threw stones at them.[848]

A Dutchbat II soldier reported in a debriefing that he had got to know 'the Muslim' as a person with two faces. On the one hand there was the Muslim on the confrontation line, who wanted to shoot everything and everyone, and on the other hand there was the friendly hospitable Muslim in the enclave.[849]

Another member of the battalion stated how difficult he found it to make up his mind with respect to the population. For instance, he was originally inclined to quickly succumb to begging children, but later he and his colleagues became accustomed to that image and their attitude became harder and less generous. In social contacts too, the soldier found it difficult to make up his mind, because he had the idea that the people he was talking to had a double agenda and were out to get information.[850] The Dutch soldiers interpreted the attitude of the enclave authorities and the local Muslim elite, which will be discussed in more detail below, as especially ambiguous. This also had repercussions on the image that they had of the entire population.

The opportunities to correct stereotypical ideas, which were derived from the training and preparation, depended in theory partly on the degree to which the Dutchbat members had the opportunity to actually get to know the Muslim population. Whether this was possible was mainly determined by the place where the blue helmets were stationed (there was less opportunity for this in the compounds in the town of Srebrenica or in the rural Potocari than on the scattered Observation Posts). It also depended on whether the men went outside the compound; in fact, most Dutchbat members hardly left the two compounds, and in so doing they formed a sort of enclave within an enclave.

Equally important was that the rules for social contact with the civilian population in the Dutch battalions were restrictive and strict. In the case of the first battalion there was still a degree of flexibility, but by the time of Dutchbat III this had changed: no one could leave the gate at will, and certainly not alone. Dutchbat members were usually glad to be able to go on patrol, to go to an OP, or to be allowed to go on a trip somewhere. For most Dutchbat members, these were the only ways to see a little more of life in the enclave and of its residents.

The section of the population with which all Dutchbat members came into contact were the people who appeared at the fence, and the local personnel in the compounds. The stereotypes about the local women in any case did not appear to apply to those who worked in the compound.[851] They were young girls, in modern clothes and well groomed. Contrary to expectations, they 'did not all have a moustache and Bosnian teeth' and neither did they all wear 'harem trousers'. The female personnel were therefore a source of concern for the commanders, who noticed that their men tended to be distracted by the ladies. Otherwise, the older women also often wore Western clothes, because the enclave had already been dependent on Western aid goods for three years, including clothing. These were more likely to be jeans than harem trousers.

Members of specialized units had more opportunity to make individual contacts with the population. This was true of the liaison team, the Explosives Ordnance Disposal Unit, the counsellors, the engineers, the commanders, the medical personnel, the military police and members of the logistics team. On patrol, there was no possibility of individual contact, because patrols from the compound were always conducted in a group (and armed), and talking to the population was forbidden during the reconnaissance patrols. This did not apply if two soldiers were allowed out in a vehicle, as the counsellors and the civil-military relations section regularly did. Under these circumstances, the threshold for contact with the local population was much lower. The Dutchbat III chaplain, for example, maintained good relations with the head imam of the enclave; they regularly spoke and ate

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[848] 101MIPel. Reports of the debriefing of 12 infbat Lumbl 1-2 February Schaarsbergen 1995.
[849] 101MIPel. Reports of the debriefing of 12 infbat Lumbl 1-2 February Schaarsbergen 1995.
[850] 101MIPel. Reports of the debriefing of 12 infbat Lumbl 1-2 February Schaarsbergen 1995.
[851] Because the Opstina selected the personnel, these girls usually came from what were the urban elite.

together. When the fuel was low, this opportunity for contact also ceased to exist. Most contacts between Dutchbat and the civilian population revolved around logistical matters and the gathering of information.

In contrast with the soldiers in the compounds, Dutchbat members on the ten Observation Posts did have contact with the population, because this was considered to be 'functional'. Such contact was generally good, not least because the population enjoyed a certain protection because of the presence of the UN troops on the OPs, which they also realized. The population bartered goods or rendered services, such as doing the laundry and fetching water, in exchange for food. Muslim children regularly stood at the gate of OP-D, who asked if they could be 'the friend' of a soldier. These children ran errands for them, for which they were given money. After a few days, they would reappear, with packets of cigarettes or a bunch of leeks.[852]

*Life on OP-M*

The Commander of OP-M, Sergeant Mulder, reported good contact with the population of the village Jaglici, which consisted entirely of local people, and accommodated no Displaced Persons. Dutchbat III converted the temporary observation post into a permanent one. Previously there had been regular Serbian mortar fire from the north, but it stopped when this OP was set up. Mulder: 'on our arrival, the flag was put up!'[853]

In the last months of Dutchbat III, the local population's trust appeared to increase. People dared to go ever further into the fields, even within sight of the VRS positions. Contacts between the crew of OP-M and the local ABiH Commander, known as 'Envir', also ran smoothly.

On a number of OPs, the men of the population also received free bread. For other services such as laundry, road maintenance, fetching water, filling sandbags and setting up roadblocks, Dutchbat members made payment in the form of rations. The services also related to burning rubbish around the OPs. Every two to three days, the rubbish was collected in a pit and burned. After burning, a new pit had to be dug, and for this too, emergency rations were the usual wages.

The daily life on the OPs consisted mainly of patrolling, guard duty and gathering food - especially vegetables and mushrooms - by way of a change from tinned food. If many mushrooms were found, they asked the local population which ones were edible. Occasionally, a sheep would be also be bought in exchange for rations. Because no one in Dutchbat on OP-M had ever handled a sheep, after a couple of failed clumsy attempts, local help had to be obtained to slaughter it.

On some OPs, aid to the population was also part of the daily activities. For instance, Sergeant Mulder observed that the primitive sewer system in the village could be considerably improved with a few simple modifications. In order to raise this matter in a 'diplomatic' way, he took along his medical orderly, who presented the proposals for modification on the basis of medical and hygienic arguments. The proposal was accepted and subsequently executed with the help of the Dutch.

Whereas on OP-M there were usually few problems with the local population, problems occasionally did occur with people who were not from the local population. For instance, there was an incident involving men from Susnjari and Pale (not to be confused with the 'capital city' of the Republika Srpska). The village of Pale had the reputation of being a robbers' den: in Mulder's words, it was 'all Mafia, a bit like Tilburg - we even had someone from Tilburg'. The population also lived up to this reputation at OP-M.[854] Unidentified persons - who later turned out to have come from Pale - had dug a tunnel at night into the OP and stolen 56 Jerry cans of diesel. This was a well-timed operation: the always alert OP dog Oscar had just given birth to five puppies and did not respond on that night. When the theft was discovered, the OP crew was given the tip to take a look in Pale. Ultimately, men from UnCivPol, the OP crew and commandos surrounded the settlement of Brezova Njiva (between

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[852] Debriefing statement B.N. Pents 07/09/95.
[853] Interview M. Mulder 06/10/98.
[854] Interview M. Mulder 06/10/98.

Jaglici and Susnjari), and, after a raid, recovered 31 cans of diesel from a house . ABiH Commander 'Envir' subsequently advised Mulder in the event of trouble not to fire in the air, but to take aim. When shortly afterwards there was a new attempted robbery at night, the men followed this advice - apparently with success, because there were no attempted robberies after that.[855]

*Life on OP-Q*

On OP-Q, Dutchbat bartered coffee for bread, and for services such as fetching water, with a local family. The family also took the initiative to provide information on all sorts of events, such as reporting that a woman had been shot by Bosnian Serbs in the surroundings and had been wounded. A number of OP crew members subsequently went to the woman, but she turned out to be beyond help. The Dutchbat members did help the woman and several cows out of the range of fire of the VRS.

A local ABiH leader, a certain Nasir Sabanovic, came regularly to this OP to tell 'tall' stories about all the things he had done either with or against the Serbs. Sabanovic also regularly provided information on the movements of the Serbs outside the enclave, because he left it often on reconnaissance. When once he had been laying mines, he was considerate enough to inform Dutchbat of where he had done so, so that the men would take account of the fact during their patrols.[856] According to Lieutenant Van Duijn of Dutchbat III, there was something of a basis of confidence between the Dutch and the ABiH in the surroundings of OP-Q. Therefore Muslims did not go to stand under the tower of the OP there, as they did at OP-A, with the intention of drawing VRS fire.[857]

*Other OPs*

The situation around the OPs was therefore subject to considerable variation. OP-E, for example, was close to the Swedish Shelter Project emergency accommodation, so that intensive relations developed with the population. There was also weekly contact with a VRS post further along the road. Around this OP, which fell under the responsibility of B Company, there were regular problems. The B Company soldiers are said to have sometimes acted fairly fiercely against Muslims, because they stole wood from a nearby factory, which was just inside Bosnian Serb terrain. This meant that they drew Serbian fire in the direction of the OP.[858]

Hardly any people lived in the surroundings of OP-F, so that contact with the population there was somewhat limited.

The ABiH looked less favourably on the building and manning of OP-K, because it was very close to the smuggling route to Zepa; the ABiH carried out a substantial number of activities there.

Numerous stories went into circulation through the OPs about night-time raids and smuggling practices, and they also reached the Dutchbat compounds.

*Adjustment of the image of the Muslim population?*

The contact with the local population around the OPs was therefore generally good, and in theory this could have led to breaking the stereotypes of the Muslim population. Nevertheless, a negative image of the population was often introduced in the 'translation' process of OP crews' stories about the population that were heard in the compound. The men usually had little to say about the normally good relations with the population, but were eager to report 'spectacular' events. This therefore presented a non-representative and potentially counterproductive image, while the majority of Dutchbat members

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855 Interview M. Mulder 06/10/98.
856 Debriefing statement T.P. Lutke 08/09/95.
857 Interview L.C. Van Duijn 02/07/99.
858 Interview W. Dijkema 21/09/98.

who stayed in the compounds could not put this into perspective or correct it from their own observations.

For Dutchbat, it was actually a matter of enlightened self-interest to maintain good relations with the local residents, with a view to supplying the OPs and gathering Intelligence locally. For the population, the presence of an OP reduced the risk of Bosnian-Serb shelling considerably, and furthermore it created a welcome source of income through trade.

*Patrols*

Another activity that could result in contact with the population of the enclave was formed by the patrols. There were various different kinds.

Firstly, there were the reconnaissance patrols, about which Chapter 6 stated that their objective was to observe the warring factions, either along the borders of the enclave, or in the enclave itself.

There were also the 'social patrols', which were intended to serve a variety of objectives. One function was to give those members of the battalion who actually never left the compound the opportunity to see something of the surroundings. A second function was to make contact with the population, a third was to show Dutchbat's presence and a fourth was to gather Intelligence. The Battalion Commanders of Dutchbat I, II and III thought that it would be good for Dutchbat members to get out of the compound once in a while. It would enable them to move their horizons further than the compound fence, and it would help counter drudgery and boredom.

In spite of their name, according to Karremans, social patrols were still actually in principle military patrols: in other words, the Dutchbat members who participated were fully armed, and therefore 'not like Dutchmen on safari'[859]. One difference was that on social patrols the men were sometimes allowed to wear a beret as opposed to a helmet, and were allowed to talk with the population. Dutchbat members were also permitted, if the situation arose, to accept food or drink offered by the population. For instance, the occasional glass of slivovitz would be taken at the invitation of local civilians during social patrols at Pusmulici, and patrols often stopped for coffee with a friendly Muslim family in the Swedish Shelter Project . There were also some negative experiences, for example in the form of youths throwing stones at the patrols, but Dutchbat rather considered this to be mischief than aggression directed against the battalion.

As a source of information, the social patrols were not a resounding success. The participants usually managed to chat with the population, but this often remained limited to small talk. There was often no interpreter with the patrol, so that the social aspect actually materialized with difficulty. In addition to the language barrier, the social patrols were handicapped by the circumstance that both Dutchbat and the population were only accustomed to the usual reconnaissance patrols. Therefore, in practice, little came of the social patrols' subsidiary purpose of gathering Intelligence. A Dutchbat III non-commissioned officer also came to this conclusion: "The chap is trained to go into the woods on patrol and to seek out the enemy. Then he suddenly has to go into the village on a social patrol, talking with people, gathering Intelligence. Things don't work like that.'[860] Besides this, the Dutchbat members who went on social patrol were often members of non-fighting units, and therefore had a different background. There was the intention here for the 'blue' aspect to take precedence over the 'green', but one fundamental problem remained: as stated earlier in this chapter, the Dutchbat training and preparation were not oriented accordingly, and the population did not know what to think of the social patrols.

An Intelligence officer viewed the social patrols mainly from the standpoint of information gathering. Assuming that the participants of these patrols had not had any 'Intelligence' training, he decided to improve the information gathering by casting it in the form of specific assignments. This

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[859] Interview Th.J.P. Karremans 24/09/98.
[860] Confidential interview (85).

involved, for example, the assignment to find out what was available on the market, or to ask for reactions to specific events or rumours. This approach yielded more results, but because of the language barrier and the uneasy attitude of the soldiers, it remained a tool of modest value.[861]

The question remains whether the population did make a distinction between the social patrols with friendly intent, and the usual reconnaissance patrols. The difference was not easy to see for the untrained eye: for instance, Dutchbat III B Company originally took hand grenades on their social patrols.

When in 1995 the atmosphere between Dutchbat and the population became more menacing, there were also repercussions on the experiences of the social patrols. For a number of soldiers in the last months, this was a disappointing experience. One of them described how:

> 'walking along the road from north to south, the locals looked icily at the umpteenth patrol and did not move a single step aside when they noticed that they were in the way. To keep the unit somewhat intact, some colleagues had to walk straight through and around groups of locals standing in the road.'

The Dutchbat members experienced such situations as threatening, from their assumption 'that the Muslims had nothing more to lose, but we did![862]

*Other contacts with the population*

Paying visits to the local population during Dutchbat I's stay was permitted, but only in the presence of an officer. Such visits were common, for example to the families of girls who worked in the compound. In the case of Dutchbat II, such 'non-functional' visits were forbidden by safety instructions, and that remained the case under Dutchbat III. In spite of the ban, this type of visit did take place regularly, however.

A medical specialist wrote to his successor:

> 'Occasionally I disappear with supervision to a friendly family. Very pleasant, just being with the people at home. On the compound they behave as if they are lethal, but I had been received everywhere with hospitality and with open arms, without a single problem. If you ever experience it, the ritual is as follows: first Turkish coffee. You let it settle for a while and drink it very carefully, otherwise you get a mouthful of grounds. I think it is delicious. After that comes the slivovitz!'[863]

Members of the Explosives Ordnance Disposal Unit also visited civilians at home. This happened, for example, if people found ammunition on their land. They were then received with hospitality.[864] Contacts also came about through the medical surgery for the population that the Dutch held. The medical personnel were occasionally invited home by people to come and drink coffee by way of thanks for their help.

In addition, there were the literal 'borderline cases' in regulating the social contact with the civilian population. These were the contacts at the gate of the compound, where with great regularity children and adults would appear.[865] The following fragment of a letter written by a Dutchbat member

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[861] Confidential interview (85).
[862] NIOD, Coll. Koreman. Diary Koreman p 21st week 3.
[863] NIOD, Coll. Schouten. Diary Schouten.
[864] Debriefing statement J.H. Kapel, 13/09/95.
[865] A part of the contacts with the population at the gates were also those involving sexual services.

on guard duty to his girlfriend demonstrates that the formal contact rules could present the soldiers with practical problems:

> 'I have to break off now, because there are some fans at the gate again, two girls about six or seven years old who want to know my name. But it is forbidden to make contact with the population, including with the children. Half an hour later. They have now been standing there singing songs to me for half an hour. This is terrible. Those children have nothing, only a set of old clothes, and we are sitting ten metres away with food, drink and even sweets. And you're not allowed to give them anything at all, because then the entire village would soon be at the gate.'[866]

In the compound in Potocari, civilians were occasionally given the opportunity to sell woodcarvings. That was stopped in March 1995 because woodcarvings had been sold with ABiH emblems.

There was much contact in the compounds in Potocari and Srebrenica with local employees, who performed a wide variety of tasks for Dutchbat, such as washerwomen, kitchen hands, interpreters, electricians, plumbers, rubbish collectors and a hairdresser. As discussed in the previous chapter, there were regular tensions between Dutchbat and the municipal executive on aspects of the employment of local personnel. The same applied to the other UN organizations and the NGOs. The hairdressers and the interpreters worked directly for UNPROFOR and had their own legal status. The others were recruited through the Opstina for a period of six months. This period started and also ended halfway through a battalion's stay, so that soldiers would not be in contact with the same local employees for more than three months. This rotation system was introduced immediately after the arrival of Dutchbat II. Local employees, in particular the kitchen and cleaning personnel, were given temporary contracts with a maximum period. The Opstina had insisted on this, to the great regret of the local employees who had previously worked for Dutchbat: they lost not only their income, but also their extra food and meaningful occupation. The administrators of the enclave allowed no other opportunity to resolve this long-term conflict.[867]

At the time of Dutchbat I, relations with the local personnel was better than under the following battalions. Sergeant Major Jansen of Dutchbat I B Company wrote in the *Buddy Bulletin*:

> 'Another phenomenon in the compound is that local employees take care of a wide variety of matters for us: as washerwoman, as cleaner, as kitchen help, and the men take on the heavier jobs. The men have turned out to be skilled workers, so that they often assist the engineers in their activities. The girls in the compound have been adopted by the CSM [Company Sergeant Major] as 'his daughters', and not without reason. They are the best looking in the area, and with the little that they possess, they do their best to look good each day. To prevent problems, they have been given this status for the duration of our stay, because anyone laying a hand on the daughters of the CSM... There is still a pleasant atmosphere in the compound and the girls work hard: for 200 DM a month and a bite to eat with us in the canteen, and that six days a week from early in the morning until late in the evening. Try that some time in the Netherlands!'[868]

The staff of Dutchbat II had their own reasons for preferring the rotation of local personnel. Firstly there was the security aspect: local employees eventually became very familiar with the soldiers and

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866 Quoted from a letter from a Dutchbat soldier from Potocari to his girlfriend, private archive.
867 GV chief military services chaplain. See report of Rev. Gijs Bikker DUTCHBAT II of 28/07/94.
868 'Compound Srebrenica' by R. de Jong in Falcon *Buddy Bulletin* April 1994.

their working methods. Consequently, all sorts of relationships could be started, which were not functional and potentially entailed security problems. Furthermore, a humanitarian argument was put forward for rotation. Ideally, through rotation, more families would be able to enjoy the benefits connected with highly desired jobs on the UN compounds and with the international organizations. The Opstina agreed with the desirability of rotation, albeit for other reasons.

The enclave authorities preselected the approximately sixty men and women and proposed the applicants, after which Dutchbat could make a selection. Generally these were original residents of the enclave. In the group of Displaced Persons, which had the greatest need of the jobs and income, almost no one was lucky. Moreover, the people who were allowed to work for Dutchbat or NGOs had to make a payment to the Opstina, who could also withdraw people for a wide range of reasons from Dutchbat and the NGOs.[869] When the Dutchbat leaders recognized it as a problem, the Opstina threatened that no one else would be allowed to work for Dutchbat if the battalion leaders stuck to their guns. Therefore, little or nothing came of the fairer distribution of jobs that Dutchbat envisaged.

The security problem, which was the basis of the rotation, was not imaginary. A Dutchbat II soldier said afterwards, from the standpoint of military security, that he found it highly remarkable that the local personnel also cleaned the C Company Ops Room (the command post). The Ops Room was cleaned twice a day by a team of three or four girls and it was impossible to keep an eye on what they were doing all the time. In the Ops Room, the patrol schedules, the leave schedules, the service and duty schedules, as well as a detailed map of the division into sectors, were on display. It also contained communication equipment, and the log book of received messages was open near the radio. There were no classified documents or telexes, but there were the so-called milinfo's from the UN. A bag containing all C Company's outgoing mail also hung in the Ops Room.[870]

On arrival and departure the employees were only subjected to a bag check; they were not frisked and did not have to empty their pockets. This information particularly disturbed the Military Security section. Against this background, it was also not surprising that family members of dispatched soldiers in the Netherlands were liable to be approached by Bosnian Muslims who appeared to know a great deal about the battalion member concerned.[871] For instance, the mother of a member of Dutchbat III B Company was approached in the Netherlands. She was requested to arrange for her son to take money to Srebrenica.[872] The same happened to various spouses of Dutchbat members.

Not only the freedom of movement, but also the duties of the local employees in the compound were a thorn in the side of some members of Dutchbat III:

> 'People were recruited to perform activities in the compound, without a specific description. We received reports from lads who had property go missing, and that people had been seen rummaging in the belongings. We put an immediate stop to that. We now keep our own gear and rooms clean. These ladies now only wash clothes and that sort of thing. Situations like that therefore did occur, and you can't actually blame them. It is understandable, but that is not to say that you have tolerate it. We changed things then. No one entered the buildings any more: those people were assigned other activities. So that is how it was with Dutchbat I. In the case of Dutchbat II, I had the idea that they dealt with the people differently from Dutchbat I. Dutchbat I was really very friendly. They went there very pro-Muslim to help the Muslims against the bastard Serbs. That

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869 Interview A.J. Derksen 10/04/01. This behaviour of the Opstina was the basis of the later conflict between *Médecins Sans Frontières (*MSF) and the Opstina, which also involved Dutchbat.

870 101MIPel. Debriefing report military DUTCHBAT II 9/02/95. However, when asked, the Commander of Dutchbat II categorically denied the correctness of this information.

871 101MIPel. Military debriefing report DUTCHBAT II 09/02/95.

872 Information based on confidential debriefing statement (11).

> is how it seemed to me. I had been led to believe that we were still a neutral UN unit'.[873]

Major Wieffer of Dutchbat III also thought with hindsight that these differences existed:

> 'Dutchbat II adopted a somewhat more detached attitude to the population. We then took this over, and perhaps it became even more detached with us, I wouldn't like to say. But it was no longer the way it had been with Dutchbat I. In our case it really was a matter, not of impartiality, but purely of neutrality.'[874]

The reference of Groen and Wieffer to the necessity of being neutral as UN personnel, seemed to underline the fact that Dutchbat II and III had departed for Srebrenica with a different picture of the conflict from that of the first Dutchbat I.

A very important factor in the contact between Dutchbat and the civilian population was, of course, the interpreters. Attempts to recruit Dutch interpreters for Dutchbat II and III failed for a variety of reasons.[875] It was therefore necessary to work with local interpreters. The interpreter Vahid Hodzic worked from the outset for the Dutch. His work consisted of translating from Serbo-Croat to English and vice versa, and translating the radio news from Sarajevo and Belgrade for the Commanders. For this, he received on top of his salary, free food and accommodation. Another Dutchbat interpreter had the idea that he was considered to be a sort of translation machine: he was not treated as someone who was part of the group. When an excursion was arranged to an OP, they forgot to include a sleeping bag for him, and neither was he taken into account when food was prepared. The man felt that he was treated as an outsider and a beggar. The soldiers created a Dutch atmosphere, a Dutch cocoon, which he was not part of. Some bars in the compound even refused to serve drinks to the interpreters.[876]

The security aspect also played an important role here. The Dutch soldiers were aware of the links between the local interpreters and the population (and possibly also with the ABiH) and therefore wanted to avoid any risk. This meant that the local interpreters fell between two stools. They were not completely accepted, if at all, by the Dutch soldiers, and they also occupied a separate position relative to their own population. This was especially true in the case of Dutchbat II and III. The section for military-civil relations left the interpreters pretty well to fend for themselves, and only the counsellors concerned themselves professionally with their fate. As a separate issue, friendships were made on a lower level between Dutchbat members and local personnel.

However, all in all, there remained a deep gulf between them. The interpreters called the Dutchbat members 'showboys': they rode around in fancy jeeps, wore trendy sunglasses, had smart haircuts and usually had enough to eat. According to one of the interpreters the relationship between Dutchbat and the interpreters improved when the Dutch ran out of electricity and supplies: everyone was then in the same boat.[877]

## 7. Contacts with the Bosnian Serbs

The contacts between Dutchbat and Bosnian Serbs in the first place involved the Bosnian Serb army, the VRS, who manned roadblocks and checkpoints on the road to the enclave. There was also contact

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873 Interview J.R. Groen, 05/07/99.
874 Interview E.G.B. Wieffer, 18/06/99.
875 For that matter, it is not necessarily the case that national interpreters were always preferred to locals. Some soldiers actually argued for the use of local interpreters. See for a discussion e.g. Douglas M. Chalmers '*Faction Liaison Teams: A Peacekeeping Multiplier* 'School of Advanced Military Studies United States Army Command and General Staff College Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, 2001, p. 48.
876 Interview Omer Subasic, 17/06/98.
877 M. Struyk, 'De showboys van Srebrenica', in *Loopgraven,* 1997, p. 18.

with the Bosnian Serbs in Bratunac, just outside the enclave, and with VRS soldiers on the other side of the enclave border. Prior to the stay, the Commander of Dutchbat I acquainted himself with the Bosnian-Serb commanders and deputy commanders that he might have to deal with. Vermeulen recalls 'groping, a sort of cockfight'.[878] It has already been mentioned how deep the Dutchbat members had to grovel before the Bosnian Serbs even to gain entry to the enclave.

In the autumn of 1994, the command of Dutchbat I paid a visit to the lower school in Bratunac, where he handed over a symbolic gift on behalf of the Minister for Development Cooperation, which consisted of exercise books and pens. It was actually the intention that a part of the school material that arrived through the Ministry of Defence in the enclave would be given to the school in Bratunac.[879] The contact with the Serbs in the north was difficult, because the VRS hardly allowed any convoys through there. To the south of the enclave, the atmosphere appeared a little more relaxed: a reconnaissance patrol was occasionally offered coffee. In spite of the language barrier, it resulted in some exchange of information. An invitation from the Serbs to accompany them on patrol was politely declined by the Dutch, however.[880]

During a marathon session in Bratunac on 6 January 1995, the new Dutchbat III team for military-civil relations (in military terms: section 5) was introduced to the local Bosnian-Serb military command, consisting of the Commander of the Drina Corps, General Zivanovic as well as Colonel Vukovic and the Majors Sarkic and Nikolic. The meeting took place on the orthodox Christmas Eve, and proceeded pleasantly. Zivanovic spoke for a long time (eight of the nine hours) on subjects including the demilitarization of the enclave, humanitarian aid and problems along the confrontation line.

Other contacts with the VRS were more austere. On OP-R, the Dutch soldiers mainly had contact by telephone with a nearby Bosnian-Serb post. The older Bosnian-Serb soldiers behaved very quietly, in contrast to the young people, who were more aggressive in their behaviour.[881] Like the Muslims, for the Serbs, age was a factor that noticeably determined the behaviour towards Dutchbat. In the words of a member of the reconnaissance platoon:

> 'Only very seldom, when we crossed the border, did a few Serbs come out. Drink some coffee, talk a little. But it depended very much on who was manning the posts. If they were regular troops: they were young lads. Aggressive, tough machos. We wanted nothing to do with them. But if they were reservists, you could chat.'[882]

The section 5 had particularly good contact with the commander of the Bosnian Serbs at *Yellow Bridge*, on the northern border of the enclave, who was known as 'Jovo' (Jovan Ivic). He was supplied with electricity from the compound. Dutchbat engineers had run a line alongside OP-P to *Yellow Bridge*. If the Serbs wanted to make contact with the Dutch, they could walk to OP-P. There was also contact by telephone between OP-R and the 'Dragan bunker', a house that served as a VRS battalion command post. The Dutchbat members on OP-E likewise had contact by telephone with the Serbs, and communicated using codes. They had a number of standard messages and questions. Because they were numbered, they could suffice with stating the numbers concerned.

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878 'De eerste commandant', *De Opmaat* 5 (1999) 4, pp. 4-6.
879 Information bundle *The Blue/Green beret* (1994)16.
880 Information bundle *Green/Blue* (1995) 25.
881 101MIPel. 15/06/95 Debriefing report UNMO observer for the period 26-10-1994-26-04-1995.
882 Interview A.A.L. Caris 03/03/00.

## 8. Contacts with UN organizations and NGOs

The UN organizations in the enclave with which Dutchbat cooperated were - as stated in Chapter 7 - UnCivPol, the UNMOs and UNHCR.

UnCivPol had the task of 'monitoring' the local police. In practice this came down to UN policemen supervising the compliance of the local police with human rights. In this framework, UnCivPol visited the prison once a week. Another UnCivPol task was advising the local police, because only 10% of them were trained. UnCivPol also assisted the UNHCR in the execution of humanitarian aid projects. The most common infringement of the law in the enclave was stealing sheep. Dutchbat was also regularly robbed, but that mostly concerned clothing, diesel or food. Because UnCivPol had a different mandate and different authorities, they were allowed to enter places that were forbidden to Dutchbat and UNMOs, such as dwellings.[883]

The UNMOs' task was to gather information on the warring factions, the population and their living conditions for UN headquarters in New York. They also took part or assisted in negotiations. They also had aid-related tasks, such as supervising and mediating in the exchange of prisoners, medical evacuations and assisting humanitarian convoys. To facilitate this, they had almost daily consultation with Dutchbat and the various NGOs.[884] The effectiveness and task performance of the UNMO team in Srebrenica varied greatly from one person to another.

UNHCR was responsible for the food, the clothing and the necessities of life of the Displaced Persons. UNHCR had therefore not only to arrange the entire food supply in the enclave, but was also responsible for the non-food products, such as clothing, bedding, mattresses, sowing seed, building materials, footwear, and so on. Dutchbat supervised the UNHCR convoys during their journey through the enclave to the unloading point, the warehouse in Srebrenica town. With much display, Dutchbat members were present at the unloading, but after that their task finished. The distribution was therefore the responsibility of UNHCR and not of Dutchbat.

## 9. Dutchbat's problems: what should be done and how should it be done?

In its relations with the population and the ABiH in the enclave, Dutchbat had to deal with a large number of widely varied problems. They were concerned with military-operational, logistics, socio-cultural and psychological issues, which, in the reality of everyday, ran through and affected each other. For a clear understanding of the development of Dutchbat's position, it is nonetheless important to consider them separately.

The military-operational problems were associated with the way in which action as part of the UN was organized. In the course of their presence, the successive Dutch battalions increasingly had the feeling that they were bound hand and foot to the UN mandate. In addition, the UN lines of command for the local units were not particularly transparent, and the regulations were subject to change, and sometimes also confusing, ambiguous, or difficult or impossible to execute. The force instruction of the UNPROFOR Rules of Engagement, for example, could not always be translated clearly into practice. The interpretations and practice therefore differed depending on the country and unit.

The Dutch battalions did have to guard an extremely inaccessible terrain of 150 square kilometres, in which approximately 40,000 malnourished and partly armed Muslims lived, without them having sufficient personnel or adequate weapons at their disposal. In view of the circumstances, the task of maintaining the peace and at the same time performing humanitarian action already far exceeded the gravity of normal peacekeeping. Furthermore, there was expectation in the Netherlands that Dutchbat members would perform additional humanitarian tasks, which were outside the UN

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[883] Interview by counsellor Bart Hetebrij with Peter Gaardse in *EGO* May 1995 pp. 3-4.
[884] Interview by counsellor Bart Hetebrij with Jan van Dool in *EGO* May 1995 p. 5

mandate and the associated military-operational action. This arose partly from wishes that existed in the Dutch political arena, but they were barely feasible for the Dutch units on the spot.[885]

The execution of humanitarian projects by UN units was actually nothing new as such. On earlier missions in Cambodia and Lebanon, Dutch soldiers had executed small scale humanitarian projects. The urge to help people in need was natural. At the same time, it was understood that humanitarian projects could also generate goodwill among the population, which could be of benefit to the execution of the task and their own safety.[886] Furthermore, it was very motivating for the units to carry out this sort of work, certainly if the sense of military action was not always clear, as was the case in Srebrenica.

How military and humanitarian matters related to each other precisely, and which had priority, was difficult to unravel for many of those involved. This was also the case in The Hague, as was evident from a large article in the *Defensiekrant* of 3 February 1994, which mentioned the following tasks: 'protecting the population in the Safe Area*s*, creating conditions for the transport of the wounded, reducing hostilities, improving the living conditions in the area and providing military assistance to UNHCR convoys.'[887] Two months later, however, the same newspaper spoke of the 'true task: protecting the Muslim enclave of Srebrenica'.[888]

The Dutch soldiers also assumed that they were in the enclave in the first place to protect the population.[889] However, the original UN mandate mentioned neither protecting nor defending the civilians in the enclave. UNPROFOR was supposed to 'deter attacks' through their mere presence and behaviour, and force was only to be used in self-defence. There are actually no occurrences of the terms 'protect' or 'defend' in the resolutions.[890]

The Rules of Engagement, from which the Standing Operating Procedures and the Standing Orders for Dutchbat were derived, were discussed in Chapters 1 and 3. Generally speaking, the commanders could work with these instructions, but their application was far from uniform, which was bound to have an influence on the way the members of the battalion viewed their duties. A Belgian soldier described their problem in a general sense with the words:

> 'I would definitely choose a war mission, because then at least we know what we are dealing with. But with the blue berets and the Rules of Engagement, they put doubts in our minds.'[891]

The Rules of Engagement were in principle known to every soldier, because they were discussed during the preparation and announced at each briefing. For example, they had the effect that little could be done if the Bosnian Serbs fired over the heads of, or into the ground at the feet of, the members of a patrol. In the event of a shooting incident, the Rules of Engagement prescribed that they had to determine the exact origin of the fire before returning fire. This was almost impossible, however, because most of the firing came from a great distance.

Commanders on the spot therefore sometimes adapted the rules when they appeared hardly realistic. The leaders of Dutchbat II opted for a line of conduct that entailed avoiding confrontation with armed persons. Similar decisions were also made in the matter of the instructions for dealing with

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885 These included, for example, what were known as the Pronk projects. The Minister for Development Cooperation made money available for junior schools in the region. The material could hardly enter the enclave, if at all, however, because the VRS would not give clearance. Nonetheless, Dutchbat did smuggle a number of items of school material in convoys.
886 Christ Klep wrote extensively about this in: Klep & Gils, *Van Korea tot Kosovo*, pp. 95-159.
887 E. Brouwer, 'Eenheid op maat gesneden voor Bosnie' ('Tailor-made unity for Bosnia'), *Defensiekrant,* 03/02/94, p. 3.
888 E. Brouwer, 'Indrukwekkende route langs the poort van the hel', *Defensiekrant* 07/04/94, p. 2.
889 For example in: '*Dutchbat in Vredesnaam'* in which the Commander of Bravo Company says 'It had been clear to us for some time that we were here for only one matter and that was the safety of the civilians.' p. 269.
890 See Part I, Chapter 11.
891 Quoted in E. Muller 'Geweldsexcessen bij vredesoperaties: Somalië 1992-1995' ('Violent excesses in peace operations: Somalia 1992-1995'), *Militaire Spectator,* 168(1999) 9 p. 503.

suspected incidents of stolen UN goods. At company level too, they subsequently opted for their own interpretation of the regulations so as to be able to deal with matters as they saw fit.[892] The demilitarization task therefore threatened to be pushed aside: the UN could well order the disarmament, but the execution would be impossible in practice, if not suicidal. In this way, many general rules lost their meaning in practice, because the soldiers were forced to resort to their own judgement.

This was also the way in which Dutchbat executed the important order to secure the enclave and the enclave borders: 'deter attacks by presence'. However, Dutchbat missed a number of essential instruments for doing this adequately. They had insufficient personnel and also insufficient resources to operate, for example, at night, or in secret, so as to deter attackers, and anyway this was not permissible because 'identifiability' was an essential element of UN troops behaviour. Dutchbat was therefore instructed to return to quarters before sunset. The Muslims and Bosnian Serbs were aware of this, of course, and therefore both parties had free rein in the evening and at night. In this way, the Dutch found it especially difficult to gain insight into what was going on in military terms inside the enclave. What is more, Dutchbat was also forbidden to move outside the enclave borders, which further undermined the information position. From a military standpoint, the situation was hopeless in this regard.

## 10. Problems between Dutchbat and the warring factions

The military aspects of the duties involved supervising compliance with ceasefires between the Bosnian Government army, the ABiH, and the forces of the Bosnian Serbs, the VRS. When they arrived in the enclave, Dutchbat soon observed that there was no peace at all, but only a disputed ceasefire, which was constantly violated by both parties. There was a great lack of clarity about how to interpret the task in practice. The Commander of Dutchbat II, for example, wanted to know whether digging trenches was or was not permissible in a 'demilitarized' area. He requested clarification from headquarters in Sarajevo on three separate occasions, without receiving an answer. Finally only a half-hearted answer came from Tuzla, that put the problem back on the Commander's plate.[893]

The problems surrounding the demilitarization, the establishment of the enclave borders and the determination of the ceasefire line appeared to be insoluble in the short term, and they repeatedly reopened negotiations with both parties. The Dutch battalions adapted, as mentioned in the previous chapters, their policy to this situation. They preferred to remain in discussion and to preserve the mutual contact between the Bosnian Muslims and the Bosnian Serbs. Identical borders accepted by all parties existed at best on paper, but in practice there were three borders: those of the ABiH, of the VRS and of UNPROFOR. Because the demilitarization also came to a standstill, the leaders of the successive Dutch battalions found themselves increasingly falling between two stools. On the one hand, the VRS repeatedly complained about the inadequate disarming of the Muslims, and from that side they argued that Dutchbat was not carrying out its duties properly. On the other hand, the ABiH constantly insisted that Dutchbat did not react alertly to Serbian movements and border corrections, and was actually too conscientious in gathering weapons from the Bosnian Government army.

In the Dutch battalions themselves, this stagnation led to many frustrations. Dutchbat I ran into this problem immediately. According to Commander Vermeulen:

> 'if you saw a man with a weapon, you could shout *'stani pucam'* ['stand or I will shoot!'], but you were not permitted to shoot, because the Rules of Engagement did not allow it. If that man ran home fast enough and threw the weapon inside, you could put up a cordon around the house. You then had to call the

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[892] Debriefing statement J.H.A. Rutten 06/09/95.
[893] See Honig & Both, *Srebrenica*, p. 186.

> local police, and they would say: 'I would have to be crazy, because then we would all be punished by Naser Oric.' You would then ask the UN police, who then said that they had had no mandate for it. It was a warped regulation.'[894]

The regulations did indeed require Dutchbat members to make a report if they found armed men in the enclave. Under no circumstances should they go off in pursuit. If the opportunity to make an arrest presented itself, they should do so, and subsequently indeed call in the UnCivPol. Frisking was forbidden, as was the searching of houses. They were allowed to 'secure' a house, which meant that they could set up a cordon around the house to await the arrival of UnCivPol. If such a situation should become 'threatening', then Dutchbat was to withdraw.[895]

Dutchbat was therefore not authorized to enter houses, and so the men who carried weapons, as Vermeulen described, could escape being disarmed by fleeing into a house. Sometimes, the blue helmets saw women leaving with shopping bags, in which they were probably taking the dismantled weapons to safety. UnCivPol and local police were allowed to enter the houses, but according to a number of Dutchbat members it was sometimes took hours for them to arrive.[896] Furthermore, the probability was indeed extraordinarily small that the local police would find much, because of the reprisals to be expected from ABiH soldiers. Many ABiH soldiers had more respect for their own commanders than for the agreements that had been made with the UN and had to be executed by Dutchbat. They feared reprisals if they were to surrender their weapon, which was sometimes so abundantly clear that the Dutch offered to mediate: if 'Dutchbat could just have those weapons, then the liaison officer would talk with the Muslim commander, to avoid punishment'.[897]

The effectiveness of the Dutchbat action in this sort of matter was also seriously impeded by another cause. It quickly became apparent that as soon as a patrol left the compound, a sort of alarm system went into effect (via children and adults), which usually attained a higher speed than that of the patrols: 'They just knew: time to hide the weapons! Now the patrol is back inside. Get the weapons back out again.'[898] According to patrol coordinator Captain Rutten, he did decide to pursue armed Muslims in a few situations. But:

> 'you can go after them on the risk that they know the terrain much better than you and, of course, disarming was not of much use. This gradually became clear to everyone. You took a weapon and you drew a certain risk to yourself. Because if you were to go into the same area later with a patrol, you ran the risk of being fired on by Muslims. I tried not to sidestep that, but in the orders I said: 'If you come across them [weapons], collect them. If you don't come across them, don't go looking for them! Is not worthwhile.'[899]

The regulations were so unclear that neither did the battalion leaders know whether the ban on searching houses was an unwritten rule or a UN rule. To prevent escalation of the confrontation between the ABiH and Dutchbat, Lieutenant Colonel Karremans decided, towards the end of the deployment, to leave large groups, who were walking around openly with weapons, undisturbed.

In brief, it is not surprising that Karremans remarked to the NIOD that in his opinion nothing ever came of demilitarization.[900] During Dutchbat III especially, the execution of demilitarization measures formed an acute security problem, because the Dutch had little or nothing else to offer the

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894 Interview C.H.P. Vermeulen 09/06/99.
895 SMG/Debrief. Ccie (NL) UN INFBAT Standing Orders Part III.
896 Interview R. Sensen 11/02/99.
897 Interview A.J. Derksen 10/04/95.
898 Interview E.G.B. Wieffer 18/6/99.
899 Interview J.H.A. Rutten 01/12/99.
900 Interview Th.J.P. Karremans 01/12/00.

population. Because the Bosnian Serbs would not allow through any more fuel, fresh food, or medical stocks, Dutchbat could hardly do anything more for the population. The situation was utterly hopeless, as the humanist counsellor Hetebrij said: 'You had to beat with a stick with one hand and give with the other hand, but we had nothing to offer'.[901]

For the Dutch battalions, there was no doubt that the ABiH had weapons at their disposal in the enclave. There was regular shooting in and around the Safe Area. Especially in the evening and at night it was unclear where the firing was coming from. Unknown marksmen also fired over and at the compound in Potocari, and sometimes shots landed only a couple of metres away from the Dutch soldiers. This was nothing special for those who had regularly been on the shooting range, but it made others fairly nervous. On the compound, they assumed that ABiH marksmen were involved and they became increasingly amazed about what they had to put up with from the Muslims, who they were supposed to protect. The practice of 'drawing fire' by ABiH soldiers around the OPs was a permanent source of concern. Because the ABiH fired on Bosnian-Serb positions in the vicinity of Dutch OPs, there was a fairly large probability that the observation post would come under fire if the Serbs returned fire. This also did happen regularly. The Dutch assumed that the ABiH played this risky game to involve Dutchbat in the conflict.

In this way, the relationship between Dutchbat and the ABiH deteriorated in the course of time. This is also apparent from the manner of the response to the figure of Naser Oric. The first battalion still had mixed feelings about Oric, but the second and third battalions no longer had a good word for him. Oric also showed himself far less in the last period, and he was generally viewed as a criminal. On the other hand, a number of soldiers did have respect for him, and they were also not unmoved by his aura of invincibility and heroism. A Dutchbat III soldier relates his first acquaintance with Oric:

> 'I first met him on a patrol. We arrived at a stream; I no longer know what it was called. There was some kind of small water mill there. He was sitting there resting with a group of men. Because they were armed, I said to the sergeant: 'Shouldn't we take those weapons?' His answer was: 'If you really want, off you go! But that is Naser Oric.' He explained a little about who he was and what he had done before the enclave was established. That he had practically liberated the entire enclave from the Serbs with a small group of men. I then started to take a different view of the matter.'[902]

For the third battalion, the taking hostage of a large group of Dutchbat members in the Bandera Triangle, which was discussed in Chapter 6, was one of the first and immediately also one of the most perturbing experiences with the ABiH. This confrontation took only a few days, but did set the tone. From 28 January 1995, 100 men were detained at three locations in the western part of the enclave. Negotiations took place regarding a solution, and permission was even obtained for a supply trip to the detained unit. The local civilian population provided the men with fresh bread and snacks.[903] Nevertheless, for the Dutchbat III personnel who had just arrived in the enclave, it remained totally incomprehensible that they should be taken hostage by the same Muslims who they had come to protect. This is how the view could become established that relations with the Muslims were more problematic than those with the Bosnian Serbs.

While the Dutchbat members were being held hostage, the village carpenter arrived in the compound to sell woodcarvings to their colleagues, at West European prices. This was the height of absurdity for the soldiers in the compound. Some wondered whether the money paid to the carpenter

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[901] Interview with Bart Hetebrij in *Panorama*, autumn 1995, pp. 19-21.
[902] Interview A.E. Broeder, 03/5/00.
[903] MID/RNlI. Dutchbat Milinfo Sie 2/3 30/01/95.

was used to buy the weapons that made life miserable for Dutchbat.[904] The experience of powerlessness, which is so disturbing for soldiers, was described by Captain E.G.B. Wieffer as follows:

> 'You just sat in the underdog position. That was the point. You were the underdog because you were in a remote location. You were the underdog because there was no possible way out. This was also well known. The battalion occasionally shouted: 'How can we do the job if matters really get out of hand?' You were also the underdog simply because you were bullied by both the ABiH - and I am not referring to the Muslims, but to the ABiH - and the VRS anytime they felt like it. And therefore you had no mandate, nor any position of power, and therefore no leg to stand on to participate there as UN. You were just a small boy there.'[905]

Dutchbat patrols were regularly apprehended by the ABiH and sent back. For example, a patrol from OP-A at the end of April 1995 was told by the local leader Imzah Begovic 'that they were no longer allowed to pass through the village of Sastafci'.[906] Practices of this kind made the execution of the original task as good as impossible.

The assumption of the deployment - that Dutchbat was present 'with the assent of both parties' - seemed in practice to be becoming increasingly problematic. The fact that agreements had been signed did not necessarily mean that they were also carried out. In spite of agreements, it was not made very difficult for the warring factions to quietly continue going their own way. The procedure that prescribed how patrols were to respond if they came under fire, virtually invited misuse. In the event of shooting, the patrol actually had to lie on the ground, and after ten minutes someone was supposed to review the situation. It the situation was safe, the patrol could cautiously resume. However, if the shooting started again, the patrol had to turn back. This procedure certainly helped limit the escalation of violence, but at the same time it made it very simple for the ABiH to get rid of a patrol: just fire twice over their heads.[907]

Dutchbat III increasingly often observed large armed groups of ABiH, which it could not act against. At the end of January 1995, approximately 400 Muslims armed with rifles and bazookas even gathered in front of the gate of the compound in Srebrenica. An hour later they departed again to the south. It was a mystery to Dutchbat members what this action was supposed to mean, although most tended to interpret the incident as a show of strength.[908]

There was also great irritation about the maintenance of the weapons that the ABiH had actually handed in; it had been agreed that the ABiH was permitted to maintain these weapons. They were stored in the Weapon Collection Point, which was controlled by B Company. According to the ABiH, Dutchbat members refused to supply them with the necessary maintenance equipment, such as polishing cloths and oil, which were not part of the agreement. Several incidents took place during the maintenance sessions. For instance, on 21 March 1995 an ABiH soldier attempted to take away a dismantled Kalashnikov after a maintenance session in the Weapon Collection Point. This attempt was discovered, after which B Company removed all ABiH personnel from the compound.[909]

Apart from that, the ABiH also had numerous complaints about the military task performance by the Dutch battalions. Ramiz Becirovic, Deputy Commander of the ABiH in Srebrenica, blamed the Dutch soldiers for never being willing to believe what they had not seen with their own eyes. Becirovic once took a Dutchbat patrol to the Muslim village of Jasenova. He wanted to make the Dutch aware of

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[904] NIOD, Coll. Koreman. Diary Koreman, 17th week 25.
[905] Interview E.G.B. Wieffer, 18/06/99.
[906] MID/RNlI. Milinfo 30/04/95.
[907] 101MIPel. Military debriefing report DUTCHBAT II 09/02/95.
[908] Dutchbat Milinfo Sie 2/3, 29/01/95.
[909] Dutchbat Milinfo Sie 2/3, 22/03/95.

infiltration by Bosnian Serbs in the village. While Becirovic was lying flat on his stomach in hiding, the Dutch stood surveying the situation. They could make no other observation than: 'We see that they are there, but we can't do anything about it.'[910] - this was a frustrating experience for Becirovic.

Under the circumstances in the enclave it was not simple for the Dutch battalions to observe the necessary neutrality or impartiality. This was even exacerbated by the material aid to the destitute population. The parties involved, in the midst of a conflict where the distinction between civilians and soldiers was often unclear, rapidly interpreted such aid as partiality. Humanitarian aid to civilians could in practice lead to indirect aid to the soldiers. The UN order stated clearly that the Dutch battalions must act in a 'neutral' and 'impartial' way. The views on the practical meaning of these concepts diverged somewhat, however, because they were not translated into clear rules. The consequence was that each (company) commander interpreted 'neutrality' and 'impartiality' in their own way.

In the period of Dutchbat I, Commander Vermeulen and Liaison Officer Derksen shared the view that neutrality meant that Dutchbat must not take sides and should try to get on well with all parties. This came down to 'never appearing vulnerable and not been swayed by either of the parties'. They were aware of the nature of the problems and they tried to familiarize themselves with them without taking sides.[911] The way in which Vermeulen defined the term neutrality did not mean that his people were allowed no contact with the population nor dealings with anyone. Yet he was well aware of how difficult it was to keep a grip on neutrality and impartiality. After all, 'as soon you go in and sit down, you are with the Muslims and you are one with the Muslims, and you are the opposing party for the other party. You will never again be neutral.'[912] According to Derksen, you have to preserve your impartiality, but this did not mean that you could not deal with people in a friendly way.[913]

The Commanders of Dutchbat II and III felt obliged to define the position differently. They opted to keep more distance and limited themselves as much as possible to functional contacts. They were also more apprehensive of too intimate contacts between battalion members and the population, because this could endanger the neutrality. Partly on the basis of their experiences in Lebanon, Everts and Karremans practically forbade contact between Dutchbat and the local population. They themselves also hardly had contact with anyone, because in their eyes this was a prerequisite for 'neutral' action.[914] It had been driven home in the preparation that Dutchbat must act in a neutral way, and that keeping a distance appeared to be the simplest way to give substance to the concept of impartiality. However, Dutchbat members were occasionally allowed to play football with the population and to provide organized humanitarian aid.

The most far-reaching consequences of the order to be neutral and impartial were taken by the Commander of Dutchbat III B Company, Captain Groen. Groen wanted to distinguish two tasks within the framework of his main task. In the first place, according to him, came the care for his own personnel, and in the second place the safety of the Muslims. To perform the latter task as well as possible with the limited resources that he had available, it appeared to him to be advisable to remain as 'neutral' as possible. Based on what he had heard of the experiences of his predecessors, he thought that a 'neutral' attitude could also mean that, if necessary, he would have to protect his own people against the Muslims. Groen understood from the accounts that Dutchbat I arrived in the enclave very pro-Muslim, on the assumption that they were there 'to help the Muslims against those bastard Serbs'.

According to his own account, his view was different:

> 'I think that as part of the UN you have to be impartial. This was also officially the intention. To be a third party in the middle. But they clearly very openly took the side of the Muslim population, which is very understandable, because

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910 Interview Ramiz Becirovic, 02/02 and 05/02/98.
911 Interview A.J. Derksen, 10/04/01.
912 Interview C.H.P. Vermeulen, 09/06/99.
913 Tabak, *Tussen hamer en aambeeld*, pp. 49-50.
914 Interview Th.J.P. Karremans, 26/06/98.

> you have the idea that you are in the misery together. But you do send a signal to the Serbian side who are surrounding you. As Dutchbat I, I would also not have approached this as they did.'[915]

It is striking that Groen apparently failed to notice that in addition to Dutchbat I's good contacts with the Muslims, they also maintained good contacts with the Serbs, and in this way therefore also acted in a 'neutral or impartial' way, except that it was not consistent with his own view. The commanders give their own interpretation of the principle of neutrality, but in the case of the last two commanders this entailed that they preferred to reduce contacts with the Muslims to a minimum. This can be partly attributed to the fact that the training paid no attention to how neutrality and impartiality were to be interpreted: this meant that it was unclear what was permissible and what not in the contacts with the warring factions. The matter was left to the capacities of the responsible officers, such as their insight into human nature, flexibility, creativity and social intelligence.

It appeared that Dutchbat II and III preferred to be safe than sorry, and avoided risks in this area as much as possible.[916] This was otherwise a consequence not only of a personal interpretation of orders by the Dutchbat leaders, but also of the worsening relationship with the ABiH and, in general, the increasing tension in and around the enclave. What was problematic in this line of conduct was that Dutchbat actually assumed that it was there for the benefit of the population in the enclave. At the same time, the battalion leaders deemed contact with the population to be so risky for the mission, that the enclave residents were kept as much as possible at a safe distance. This ultimately led to a paradoxical situation, in which it was actually forbidden to make contact with the Muslims, while they were to be provided with humanitarian aid.

In order to assess Dutchbat's situation, it is also necessary in general terms to raise the question of to what extent striving for neutrality is compatible with a peace mission with a strongly humanitarian element. Simply by being present, peacekeepers influence the existing relationships and the way in which the hostilities develop. The task of providing humanitarian aid to a less than clearly separated conglomerate of civilians and soldiers made this even more difficult. The UN intervenes politically and militarily to achieve its objectives and is therefore a party in skirmishes, fighting and aid. Upholding the principle of neutrality in such a situation is more of a wish than a reality, and it is even questionable whether it can serve as an adequate guide for action in a UN context.[917] The concepts are often interchanged, but it is possible to make a clear distinction .

*Impartial or neutral?*

According to specialists, the concept of 'impartiality' has appeared to be more workable for peace missions than 'neutrality', also for many NGOs.[918] Impartiality allows for being 'judgmental', which, roughly speaking, means acting as a referee. Neutrality is a more detached attitude. The author J. Pictet describes the difference as follows: 'the neutral man refuses to make a judgement whereas the one who is impartial judges a situation in accordance with pre-established rules'.[919] At the time of the deployment

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915 Interview J.R. Groen, 14/01/00.

916 The commanders of Dutchbat II and III have also repeatedly pointed out that through their experiences in Lebanon they had become extremely cautious and wished to act in a strictly neutral way.

917 The author Hugo Slim explains the pitfalls of using concepts such as neutrality and impartiality extremely well in 'Positioning Humanitarianism in War: Principles of Neutrality, Impartiality and Solidarity in: '*Aspects of Peacekeeping'* D.S. Gordon and F.H. Toase (ed.) (London, 2001) pp. 125-140, The author Stuart Gordon does the same in 'A Recipe for Making the Safe Areas Unsafe' in: *Aspects of Peacekeeping,* D.S. Gordon and F.H, Toase (eds.) (London, 2001) pp. 213-230 The Sandhurst Conference Series.

918 see explanation by Hugo Slim in the article 'Positioning Humanitarianism in War: Principles of Neutrality, Impartiality and Solidarity in: *Aspects of Peacekeeping,* D.S. Gordon and F.H. Toase (eds.) (London, 2001) p. 134.

919 J. Pictet '*The Fundamental Principles of the Red Cross: A Commentary,* Geneva, 1979, p. 26. An American Air Force manual for dealing with NGOs contains the following clear and concise description of the difference between neutrality and

of Dutchbat, the problematic implications of the order to observe neutrality by the United Nations were still little recognized, let alone that account was taken of them in formulating the order for Dutchbat. The consequence was that each commander provided his own interpretation of these concepts. Vermeulen of Dutchbat I viewed 'neutral' as remaining on friendly terms with everyone; Everts and Karremans of Dutchbat II and III viewed it more as keeping distance from the parties.

*Security measures in the contacts with the population and the warring factions*

Dutchbat II and III aimed to avoid contacts between Dutch soldiers and the local population, also for reasons of military security, as much as possible. There had been regular problems in previous years. For instance, men of the Dutch transport companies sometimes took civilians along in convoys over the confrontation line, which could have endangered the entire convoy. Contacts with civilians could also easily have led to identification and taking sides, which was in conflict with aiming for neutrality. In the case of Dutchbat I and II, for example, it appeared that battalion members sent numerous parcels to civilians in the enclave. Rave, who, apart from being a member of the liaison team, was also a military security officer of Dutchbat III, wanted to stop this practice because it carried security and operational risks.[920]

For that matter, not all members of Dutchbat III fell under the explicit ban on contact with the population. However, it was advised in connection with the security risks to limit contact to what was strictly necessary and functional. In problems of this kind too, it came down to working according to individual discretion. According to an involved party, Rave solved this problem on the Potocari compound by means of the following line of conduct: 'Contacts are fine, but I do want them to be reported to me'. In this way he was able to check what specific contacts involved, and whether anything strange was going on.

Rave impressed upon soldiers to remain anonymous and therefore not to disclose their names. He was concerned about possible activities of Intelligence Services and criminals. Therefore, for example, Rave instructed no envelopes to be thrown away, in case addresses might be revealed. It became apparent that this was no groundless fear when half a year after Major Franken met with Colonel Jankovic (VRS), he received a Christmas card at his home address. The wife of the Dutchbat dentist once phoned the Situation Centre in The Hague because a package had been delivered to her home with the request to forward it to her husband in the enclave. Her husband was extremely concerned, and that possibly had consequences for his performance in the enclave.[921]

The Dutchbat III B Company was the strictest with respect to security measures. The B men wore no name tags and were not allowed to speak to the local population. The probability of problems for this company was greater, of course, than for the other companies in Potocari, because Bravo was located in the middle of Srebrenica town. During the training of the battalions, military safety had already been raised for discussion. The lessons were repeated in Srebrenica and updated on the basis of new information and experiences. This especially concerned the risks associated with trading with the local population and exchanging equipment. In addition, the attempts to use Dutchbat for postal traffic into and out of the enclave was raised. The risks of maintaining contacts, entering into personal relations and 'taking sides' were likewise raised. Finally, alertness was called for in telecommunication. The ABiH warned Dutchbat that the VRS was intercepting all the message traffic that was sent over

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impartiality: '*Neutrality implies that all parties will be equally affected by an action. But no peace operation, not even unarmed monitoring, will be likely to affect all parties equally and therefore none is neutral. Impartiality implies that the United Nations, normally the Security Council, believes that all parties share responsibility and therefore refuses to identify aggressor or victim. Peace operations are or should be impartial*', in: 'Strengthening the Partnership' Improving Military Coordination with Relief Agencies and Allies in: *Humanitarian Operations*. Prepared by Rand for United States Air Force by Daniel Byma. (et al.), Santa Monica, 2000, p. 105.

920 Confidential interview (85).

921 Confidential interview (85).

open channels. This was confirmed by the British UNMO, Major Donaldson, who had been presented with a fax, which he himself had sent, by the Bosnian Serbs at Yellow Bridge.[922]

## 11. Logistics problems

Apart from the above-mentioned problems of a military-operational nature, there were also great logistical difficulties that limited Dutchbat's radius of action in the enclave. Practically all stocks had to be brought in from outside the enclave. It was described in Chapter 6 how problematic supplying Dutchbat was. This was also true of the humanitarian transports which were the enclave's lifeline and which Dutchbat was to protect through its presence. Dutchbat's logistics problems had repercussions not only on the battalion's own performance, but also on the possibility of performing the military and the humanitarian tasks in a reasonably satisfactory way. This in turn had a great influence on the relations that Dutchbat maintained with the two warring factions and their paramilitary units, with the administrators of the enclave, and with the civilian population in general.

Dutchbat III was confronted with dire and, under the circumstances, nearly insoluble supply problems as a consequence of the way in which the VRS dictated the supply. Under the first Dutch battalion, the resupply originally went fairly well and it was possible to build up stocks. The more the supplies were obstructed the less fuel and fresh food came in. In mid April 1994, the VRS closed all roadblocks to UN columns. Two supply transports and a convoy of personnel going on leave were therefore unable to leave. This was the original reason for cancelling the visit that Minister Ter Beek was to make to Srebrenica and Potocari. There was still enough fresh food for a few days: after that Dutchbat would have to draw on the reserves. There were still substantial stocks of canned food, water and fuel: the only shortages were of such items as razor blades, soap and nails.[923]

The situation was more serious for the population: for them there was only enough food in stock for one week. At the handover to Dutchbat II, on 21 July 1994, there was only fresh food for one day and fuel for four days in stock. The extremely problematic situation that Dutchbat III ran into has already been referred to and will be further elaborated in Chapter 4 of Part III. A comparison with the experiences of Dutchbat II shows that they actually had similar experiences, albeit in a less acute form.

It is clear that on arrival Dutchbat II immediately found itself with problems concerning supplies. In the first month of the stay in the enclave, a strategy had to be developed to deal with the situation. Because the food and medicine convoys were not allowed to bring medicines into the enclave, there was almost no possibility of humanitarian aid for the population any more. The Dutch relief personnel were body searched on passing the Serbian checkpoints and personal possessions such as penknives and transistor radios were confiscated. Car radios were also ripped out of the trucks.[924] As soon as two days later, the patrols had to be cut back because there was no longer enough fuel. A group from the first Dutchbat battalion that was on the way to Zagreb, had to wait for six hours at the Yellow Bridge checkpoint on the enclave border, because all 250 bags were searched. Still no fresh food and essential components arrived.[925] Another day later, the VRS refused access to OP-A.

On 27 July, *Médecins Sans Frontières* and UNHCR threatened to stop their activities, because they were no longer possible without fuel. The Commander of Dutchbat II then wondered how the situation would develop, and recognized the risk of the population turning against the Dutch soldiers.[926] Dutchbat promised *Médecins Sans Frontières* as much diesel as possible from the UNHCR

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[922] Confidential information (15).
[923] *Defensiekrant*, 21/04/94.
[924] Def. Sitreps. Sitrep 20 - 21 July 1994 from DUTCHBAT II to Sector HQ North-East ops offr G3 cc. Tuzla, Lukavac, Sitcen BLS and 11 Lumblbrig. From early August, these sitreps were also copied to the Dutch General Bastiaans, who was stationed at a HQ UNPROFOR Zagreb. He therefore had the opportunity to be completely informed of the difficult position in which the Dutch battalion found itself in Srebrenica.
[925] Def. Sitreps. Sitrep DUTCHBAT II dispatch see above, 24/07/94.
[926] Def. Sitreps. Sitrep DUTCHBAT II, 27/07/94.

reserve on the compound, to enable them to carry on a little longer. At the Serbian checkpoint in Zvornik, cameras, jackets, shoes and walkmans of Dutch UN soldiers were confiscated, and personal post was opened. There was still no fresh food, although some diesel did arrive, but still no oil and spare parts for vehicles[927]. Another day later, there was a meeting attended by all the UNMOs, *Médecins Sans Frontières*, UNHCR, UnCivPol, Opstina and Dutchbat on the humanitarian situation in the enclave. The Opstina needed diesel for harvesting, and *Médecins Sans Frontières* needed it for the hospital and the water supply. Company Commander Everts promised in both cases to meet their needs.[928]

On 2 August the Commander admitted that he could hardly function any more if no oil, spare parts, tyres and batteries were to arrive in the coming days. In that case practically all the vehicles would be immobile.[929] However, still nothing arrived, and Everts found it necessary to draw a new operation plan on the basis of a minimize programme. The humanitarian aid was continued as much as possible. The farmers in the enclave were provided with fuel to enable them to bring in the harvest. On 9 August, the Commander again stressed that they were hardly able to continue using vehicles, which seriously threatened the execution of the tasks. To make matters worse, the convoy that was on its way to Srebrenica had to turn back half way because of lack of clearance.[930] The following day the Commander issued the instruction to stop all tasks for which vehicles were necessary, because still no convoys were arriving.

Execution of duties according to the minimize concept was expected to be sustainable possibly for about three weeks. Because no more medical supplies were arriving either, the treatment of any seriously wounded among Dutchbat's own personnel was even at risk. For the population, the food situation deteriorated even faster than for the Dutch soldiers. There were stocks for only about five days, after which large groups would actually have to go without food. Moreover, infestations of lice and fleas were commonplace, which in combination with the extreme heat, poor water supply and the shortage of food, made the general health situation in the enclave particularly risky. Dutchbat considered these rapidly deteriorating living conditions for the population to be threatening, and they feared groups of starving people at the gate.[931]

The next day, a UNHCR convoy did arrive, but it had little food on board. Dutchbat also received a convoy, so that the soldiers were again able to function normally for three to five days. Everts then urgently requested to be allowed to bring food from these reserves to the enclave in the hope that it would calm the population somewhat.[932] In the meantime, however, problems had arisen with the local manager of the warehouse during the unloading of the UNHCR-convoy - which, in the light the distressing conditions, were rather remarkable. He was furious when he saw a couple of cans of meat with patches of rust, and he demanded, even after it had been shown that the contents were perfect, that the whole load of twelve tons be sent back to Belgrade. The president of the Opstina promised Dutchbat that it would have a word with the manager.

On 16 August, Dutchbat was again fully occupied with cleaning the town, and it again supplied diesel for the threshing machines.[933] Because essential components for tracked and other vehicles still had not arrived, 'normal' functioning was impossible. The mood deteriorated when a Dutchbat member was seriously wounded in a mine incident. On 18 August, another Dutch citizen was seriously wounded in a mine incident; another mine damaged an APC. The mines were on a road that only Dutchbat used,

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927 Def. Sitreps. Sitrep DUTCHBAT II, 30/07/94.
928 Def. Sitreps. Sitrep DUTCHBAT II, 31/07/94.
929 His irritation about the state of affairs was exacerbated when he concluded that the lines of command for HQ-NE were apparently still unclear after six months. He therefore also requested orders, messages etc. to be sent *directly* to HQ Dutchbat in Srebrenica and no longer only to all sorts of subordinate Dutchbat units elsewhere in the region, Def. Sitreps. Sitrep DUTCHBAT II, 09/08/94.
930 Def, Sitreps. Sitrep DUTCHBAT II, 09/08/94.
931 Def. Sitreps. Sitrep DUTCHBAT II, 09/08/94 (again cc Dutch General Bastiaans HQ UNPROFOR Zagreb).
932 Def. Sitreps. Sitrep DUTCHBAT II, 14/08/94.
933 Def. Sitreps. Sitrep DUTCHBAT II, 16/08/94.

and therefore this accident was interpreted as a deliberate VRS action against Dutchbat. The Dutch reckoned with increasing tension between Dutchbat and the VRS.

In the course of the entire month, on average approximately ten Muslim citizens were admitted to the hospital in the Dutch compound in Potocari. Because the VRS constantly blocked medical supplies, and Dutchbat itself had two seriously wounded, the battalion leaders informed headquarters that they would have to suspend the medical help to the population because the stock was practically exhausted. If a serious accident should occur, Dutchbat had sufficient medical supplies to operate on at most three of its own soldiers.[934]

This was how Dutchbat II's first month in the enclave progressed. At the end of August 1994, it was observed that because of the lack of fuel, all tasks would have to be minimized and the patrols could only be carried out on foot. If things were to continue in this way, it was unavoidable that all activities would have to stop at the end of August. The preparations for winter threatened to be brought into serious danger because of the lack of necessary material.[935] With the exception of humanitarian aid, in September the assistance provided by the engineers to the population also had to be suspended. Meanwhile, the food situation for the population deteriorated rapidly: 2000 people were being provided with meals through the social kitchen, which was supplied partly by Dutchbat. The population and the international organizations waited desperately for the arrival of food convoys.

On 4 October, Commander Everts reported that the food situation in the enclave had become even more disastrous, because yet another UNHCR convoy had been refused. The Dutch battalion's situation also deteriorated again. As soon as the minimum stock of diesel was 6000 litres, Dutchbat II was to suspend all movements in the enclave and limit action to maintaining a presence only. If no convoy was to arrive in the following seven to ten days, then they would have to conclude that the mission was no longer feasible. On 21 November, Everts presented the matters even more starkly in his report: if by 24 November no diesel had arrived, he would be obliged to suspend all activities and he would do no more than secure his own compounds.

At that time they were busy making stoves and open hearths and cutting wood. Furthermore, there was no more hot water and no heating in the sleeping accommodation. Light was only available while they were working, and no longer in their free time, and Radio Dutchbat was also taken off the air.[936] En passant, a convoy of soldiers on leave 'disappeared' for a couple of days: it turned out to have been captured by the Bosnian Serbs. On 29 November, it was clear that if no food convoy were to arrive within a couple of days, there would be acute hunger among the population. Dutchbat therefore requested the dropping of food by air and attempted to generate its own power by placing improvized water mills in the stream.

On 8 December, Everts told the *Defensiekrant* that the state in the enclave was 'abominable'. Within five days, the majority of the population would have exhausted their supply of food. Everts was particularly surprised that people in the Netherlands had the impression that life in the enclave was continuing as normal. He was also deeply concerned about the possible consequences for Dutchbat if the population were to run out of food completely.[937] It was precisely in these days that Dutchbat II could finally be relieved and return to the Netherlands. Most of the men were exhausted and disillusioned. They had a strong feeling of being completely on their own for six months, without any support from the UN or from the Netherlands. The departing Batallion Commander expressed his heartfelt 'thanks' to the headquarters of UNPROFOR and all other parties concerned in one of his last sitreps, for 'all the interest in our problems.'[938]

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[934] Def. Sitreps. Sitrep DUTCHBAT II, 21/08/94.
[935] Def. Sitreps. Sitrep DUTCHBAT II, 23/08/94.
[936] Def. Sitreps. Sitrep DUTCHBAT II, 21/11/94.
[937] E. Brouwer, 'Dutchbat vormt erehaag voor konvooi' ('Dutchbat forms a guard of honour for convoy'), *Defensiekrant,* 08/12/94.
[938] Def, Sitreps. Sitrep DUTCHBAT II, 02/12/94.

For Dutchbat II this meant a nearly constant lack of fuel, ammunition, spare parts, medicine and personnel, and no post. Disregarding the problems in the execution of military and operational tasks, nearly all everyday practices were influenced negatively directly or indirectly by these logistics problems. The Defence leaders were aware of the situation, but The Hague never made it publicly known in its information on the daily practice of the deployment of Dutch soldiers in Srebrenica. In this way, the home front was kept in the dark about the problems that so seriously impeded Dutchbat's performance in the enclave. Dutchbat III encountered similar problems: looking back, Karremans evaluated these problems as follows:

> 'For the execution of a task, you need resources, and these resources were all present at the outset. We did have fuel then, so we could use the vehicles. We were able to assist the local population by giving them a generator, by carrying out the occasional repair, and so on, because in the beginning - and I am talking about January-February - convoys arrived regularly. This situation came to an end after 18 February. On 18 February, a fuel convoy was no longer permitted, and later no more medicines arrived. Then, soldiers due for leave were no longer allowed out. From mid April, those returning from leave were no longer allowed in. This ultimately grew to about one hundred men who wanted to return. After that no more spare parts arrived. Essential resources, which were necessary to carry out such matters, no longer arrived. If I consider the second aspect: humanitarian aid. At the start this went reasonably well. Everything arrived in ample quantities. Obviously, it can never be enough, that much is clear. But if at a certain moment even that stops, or only arrives in dribs and drabs, and the best is also skimmed off, then it is obvious that you have nothing left for the population. In actual fact, humanitarian aid stopped. We could continue reasonably well under these conditions, but the population could not, of course. They had been deprived of the kinds of normal things that you need to live, or, for the population, even to survive, for a considerable time.'[939]

The problems with the convoys had immediate consequences for Dutchbat II personnel due for leave, and even more so for those of Dutchbat III. According to Karremans, between sixty and eighty men in his unit never took leave. The fact that no more convoys arrived after mid April, and therefore no post, began to eat away at the men. Also, the lack of opportunity even to spend a week outside the enclave so as to recuperate in different surroundings, led to exhaustion. These circumstances are dealt with more extensively in the context of UNPROFOR in Chapter 4 of Part III.

Moreover, the position of impartiality was also brought into the discussion, because an anti-Serbian attitude started to arise. This was also the reason that Karremans even indicated in a report that Dutchbat was 'no longer willing, able and in a position to consider itself impartial due to the imputing policy of the Bosnian-Serb Government and the BSA [VRS].'[940] The mood about the mission also became more negative. Naval Medical Captain Schouten warned about the far-reaching consequences of the logistics problems in his diary:

> 'Therefore, never a light on in the evening, no TV, nothing. Reading and writing is therefore impossible after dark, except in the Intensive Care Unit, because there is still a patient there. No vehicles are running any longer, unless it is absolutely necessary. We are also bored to death. The atmosphere is irritable. Approximately half the group wants just one thing: to go home as

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[939] Interview Th.J.P. Karremans, 24/9/98.
[940] SMG, 1004. Fax of 29/06/95, no. TK95105 from Th. J.P. Karremans to Commander B-H Command HQ Unprofor Sarajevo subject: Continual hostage of 1 (NL)UN Infbn in Srebrenica.

> soon as possible. They live on messages and rumours. If the convoy would this, have they requested clearance yet Sunday, have you heard that ... you get sick of it. And when their hopes are dashed again, they collapse completely. The other half wants the same, as I do, but are just resigned to what happens and take what comes.'[941]

The immediate consequence of the logistics predicament was that the industriousness of the Dutch battalion sank to an ever lower level and the boredom and drudgery started to strike home. From mid May 1995, all convoys in or out of Srebrenica were refused, except for UNHCR and the UNPROFOR post vehicle. Dutchbat III received its last fuel in February 1995. All activities were cut back drastically. Because there was no fuel for refrigeration either, Dutchbat decided to distribute the frozen food that could no longer be kept.[942] This presented Company Commander Karremans with additional problems:

> 'It meant that the personnel of the supply platoon actually had nothing else to do. The company of drivers was also idle, because hardly any use was still being made of vehicles. They were only included in a schedule to participate in guard duty. This meant that an alternative had to be devised. Drudgery really breaks you up.'[943]

The supply platoon was also more or less without work because of the absence of the convoys. The battalion leaders attempted to come up with everything that might alleviate the drudgery and boredom, such as sport and activities. For example, the commandos gave mountaineering courses. If possible, the men were sent along with the escort of a UNHCR convoy or to an OP. There were also regular football matches on Sunday against the Muslims. A number of four-tonners then went along with personnel as spectators, so as to get out for once.

On 10 May 1995, Dutchbat III entered the state of 'superminimize', which meant that all lights were turned out ('the dark ages'), there was no more TV and hot water, and neither were there any normal meals. Electricity was still available only for the water treatment plant, the communication centres and the lighting of the compound fences. They also had to take cold showers and clothes could only be washed in cold water.

Paradoxically enough, the Serbs in Bratunac supplied diesel to the battalion, so that Dutchbat would continue to drive to Bratunac in a four-tonner to buy beer. The kitchen had no more fuel to cook with, and was limited to heating up emergency ration cans with hot water. It was also no longer possible to supply the village baker. Consequently, the only thing left to eat was biscuits. Because practically no vehicles were still able to run, Dutchbat members could only leave the gate on foot. To be allowed out of the gate, there had to be at least six people together, well protected and secured, and in possession of a communications device.

## 12. Socio-cultural and psychological problems

In addition to the problems that had a military and logistics background, problems for Dutchbat in the enclave also arose as a consequence of the indisputable socio-cultural differences between the Dutch soldiers and the Muslim population of the enclave. This complicated the relations and reinforced mutual irritations and reciprocal lack of understanding. This subsequently caused Dutchbat and the local population to drift further apart in the constantly worsening predicament, so that they could no longer cooperate well in coping with the situation.

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941 NIOD, Coll. Schouten. Diary Schouten.
942 UNGE, UNHCR, F 19, SF 6, order 1995 FYOO OPS 16. UNHCR sitrep 18-05-1995 Srebrenica to Belgrade.
943 Interview Th.J.P. Karremans, 24/9/98.

The capacity to emphasize with the state that the population found itself in was indispensable to a fruitful contact leading to good collaboration and fulfilment of the task, provided at least that they did not opt for an attitude of complete aloofness. The Dutch battalions did notice the problems of the population, but they had insufficient understanding of the fact that the Muslim population had endured the effects of physical and mental hardships over a succession of years. The impact that this had on the psychological state of the population - the apathy, the depressions and the total dedication to survival that such circumstances generally entail, were completely unknown in the prosperous and peaceful Netherlands of the 1990s.

For example, the filthiness of the enclave was a permanent source of amazement and annoyance for the Dutchbat members, especially in combination with the fact that thousands of men were hanging around on the street with absolutely nothing to do. This led to a lack of understanding among most of the Dutch, who thought in terms of 'roll your sleeves up' and 'just do something about it'. Many also came to think that the people were probably just as dirty as the town. In a trip report by Major L. van Beek, who visited the enclave in November 1994, observations of this kind are almost literally recorded: 'The filthy mess that the people live in is striking. It is incomprehensible that people can continue to live in their own mess, rather than keeping things clean'.[944] The NGOs and Dutchbat made every effort - as is known - to clean up the town. The rubbish tip was moved to a location outside the town. The reasons were primarily hygienic, but they also wanted to discourage the population from searching for food on the rubbish tip.

Most Dutchbat members who went to the rubbish tip with the refuse truck during their deployment have very unpleasant memories of the experience. For many it was perhaps the most striking confrontation with the enormous difference between their own life in the Netherlands (and on the compound) and the life of the poorest group of Displaced Persons. The sight of people searching for food among their garbage left a deep impression on many. They also escorted the local drivers on the daily trip to the refuse truck, which they did in order to keep an eye on the local police, because they often acted with extraordinary harshness around the rubbish tip. A Dutchbat II soldier described the spectacle in a letter to his girlfriend:

> 'I went with the refuse truck to the rubbish tip today, and what I saw there made a great impression on me. I don't think that I am exaggerating if I say that there were a hundred people waiting there. So there we were, two UN soldiers to hold back about one hundred people (...) five minutes silence. There was a girl among them who stood out, pretty, red lips among a mass of 'poor beggars'. I just thought, what are you doing here? But when the refuse truck hatch opened, she was one of the first to try to grab something. Everyone stood around the refuse truck and some even crawled under the container when it started to unload, and they, including that girl, got all that muck (with the most sickening smell) on their heads. And how happy they were with a piece of discarded meat from the kitchen. Sometimes there would be two or three grown men tugging at a rubbish bag. No, I will not forget that in a hurry.'[945]

The first battalion did not quite know what to do about the rubbish problem. To prevent people from living in their filth, incinerating the rubbish was put forward as a solution. But this did not work, because people would retrieve red hot cans from the burned remains. After that, Dutchbat reverted to dumping the rubbish. 'Too old' canned food was the most cherished item, because food that was past the use-by date could no longer be given away, in contrast to food that was close to the expiry date.

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[944] Trip report of Major L. van Beek in *Buddy Bulletin,* December 1994.
[945] Confidential information (14).

Therefore, such cans were thrown away. Dutchbat I Commander Vermeulen formulated the problem as follows:

> 'I consider rubbish to be an ethical problem for a commander. What should I do with milk that is five days old. If I give it to the locals and someone gets sick, I will have the whole world on my neck. I am not allowed to give it to my men, and if I dump it I am criticized. There simply is no good solution. I consider it to be a great problem, a really great problem.'[946]

Throwing away food was the subject of much discussion within the battalions. Some thought they could help the population by actually throwing a large amount of food away, so that that there would be a fair amount of edible material among the dirt. The Commanders of the last two battalions, Everts and Karremans, acted firmly against throwing away good food. They thought it ran counter to human dignity to feed people via the rubbish tip. Moreover, searching through the rubbish tip was certainly not devoid of danger for the population, because they could come under Bosnian-Serb fire. They issued instructions to give excess food - in particular bread - to the elderly person's home, the hospital or the social kitchen in Srebrenica, after packing it well. This would ensure that the food would arrive with those most in need, and they would no longer have to retrieve it from the rubbish. Another argument for this course of action was that the oldest and weakest were unable to make the long journey on foot to the rubbish tip, which was also the case with the food droppings of 1993. Under the two last battalions especially, attempts were made to deliver potentially excess food to the population before the expiry date. This also happened when 'some lunatic' sent 10,000 eggs to the enclave: Dutchbat did not wait until they inevitably rotted, but sent some immediately to the humanitarian bodies[947].

Another source of irritation often mentioned by Dutchbat members was the Muslims' habit of 'endlessly hanging around and walking to and fro' in Srebrenica town. This is also an area where better information and more interaction could have helped. Precisely that 'doing nothing' was actually a great source of frustration for the population itself as well. The people could not work because there was no work for them, and furthermore there were many farmers among the Displaced Persons who had lost their land. What is more, the enormous lack of living accommodation meant that people lived in very cramped spaces, and often had to take it in turns to sleep. The other residents then had to take to the street. Otherwise, for some, this exodus was a reason to seek distraction by provoking Dutchbat. Especially in Srebrenica town, soldiers on guard duty received a large number of obscene gestures, and these provocations led in turn to a negative attitude towards the population.

The phenomenon of the great difference between poor and rich in the enclave and the attitude of the local elite were discussed above in Chapter 4, and they were a perplexing experience for the Dutchbat members. The elite of the local Muslim society were fairly well-off in material terms, and they had more than enough to eat. When Dutch people were invited to feasts by the military or civil Muslim leaders, they perceived this as a lack of solidarity with the destitute people in the enclave. The self-enrichment of the elite at the expense of the poorest groups usually met with a lack of understanding and aroused disgust. Even Karremans, who thought that his experiences in Lebanon had taught him to know what to expect, was surprised by the lack of mutual solidarity in the society in the enclave, the mutual harshness and violence.[948] The lack of involvement of the elite in the fate of the rest of the population led the Dutch soldiers to question why they should help the population, if the people would not even support each other.

Dutchbat I had already observed that, while hunger was rife among the population, the warehouses that were under the control of the civil administration contained large stocks of food. For Major A. Derksen the epitome was that he was invited as liaison officer to a dinner at the home of the

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[946] Interview C.H.P. Vermeulen, 09/06/99.
[947] Interview P. Lindgreen, 22/02/01.
[948] Interview Th.J.P. Karremans, 24/06/98.

Vice-President of the Opstina, Hamdija Fejzic, and was served by a waiter with a white napkin over his arm who put all manner of delicacies before him. A stones' throw away, people were living in the most miserable conditions in containers, and were dependent for help on this Fejzic.[949]

Because Srebrenica was dependent on the UNHCR convoys for the supply of food and other vital necessities, according to the local authorities there was an immediate life-threatening situation for the population in the event of a Bosnian Serb refusal to allow convoys through. It was repeatedly observed, however, that after a UNHCR convoy had been obstructed, the supply of UNHCR articles on the market nevertheless suddenly increased. The emergency therefore did not apply to the entire Muslim population: the privileged section had substantial reserves that could be sold for high prices.

The prices on the market varied considerably, in line with the supply. The articles came from UNHCR stocks or were brought in by smuggling from Zepa. In turn, the Bosnian Serbs bought the articles from the Ukrainian UN soldiers who protected this enclave. If the price on the market fell again in response to 'excessive' supply, it was not unusual for a number of smugglers to suddenly walk into an ambush. This reduced the supply, so that the prices rose again. In this way, the rulers in the enclave, possibly in collaboration with the Serbs, kept the local market prices high.[950] This was 'business as usual' under the circumstances. The three successive Commanders perceived the attitude of the local administration as passive, obstructive and self-enriching: they felt that Dutchbat constantly had to take responsibility for everything.

*The identities of the Bosnian Muslims*

Such lack of solidarity of a part of the administration and the army met with considerable incomprehension from Dutch soldiers, who found it incredible that 'they' did not help each other. The lack of understanding regularly led to condemnation of the behaviour of the Muslims as a group. In the preparation as well as via the media, the impression was established among the Dutchbat members that the Muslims were a homogeneous group and that the war had meant that all other 'self-identifications' of individuals had ceased to exist.

However, it is a misconception that outside pressure automatically causes a group to become homogeneous and to exhibit solidarity. In reality, people do not readily shed other identities, such as that of 'town-dweller', 'intellectual' or 'soldier', as soon as a collective identity is thrust upon them from the outside. This also proved to be the case in Srebrenica. *Médecins Sans Frontières* worker Hans Ulens, who was in the enclave at an early stage, recounts how the original residents behaved as the local elite towards the Displaced Persons. They looked down with contempt on these 'bumpkins', and felt not the slightest compulsion to help them.[951] The Belgian UNMO, who entered the enclave with Morillon, was also surprised that the town-dwellers did so little for the Displaced Persons. Only under pressure of UNHCR official Larry Hollingworth were public buildings, cinemas and hotels opened for the thousands of homeless.[952]

*Corruption*

Dutchbat was also constantly confronted with the corruption of the local administration. Opportunism and self-enrichment were the rule rather than the exception for administrators. For example, when the diesel ran out in the enclave, the bread had to be taken by horse and cart. Ultimately, Dutchbat arranged for someone to do this for payment in food. It quickly appeared that the man in question had

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[949] Interview A.J. Derksen, 10/04/01.
[950] A great deal of information is available on these smuggling practices, and this 'summary' is based on a discourse from 1996 by A.J. Derksen *'Ethiek op de werkvloer'*, Fax Derksen to NIOD.
[951] Interview H. Ulens, 06/08/97.
[952] Cant, *Lessen in waanzin*, p. 147.

to surrender the coffee to the Vice-President Hamdija Fejzic, and that the horse also belonged to Fejzic.

An incident illustrated Fejzic's attitude. During a check of local personnel in the Potocari compound, a woman was picked up for smuggling. This woman turned out to a sister-in-law of Fejzic: she tried everything possible to wriggle out of being dismissed. The fact is that it would involve him in a considerable scandal. Major Franken made use of the situation to put the Vice-President under pressure and to impose demands on him. Fejzic succumbed and the woman therefore escaped dismissal.

The local administration and the ABiH ensured that the UNHCR-supplied food was not all that was 'skimmed off': it also happened with the non-food articles. In 1994 the local police suddenly started walking around in new blue uniforms. Fejzic had had them made from stocks of material that the UNHCR had earmarked for the Displaced Persons. The battalion leaders were also unable to comprehend the anger of the local elite when OP commanders gave away items to the population. Later it became clear that the Dutchbat members were distorting the market for the local leaders, who sold the same items to the population at exorbitant prices.[953]

Cultural differences also came to light in the communication between the Dutch soldiers and the local population. The Dutch were accustomed to a fairly direct and goal-oriented style of communication, but both the Bosnian Serbs and the Muslims in East-Bosnia expressed themselves less directly. In this area it was customary first to build up a good relationship and only then to get to the point. The relationship had to be established by exchanging information about the family and suchlike. This cost much time and patience, which some Dutch soldiers found easier than others, in particular the liaison section. The practice of six-monthly rotations exacerbated the problem: precisely at the moment when the relationship had been established, the officer left and everything started again from scratch. The rotation system used by the battalions made it impossible to keep social knowledge and experience at a satisfactory level.

Major Franken observed among the elite what he called 'a Muslim-like world where religion was turned on and off, according to what was convenient'.[954] This was a problem for three Dutch battalions and a number of NGOs. They found that the Muslims would take decisions at the most unexpected times on the basis of their beliefs, which at other times appeared to play no role whatsoever. This caused much confusion and mistrust. An example was the introduction to the Muslim leaders, in which their Dutch opposite numbers were amazed by the enormous quantities of alcohol that were consumed: after all, they had been taught that Muslims are not allowed to drink alcohol. At the following meeting, Dutchbat was the host and they thought it would be appreciated if they offered alcoholic drinks. However, this time the drinks were indignantly refused, because they were Muslims. When Dutch help was called in to restart a generator in the bakery, there was great indignation when the machine was eventually repaired and fired, because it happened right on a religious holiday. Local leaders were also extremely angry when a UNHCR convoy arrived in the daytime during the period of fasting. However, Oric's men were still on the spot immediately to skim off their share.

*Cultural patterns*

Different cultural conventions and views around man-woman relationships were a regular source of friction between Dutchbat and the Muslims. Women happened to perform all the activities in the enclave, except cutting wood. They fetched water, tilled the land, collected food from the distribution points, washed clothes, cleaned and carried goods. Most men sauntered around, played chess or slept. This division of roles between the sexes caused amazement among the Dutchbat members and confirmed negative ideas about the Muslim men. A UN woman, who was in command, was not

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953 Interviews with various Dutchbat officers.
954 Interview R. Franken, 04/05/01.

accepted by the Muslims at first. When a degree of pressure was brought to bear and a clear emphasis was placed on the superior position of the woman, collaboration was possible, albeit to a limited extent. The men usually then repeated that in their eyes they had been put in an absurd situation. This inflexibility on the point of the relationship between the sexes, which was more pronounced on the part of the men from the countryside than those from the town, caused much astonishment among the Dutch.[955]

The cultural differences hampered the relationship between Dutchbat and the Muslims. Added to this, the years of physical and mental hardship that the enclave residents had endured, as is usually the case, did not bring out the most attractive traits in the people. Lieutenant Colonel P. Venhovens, psychologist with the Netherlands Army and with Dutchbat III, viewed the situation as follows. According to him, the Dutch soldiers had great trouble with the inconsistent and sometimes unpredictable behaviour of those under pressure. Dutchbat went to the enclave with the naive idea that they would be able to count on waves of sympathy from the local population and that that would be a sound basis for a relationship. The population of the enclave had been engaged since1992 in a bitter conflict with its besiegers, and therefore this expectation was fairly unrealistic.

Venhovens recalled that in those years grenades exploded in the enclave almost every day, and that the residents were shot at by snipers from the mountains. What is more, many residents were Displaced Persons from elsewhere who had lost all their possessions and many of their families in 'the ethnic cleansing': 'Don't demand of these people what is good or bad according to Western standards. They have a different priority: survival'. This priority justified everything, for example, stealing clothing from Dutchbat members, or from each other.[956] Discussions with Dutchbat members show that little attention was paid in the training to the experiences and the psychological state of the population in the enclave. Insufficient attention was given to the fact that a group of ten thousand people, confined together in dreadful conditions, would obviously undergo a change in their social and moral standards. The hardening of the social relations in Srebrenica was often misunderstood by Dutchbat members and interpreted as 'typical Muslim' behaviour.

Conversely, the poor cultural understanding that Dutch soldiers had of many everyday situations also caused amazement and concern among the population. One of the Dutchbat interpreters said that he did not know whether he should laugh or cry when a liaison officer came to him with the story that ABiH soldiers fastened explosives around themselves. The objective of this 'action' was assumed to be to enter Serbian houses and blow them up in a suicide action. The interpreter then asked what kind of training the section had actually received in the Netherlands and what they really knew about the Muslims in the former Yugoslavia. It particularly irritated the interpreter that Dutchbat members so easily swallowed this kind of Serbian propaganda about 'the Muslims'.[957]

The UNMO interpreter Hasan Nuhanovic also observed that there were many misapprehensions about Muslims within Dutchbat. What struck him was that battalion personnel so often wanted to talk to him about religion, dress codes and fundamentalism.[958] According to him, many, certainly when they were new in the enclave, were afraid of Muslims and fundamentalists, as well as everything that was unfamiliar. This can be partly explained by the training. In order to create an air of 'realism' in Dutchbat III's final exercise, Noble Falcon, a general call to evening prayer was sounded from the 'minaret' (a loudspeaker on a pole)[959] Such an image of 'the Muslim world' in Bosnia created a far from realistic pattern of expectations. Most of the Muslims in Srebrenica were aware that they were

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955 101MIPel. Reports of the debriefing of 12 infbat Lumbl 1-2 February Schaarsbergen 1995.
956 Interview with P. Venhovens in article 'Dutchbat heeft niets van bevolking van Srebrenica begrepen' ('Dutchbat understood nothing about the population of Srebrenica') by C. van der Laan, *Nieuwsblad van het Noorden,* 26/07/95.
957 Interview Mujo Nikic, 07/02/98.
958 Interview Hasan Nuhanovic, 06/08/97.
959 *Falcon,* December 1994 p. 13.

Muslim, but did not know how they were supposed to pray, and neither had they ever been in a mosque.[960]

*Doubts in Dutchbat about the value of the mission*

Alongside a lack of understanding about the religious background of the population of the enclave, there were other phenomena that the Dutchbat members understood little or nothing about. For instance, it was clear to everyone that there was collaboration in the south of the enclave between Bosnian Serbs and Bosnian Muslims. The Serbs there earned a great deal of money by supplying goods to Muslim traders. There was also a suspicion that lively barter took place of weapons for food. This knowledge made it even less clear to Dutchbat members what their task in the enclave was, and fuelled the feeling 'that they should sort it out by themselves, and that certainly no Dutch soldiers should die for the cause'. It was incomprehensible for them that parties traded with each other during the day only to use the items they had traded to go after each others' blood in the evening and at night. In this light, B Company reported at the end of May 1995 that in past twenty-four hours in the surroundings of OP-K, 51 persons and 27 horses had left the enclave and 8 persons with 6 horses had entered. In the following report, 24 hours later, it was stated that 38 persons and 8 horses had entered the enclave and 53 persons and 18 horses left.[961] Otherwise, trips to Zepa were also involved, in other words 'the normal smuggling', and not only trade with the VRS.

The sort of contact that existed between the warring factions was hard for most Dutch soldiers to understand, because it had rather paradoxical elements. After endless string-pulling, Dutchbat I succeeded in April 1994 in arranging a meeting between VRS and ABiH in the Potocari compound. This meeting was to discuss the exchange of mortal remains, to establish borders and a number of other issues. It was attended by VRS Major Nikolic, Mayor Salihovic, ABiH officers and various others. During the break, the Chief of Staff of the ABiH, Major Ramiz Becirovic, asked the Bosnian Serb Nikolic whether he could bring him two containers of *jupol* (white paint) and coffee next time, because he was painting his house (which he actually did later). After that there was much laughter and the Muslim Commanders Becirovic and Oric and their opponent Nikolic clapped each other on the shoulders and told hearty *combat stories*.[962]

Another contact with paradoxical features was that between Dutchbat and the Bosnian Serbs. The major problems with supplying the enclave meant that often little or no fresh food would arrive. Therefore they ate out of tins. When they complained to the UN about the monotonous canned food, the battalion was given French tins for a change, which were even less appetizing. Dutchbat therefore occasionally bought food from Bosnian Serbs in Bratunac, where they also stocked up on cans of beer and soft drinks. This was a remarkable situation in its own right because the Bosnian Serb army was the actual cause of the stagnation in the supply. This purchasing in Bratunac was started under Dutchbat I, after the battalion had complained to Nikolic that no convoys were being allowed through. Nikolic expressed understanding for the situation and offered to arrange for the Dutch to be able to buy fresh food, beer and soft drinks through him. The Dutchbat leaders decided to accept the offer, albeit scantily, until the convoys started to run again. Because the supply problems only became more serious, the subsequent battalions continued the habit of buying from the Bosnian Serbs. The refusal to give convoys clearance was otherwise the responsibility of the VRS in Pale and not of Nikolic personally.

Dutch soldiers who took a view of the situation, quickly came to the conclusion that their presence in the enclave was sometimes absurd, in view of the attitude of the warring factions. On the one hand, discussions with the Bosnian Serbs repeatedly demonstrated that they would be happy to let the Muslims leave. Most Muslims in the enclave would also have been pleased to leave, but, during the entire enclave period, were not allowed to do so by their own government in Sarajevo. This fact also

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960 Interview of counsellor Bart Hetebrij with Dutchbat interpreter in *EGO* April 1995, pp. 3-4.
961 MID/KL. Milinfo 27/05 and 28/05/95.
962 Interview P. Lindgreen, 22/02/01.

made it difficult for Dutchbat members to avoid being cynical about the entire state of affairs in the enclave - including their own presence.

While the battalion doubted the usefulness of the mission under these conditions, the Netherlands Army did not succeed in developing a clear vision of it, or at least not in conveying it to the unit in the enclave. This already came to light when Everts, the Commander of Dutchbat II, asked Couzy before his battalion's departure to Srebrenica: 'General, what should I do if the enclave is attacked?' The Commanding Officer's answer was as follows: 'Hold your position and act according to your own discretion.'[963] This response largely determined the Dutchbat leaders' frame of mind. They realized that they had to rely on their own resources if something should happen in the enclave. When, in November 1994, Everts informed the Commander of the Army Crisis Staff, Brigadier General Pollé and the Chief of Staff of UNPROFOR in Tuzla, Colonel Brantz, by fax that the battalion was no longer able to perform its duties, on Everts' own account he received no response whatsoever from The Hague.[964] Karremans also said he received no reply to his announcement in June 1995 that the operational and humanitarian situation was particularly serious and 'that if no change takes place in the short term in the state of affairs, a disaster cannot be ruled out'.[965]

The lack of understanding from The Hague for the local situation is also revealed in small but meaningful details. For instance, the military doctor W.J. Wertheim, who was one of the last outsiders to enter the enclave in May 1995, recalls: 'I will never forget it. It was a crazy event. A Warrant Officer had been sent with me. The situation then was already difficult! This was a Warrant Officer, who had been given the task of counting the number of televisions in the compounds!'[966] For the Dutch soldiers, who only had candlelight in the evenings, who had to shower in cold water, had no more fresh food and had to walk every metre, this was the final proof that people in the Netherlands had no idea of the conditions they had to put up with in Srebrenica.

The information provision from The Hague to the battalions in Srebrenica was utterly poor. Not only was it unpleasant for the Dutchbat soldiers to hear news about themselves on the Dutch RTL 4 television channel - which could be received by satellite - and not directly from the Ministry of Defence, but there was an additional problem. Because of the - often incorrect - reporting and statements from The Hague, the home front often became alarmed. The soldiers on the spot then had to use the extremely expensive satellite telephone to call home to explain 'that things weren't so bad'.[967] There was also to be a great deal of miscommunication in June 1995 surrounding the relief between the battalion and The Hague, as will be covered in Chapter 4 of Part III.

What particularly irritated the Dutchbat I and II leaders was the apparent lack of response to the repeated announcement that only 16 per cent of the necessary ammunition reserve was available. Neither did the report that what ammunition was available was more dangerous for the person firing it than for the enemy because it had been affected by damp lead to any reaction in The Hague that could be discerned in the enclave. More generally, both Everts and Karremans considered that the Ministry of Defence had not responded adequately to the negative developments in the situation in the enclave. They had counted on more response because they assumed that the Crisis Staff, who received the situation reports and were therefore in a position to be informed, would intercept the signals about the numerous problems and where possible would take steps or cause them to be taken. But whatever: from the enclave it was impossible to have a view of which body in The Hague was willing or able to take which responsibilities.

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963 P.L.E.M. Everts, 05/04/01.
964 Interview P.L.E.M. Everts, 05/04/01.
965 SMG/Debrief. Letter from Th. J.P. Karremans to C-Army Crisis Staff and Bgen Polle, subject : the state of affairs in Srebrenica,. 05/06/95 letter no. TK9589.
966 Interview W.J. Wertheim, 14/02/00.
967 The first two battalions were allowed 5 minutes of free calls a month (and sometimes twice a month, if the post was held up for a long time after incidents). The third battalion were not allowed this privilege, pending a new telephone system, but were allowed to call home for DM 40 for 8 minutes.

It furthermore appeared that responsibilities were constantly being moved around within the Ministry of Defence. According to the former Deputy Director of the Public Information Department of the Ministry of Defence, Kreemers, the messages from Karremans (known as the TKs) about the situation in Srebrenica, which arrived at the Army Crisis Staff, even after repeated urging, were not forwarded from the Army to the Ministry of Defence. This situation existed both in the period leading up to the fall and afterwards.[968]

It should be clear that the formal responsibility for the mission and for solving the numerous problems resided strictly with the UN. Nonetheless, the battalion leaders counted on General Bastiaans especially, as Commander of the Airmobile Brigade, to feel and to show himself equally responsible. Precisely because of the great isolation and the substantial problems in which the Dutch unit found itself, the officers concerned thought that they had a perfect right to make a claim on sympathy, a creative contribution of ideas, and other forms of support from senior officials in the Ministry of Defence. They simply could not imagine that, for formal reasons, The Hague would remain purely passive, while the state of affairs constantly worsened. After all, they also had taken the responsibility to make the battalions available.

## 13. Peacekeeper stress

Although the interpretation of the duties and tasks varied according to the (company) commander and battalion concerned, primary objectives for each of the three successive Dutchbat battalions were that assistance was to be provided in humanitarian aid, a contribution was to be made to keeping the peace in Bosnia through their presence, and the Muslim population was to be protected. Tasks such as patrolling, crewing observation posts and reporting ceasefire violations derived from this. The two last battalions in particular arrived at the conclusion that that they had been sent on a practically infeasible mission. The fact was that there was no actual peace, which therefore could not be monitored. The parties in the area refused to comply with the UN resolutions that affected them, and the disarming of the ABiH was not feasible. Dutchbat attempted to perform its duties as well as possible, but the situation in and around the enclave only became poorer. No response whatsoever was forthcoming to the observations of actions of the warring factions, which were reported to the UN headquarters. An exception to this were the events surrounding the Bandera Triangle, when Sector North East said 'press hard', which, however, immediately led to 100 Dutchbat members being taken hostage.

The assistance in humanitarian aid, which most soldiers considered to be their most useful activity, became increasingly difficult because of the ever scarcer arrival of convoys. The fear of firing incidents increased, as did the frustration about the firing incidents that did occur. That was particularly true if the bullets probably came from the ABiH side, because Dutchbat reasoned that they were actually there to protect the Muslims. These developments made it increasingly difficult to answer the question of the meaning of the presence and the activities of Dutchbat in the enclave, and so it also became ever more difficult to motivate the men. Chapter 9 below reflects in greater detail on the problems surrounding the morale of the Dutch battalions. On the subject of the relationship with the task regarding the population of the enclave, we will now go into a number of stressful aspects of peace operations.

Peacekeeping operations differ in many respects from regular military action. This creates other problems and expectations, as well as a different kind of tension. Operations of this kind generally involve a small degree of violence, but this does not automatically lead to less stress.[969] The psychiatrist Peijzel and the psychologist Jacobs mention confronting one's views of the world and humanity with those of a different reality as one forerunner to psychological problems. The change in social life and

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[968] Kreemers, *'Aan de achter kant van de maan'*, p. 5. Supplement from 2000.

[969] See for example article I of Zeist 'Stress en Nazorg' ('Stress and after care') in: *Maatschappij en Krijgsmacht,* April 1996.

the awkward communication with the home front can also cause problems.[970] Many authors also state that one can justifiably speak of a specific peacekeeper stress or even of a peacekeeper stress syndrome (PKSS), alongside the familiar Combat Stress Reaction.[971] There is also a clear distinction between traumatic stress and cumulative stress.[972]

Investigation has shown that a number of factors, which are specific to peacekeeping operations, can be identified as a cause of stress. In traditional peacekeeping operations, this particularly involved boredom, frustration, fear of illnesses and meaninglessness. The action in peace missions as has become customary in the last decade, entails other possible sources of potential stress.[973] It can be caused by unclear, ambiguous or infeasible Rules of Engagement, a lack of clarity about the objectives of the mission, threatening situations in the execution of humanitarian tasks, lack of familiarity in operating from a position of 'turning the other cheek' as opposed to 'striking back', and also a hostile attitude on the part of the population, who are precisely the people you thought you came to help.[974] The action has to take place in a way that runs counter to one's own professional expertise and such that one's own personnel are placed in greater danger than is strictly necessary from a military point of view.

On the other hand, additional tension can arise if the peacekeepers find themselves obliged to have their mandate and their own safety take priority over acting against common criminality and possible war crimes. The same happens if they have to collaborate with civilians or soldiers with a completely different background and training. This is particularly difficult for soldiers, because they are trained and socialized within a culture that is centred on individual initiative with all available means of force, as opposed to awaiting developments. Some researchers also refer to a specific 'post peace mission stress syndrome'. They consider that there is a clearly distinct mental clinical picture as a result of participation in peace missions. This tension is caused less by the fear of violence inflicted by others than by the fear that they will no longer be able to control their own aggression. The fact is that during such missions soldiers find themselves in situations in which their aggression is constantly stirred up and provoked without any adequate way for them to vent their feelings. In emotion-filled and life-threatening circumstances, they have to suppress both the fight and flight impulses and - against their own instincts - maintain a neutral attitude.

Another characteristic difference with the familiar military behaviour disorders as a consequence of combat situations is that peacekeeper stress often manifests itself a considerable time after the end of the mission.[975] Especially for soldiers who are trained to act and to operate with all available means of force, having to await developments can create tension. Peacekeepers, especially in the kind of peace operations of the last decade, often find themselves in situations that stir and provoke their aggression without them being able or authorized to do anything.[976] The soldiers had to behave

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[970] See B. Peijzel and R.W. Jacobs 'Stress, Trauma en Zorg' ('Stress, Trauma and Care') in: Baarda & Schoenman (ed.), *Werelden Apart?,* p. 161-162.

[971] The term peacekeeper (post-traumatic) stress syndrome said every bit as little as the term Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), which is a collective name for the most diverse psychological and psychiatric consequences of shocking, traumatic events.

[972] Sten Martini 'Peacekeepers Facing Horrors of Civil War-like Conflict. Danish Lessons Learned in Preparing and Taking Care of Soldiers' in: Biermann & Vadset (eds.), *UN Peacekeeping in Trouble,* p. 333.

[973] Brett T. Litz 'The Psychological Demands of Peacekeeping for Military Personnel' in: *NC-PTSD Clinical Quarterly* 6(1996)1, p. 1, 3-8, which can be read on Internet
http://www.ncptsd.org/treatment/literature/military/cq_v6n1b_peacekeeping.html
The site of the American 'National Center for PTSD' is a rich source of information on peacekeeping stress.

[974] See Brett T. Litz and others' Posttraumatic Stress Disorder Associated With Peacekeeping Duty in Somalia for U.S. Military Personnel' in: *American Journal of Psychiatry* Vol. 154(1997)2, pp 178-184 and J.R. Schoenman, 'Peacekeeping als (non-traditionele) stressfactor' ('Peacekeeping as a (non-traditional) stress factor') in: *Marineblad* 106 (1996) 10 pp. 284-288.

[975] See J.R. Schoenman, *'Veteranen van 'goede' en 'foute' missies'* ('Veterans of 'right' and 'wrong' missions'), *Militaire Spectator* 169(2000)5, pp. 231-240. (see Schoenman ' Peacekeeping als (non-traditionele) stressfactor', *Marineblad* 106 (1996) p. 287).

[976] This was clear from an investigation by the Netherlands Army as long ago as 1993 into the experiences of soldiers returning from the former Yugoslavia. 'The increasing tension with the civilian population, for example, when it was

passively, which is exactly the opposite of what a combat soldier normally does. An example of this was the endless humiliation and provocation that the Dutch soldiers had to put up with from the Bosnian Serbs during the 'checks' at the checkpoints.

Soldiers also had to remain passive, or 'impartial', while they found themselves in situations that could be described as organized inhumanity.[977] They have to attempt to uphold humanitarian values in an environment characterized by violence and a violation of those standards and values. Often, the endeavour to observe those values meets with resistance from the warring factions. Being forced into a spectator role as a third party in an environment that is characterized by violence and a violation of human rights can have drastic consequences for individual soldiers. Soldiers can come into conflict with themselves if they have to observe excesses, especially if they are prevented from acting by the Rules of Engagement. Such experiences consist of a mixture of guilt, compassion, powerlessness, frustration, fear, anger and hostility.

This complex of often simultaneous emotions is referred to by the term bystander anxiety.[978] This symptom occurs if people are not in a position to do anything about the violence in the surroundings. It is therefore particularly important for soldiers to know exactly what task derives from their mission, what position they have to take as a third party and how they are to interpret concepts such as neutrality, impartiality and humanity. It was therefore risky that there was no clear vision in the Netherlands Army during Dutchbat's mission on the question of how Dutchbat was to deal with situations that could occur in practice, and that much would depend on improvization. This was partly because the Rules of Engagement did not contribute to clarity on the way in which Dutchbat was to position itself in the enclave. This again created the opportunity for different commanders to interpret the position of the battalion in different ways: the result was confusion among Dutchbat members regarding how they understood their duties, and misunderstandings among the NGOs with which they had to cooperate.

A complicating factor was that the existence of peacekeeper stress was accepted only reluctantly within the defence organization at the time. The rule was more the idea that: 'it's not a war, after all, so how can you get stress from it?' Interviews repeatedly attest to a great disdain for the 'shrinks' and even more for the soldiers who called on them. An example is the response of Marine Major Piepers in 1995 in Busovaca (Bosnia), quoted in an article by J.R. Schoenman, when a request was passed on for having the men talk to a psychologist. Major Piepers simply will not hear of it, with the argument: 'If there is a psychological need, which there isn't, then we will resolve it ourselves.' When the doctor and counsellor of the company attempt to point out to him that there probably were problems, he interrupts them by saying 'it just won't happen'. The visit of the psychologists was just a case of 'military tourism' and resulted from the idea 'that the marines' camp is a zoo'. According to Piepers, the men could possibly also be talked into problems.[979]

In view of the factors that can give rise to peacekeeper stress, it would appear likely that it would strike hardest in elite units, where the greatest change from warrior to peacekeeper or humanitarian had to take place.[980] However, in the early 1990s, the Airmobile Brigade, as an intended elite unit within the army, fell between two stools, especially regarding preparation and after care. After

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impossible to help them, also made the personnel more aggressive'. DOKL/OZ. Netherlands Army Staff COKL no. 7484/2556 10/01/94 from Staff COKL (signed by J.P. van Baal) to DPKL subject: Investigation into leadership in crisis and war conditions.

977 This term is used by Hugo Slim, 'Positioning Humanitarianism in War: Principles of Neutrality, Impartiality and Solidarity' in D.S. Gordon and F.H. Toase (eds.) '*Aspects of Peacekeeping'* (London, 2001) p. 127.

978 idem p. 127.

979 The quotation from Piepers is from Vrij Nederland, 30/09/95 included in J.R. Schoenman, 'Peacekeeping als (non-traditionele) stressfactor', *Marineblad,* 106(1996)10, p. 284.

980 J.R. Schoenman ' Peacekeeping als (non-traditionele) stressfactor', *Marineblad,* 106(1996)10, p. 287.

the events in Srebrenica, the attention for the psychological counselling of soldiers, before, during and after a mission, has actually increased in the Netherlands Army.[981]

The question of how to prevent stress was asked by, among others, Air Force Medic Van Leusden, who was involved in the emergency aid operation Provide Care in Goma. According to him, such situations mainly come down to a great deal of flexibility and feeling, not only with respect to the local population but also to a person's own colleagues. Also, selection, support, team-building and attitude-forming are important. Van Leusden furthermore argues for acculturation courses, as given in multinationals and NGOs to personnel to be deployed.[982]

It is important to recognize that the training of the Airmobile Brigade was oriented to entirely different tasks from those that Dutchbat was to encounter in practice in Srebrenica. The emphasis during the training was especially on physical performance and on activities such as shooting, diving, and rock climbing. Parachute jumping and outdoor training are hardly any training for work as a peacekeeper in Bosnia, however: the men were trained to fight, while the nature of the mission obliged them to respond passively to violence. Not responding, the passivity with which they had to approach incidents, was diametrically opposed to the training and expectation of the average soldier and so could be a source of frustration and stress.

In theory, Dutchbat was well prepared to deal with individual psychological problems that might arise on the spot. This was the task of the Social Coordination Committee, consisting of a chaplain, a counsellor, a social worker, a psychologist and the battalion doctor. They met regularly under the chairmanship of the battalion's head of personnel to discuss current matters and individual cases, for example in connection with repatriation. The task of the Social Coordination Committee was 'the prevention, alleviation and minimization of problems in the psychological, medical and social area.'[983]

The overall division of tasks between the various Dutchbat III carers was as follows. The chaplain was based permanently in Simin Han, with A Company. The humanist counsellor was the regular carer of B Company in Srebrenica. Originally available to the combined presence of C Company and the staff and nursing company in Potocari, were the psychologist Lieutenant Colonel Sanders, Engberts and someone from the Social Service of the Ministry of Defence (MDD). After the leave period in April 1995, both the counsellor and the chaplain could no longer return to the enclave. In order to continue the support to the B Company under these circumstances, the social worker, Dijkman, and the psychologist, Sanders, took turns to staff this location.[984]

After each incident, the Social Coordination Committee drew up a plan. In the case of Dutchbat III, this started with the taking of hostages in the Bandera Triangle. This was followed by the two mine accidents in February, and on 29 March 1995 the death of soldier J. Broere of A Company in Simin Han. The death of a colleague knocked the bottom out of all hope of getting home together safely, and this event therefore also had a great influence on the atmosphere.

The daily work of the staff of the Social Coordination Committee consisted of doing a round of the compound, advising on repatriation, taking stock of the mood and refuting any rumours. They carried out discussions, mediated, conducted debriefings and extinguished social and psychological fires. The Social Coordination Committee therefore functioned as a relief valve for those, who, under the distressing conditions, became overcome with themselves or someone else. Apart from the conditions, this could also have to do with problems in the family sphere or relationship problems. A

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[981] The army after care department is a separate issue, and the experience of many Dutchbat soldiers with it was extremely disappointing. Later in this report, we will pay attention to this issue.
[982] A.J. van Leusden, 'Ethiek bij Noodhulp. Reflectie op normen en waarden naar aanleiding van ervaringen bij recente (nood)hulpoperaties' ('Ethics in Emergency Aid. A reflection on standards and values in response to experiences in recent (emergency) aid operations'), *Military Spectator* 165(1996)4 pp. 156-163.
[983] Interview SCC in *Falcon Buddy* bulletin June 1995.
[984] Debriefing statement E.B. Dijkman, 12/09/95.

certain amount of creativity was called for in engaging soldiers in discussion: it did not fit in with the macho culture of the red berets to go to a counsellor.

For the staff of the Social Coordination Committee it was therefore a matter of walking around for themselves and actively speaking to people and not waiting behind their desks for customers. The very idea of attending a counsellor's surgery would have erected a large threshold. Although the Company Commanders and Karremans were originally rather hesitant about the presence of 'all those shrinks', with hindsight they were very happy that they had the counsellors with them. Karremans remarked that humanist counsellor Hetebrij, psychologist Sanders and social worker Dijkman in particular, 'were run off their feet and were worth their weight in gold'.[985]

The experience of powerlessness that played a background role with Dutchbat III, was not unique. The same was true for the psychological consequences of this type of situation and experiences that were more often manifest in the creation of a pure 'survival mentality' and being as detached as possible from the outside world. This attitude serves to put the surroundings 'at a distance' so as to prevent a fundamental disruption of the arrangement of a person's own conceptual and experiential universe. The original goal of creating a psychological distance is therefore self-protection in a broad sense, although the self-protection can also become a goal in its own right. The distance is usually created by starting to consider people in the outside world as beings from a different category from oneself. This can even apply to people who are in principle powerless and even victims of extreme violence.

The feeling of being threatened, precisely through the presence of victims, can be even greater when a person does not succeed in the mission of protecting these victims. This happened in the case of Dutchbat III, because the presence of the victims also put the desired self image in danger.[986] In the extreme case, such a negative view can lead to dehumanization, which means that a certain category of fellow humans is no longer treated as human. It is then becomes understandable and even acceptable that other standards and values apply to the 'dehumanized', inferior group.[987] In theory this also increased the risk of misconduct towards this group. This process was described by a former Dutchbat member: 'Perhaps it was also because the Muslims looked like animals, and sometimes also behaved like animals. Filthy and rotten. After a while that is what you start to call them. "I am going to fetch the cattle", is the way you talk about them'.[988]

General Brinkman, who worked in the area during the war in Bosnia as chief of staff of Bosnia-Hercegovina Command pointed to this phenomenon and quoted a British UN commander in Bosnia: 'War is an animal thing'. According to Brinkman, intervening in a war situation involves entering a more or less 'dehumanized' environment'.[989] In this light, the socio-psychological problems that the Dutch peace soldiers developed as a consequence of the way in which their mission, and the problems that they encountered, exhibit a parallel with the military-operational side of the matter. While Dutchbat increasingly became an 'enclave in the enclave' because of the blockade, the shortages and the ever deteriorating relationship with the administration and the residents, Dutchbat members also became mentally isolated from the surroundings. The more often isolated phenomenon that Dutchbat became increasingly withdrawn into itself, feeling ever more powerless to assert an essential influence on developments in the enclave, had an undeniably negative influence on the motivation of the men.

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985 Interview Th.J.P. Karremans, 25/01 and 26/01/01.

986 The literature on the concentration camps shows that the 'threatening' confrontation with the victims of violence often leads to placing these victims in a separate category. The author Bernard Wasserstein describes the response of allied soldiers on their first confrontation with the population of the camps. The shocking first acquaintance with the human evidence of the Nazi genocide caused pity and disgust at the same time. Bernard Wasserstein, *Vanishing diaspora,* London, 1996, p. 3.

987 In this connection, reference can also be made to the Japanese experience in World War II. The notorious 'Unit 731', that subjected prisoners of war to lethal 'medical' experiments on a large scale, labelled these prisoners as *maruta*, or as blocks of wood.

988 Quote from A. Kranenberg, 'Moord op de witte muizen' ('Murder of the white mice'), *De Volkskrant,* 22/07/00.

989 Jan Willem Brinkman in *Kernvraag* 2000/3 no. 125 p. 51.

## 14. Problems with the behaviour of Dutchbat personnel: the attitude towards Muslims

It was commonly assumed in the press and in the public debate that the Dutch battalions were fairly anti-Muslim, which was supposed to have had consequences for the behaviour of these units.[990] What attracted particular attention was that, after the fall of the enclave, the Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army, General Couzy, told journalists that he was shocked by the anti-Muslim sentiments and pro-Serbian attitude of the Dutch soldiers.[991] When he published his experiences in book form one year later, he expressed himself in the same vein: he was shocked 'by the extraordinary aversion to the Muslims' and was surprised that in general they 'spoke in disproportionately positive terms about the Bosnian Serbs'.[992] Couzy decided to raise the subject himself in The Hague, to prepare politicians and the media at an early stage for what they might hear from the Dutchbat members:

> 'On arrival, the battalion was so terribly negative about the Muslims and so incredibly positive about the Bosnian Serbs that I was severely taken aback. And yet they had done so well and earned a reunion with the home front that had such different opinions. It was almost impossible to bridge that gap. I merely put myself in the middle. To halve the psychological gulf.'

There was certainly a strong feeling among Dutchbat II and III that the Netherlands Army top in The Hague had shown insufficient interest in the day-to-day problems. When, during his stay in Zagreb, Couzy wanted to show that he shared the men's feelings, they interpreted the commander's statements to the press, which paid considerable attention to them, actually as a lack of understanding for the difficult situation in which they found themselves. The events in Zagreb, immediately after the fall of the enclave, will be discussed in more detail in Part IV of the report. In this section of the current chapter, we question the nature and the background to Dutchbat's, or individual Dutchbat members', criticized attitude before the fall of Srebrenica. This involves investigating the attitude of the Dutch blue helmets towards the population of the enclave, and a possible connection with specific forms of misconduct towards the population.

Anyone investigating 'anti-Muslim behaviour', 'anti-Muslim expressions' or an 'anti-Muslim attitude', has to know exactly what was intended before discussing the possible consequences. During the training, attention was paid only to the outward aspects of Islam, but in practice in Bosnia there were few religious attributes such as mosques and mosque-goers to be seen. For instance, contrary to what was expected, far from all women wore headscarves. It was mainly the older women in the countryside who wore such headscarves, while as a rule the young women from an urban environment did not. Muslims were therefore not identified on the basis of religious characteristics, which raises the question of how much the behaviour that so upset Dutchbat was related to being Muslim. The term Muslim stood for the local population, and the term anti-Muslim referred to tensions between the soldiers and the population and not to a rejection of a religion. Moreover, in practice there appeared to be large differences in the behaviour of the ABiH, the local elite and the Displaced Persons. This distinction disappeared by the time that Dutchbat made comments about 'the Muslims', so that it appeared that the total local population of the Srebrenica enclave was always being referred to.

If the issue of the supposed 'anti-Muslim attitude' of Dutchbat is under discussion, then the first relevant question relates to the consequences of this attitude - for the relationship of the Dutch soldiers with the population of the enclave and for the fulfilment of Dutchbat's duties. It is also

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990 E. Nysingh, 'Niet alleen Nederlanders anti-Moslim' ('Dutch not the only anti-Muslims'), *de Volkskrant*, 02/09/95.
991 See for example D. Hos, 'Nederlandse blauwhelmen hebben veel sympathie voor de Serviers' ('Dutch blue helmets have much sympathy for the Serbs'), *Trouw,* 25/07/95 and W. op den Brouw and H. Meijer, 'Sympathie voor Serviërs bij Nederlandse militairen' ('Sympathy for Serbs among Dutch soldiers'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 24/07/95.
992 Couzy, *Bevelhebber*, p. 169. Couzy reiterated his observation in the programme: interview with NIOD 04/01/00.

important to recognize that Dutchbat and the local population shared the same fate in a certain sense. On the other hand, the Dutch had to deal with the Muslim population every day, and the pressure of the circumstances made the relationship increasingly complicated. If the situation had been reversed, with the Muslims outside the enclave and the Bosnian Serbs inside, then Dutchbat would probably have spoken in more negative terms about the Serbs and in more positive terms about the Muslims. According to the general experience in UN peace missions, frictions between the peacekeepers and the local population were sooner the rule than the exception.

The difficulties that had apparently arisen with Dutchbat in Srebrenica were definitely not unique. This was also confirmed by Major General (retd.) Van Vuren, who was acquainted with a large number of officers of the former UN headquarters in Kiseljak (Bosnia). Van Vuren told a journalist of *De Volkskrant* that all soldiers 'there became anti-Muslim (...) whether they were British, French, American, Belgian or Dutch.'[993] He also pointed to experiences in Surinam and Lebanon. According to him, cultural differences and harassment in both directions between the civilian population in the area and the troops who were there to protect them often led to a show of military strength, so that the balance - unintentionally - could ultimately turn to friction and confrontations. An experienced Canadian *peacekeeper* also observed this phenomenon. At the end of each mission that he had been on, when everyone was tired, wanted to go home and the tension was building, intolerance and racist remarks became more common. Regardless of where he was, he was often witness to discriminatory remarks everywhere. On Cyprus there were 'those damn Greeks', in the Gulf 'that gang of Arabs', in Haiti 'the damn niggers' and in the former Yugoslavia there was a choice between 'the damn Serbs', 'the damn Croats' or 'the damn Bosnians'.[994]

On the one hand, this development is difficult to prevent, but on the other hand it was initially insufficiently recognized by the Netherlands Army, and the response was far from adequate. While, after the fall of the enclave, General Couzy exposed the anti-Muslim expressions as such, Lieutenant Colonel Everts, the Commander of the second Dutch battalion, attempted to place them in a broader context. On his return to the Netherlands, he publicly expressed - to the displeasure of the Ministry of Defence[995] - his concerns about the attitude of the Dutch soldiers towards the local population. According to Everts 'everyone in the battalion developed a dislike for the people they were there to help: the Muslims in the enclave'. In Lebanon he had had the same experience, and he saw this as a general problem of peace missions. To his great frustration, his attempts as Commander to oppose this development remained fruitless, even when it concerned the attitude to children.[996]

Even if assumed 'anti-Muslim' behaviour in Srebrenica is part of the more general problem of friction between UN units and the local population, it remains necessary to ask whether misconduct towards the population can be related to an anti-Muslim attitude among the soldiers in the enclave. A number of forms of misconduct by Dutchbat members towards the local population were given publicity. There were also reports of extreme right-wing sympathies on the part of certain Dutch soldiers. A number of remarks have to be made in attempting to form a view of exactly what happened.

To begin with, it should be clear that neither 'the Muslims', nor 'Dutchbat' were homogeneous units, to which it is possible to ascribe a single collective attitude. Is very much the question which Muslims determined Dutchbat's attitude. Chapter 7 already spoke of large differences between the 'rich' original residents and the poor Displaced Persons, on the one hand, and between civilians and the ABiH on the other. Dutchbat members objected especially to the attitude of ABiH soldiers and leading figures in the enclave administration. But within Dutchbat too there were large differences in

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993 E. Nysingh, *'Niet alleen Nederlanders anti-Moslim'* (not only the Dutch are anti-Muslim), *de Volkskrant*, 02/09/95.
994 WO J.S.M. Forest, 'Preparations for peacekeeping missions'.
995 The remarks can be found in: P. Everts, '*Mars in Cathedra'* (1995) p. 2975. The response of the Ministry of Defence after the lecture was to insist that Everts went around with an information officer. Unfortunately, the alarm was concerned with the messenger and not the message. NIOD, Coll. Kreemers. Memorandum V95016779 from Information Section to Minister, 01/09/95.
996 P. Everts*, Mars in Cathedra,* p. 2975.

experiences and attitude, depending on the perception of the men. For instance, the image generally held by soldiers who were often on OPs or members of the medical team was different from that of the staff and medical support company. The image also differed according to the position of the individual concerned in the battalion. This determined which group or layer they had to deal with among the Muslims. In turn, Muslims also saw Dutchbat as a single entity, and this also increased the distance between Dutchbat and the Muslims.

The shortcomings identified above regarding training and preparation could have led to the Dutch men arriving in Srebrenica with a somewhat exaggerated picture of the significance of Islam for life in the enclave. In addition, because of the strict regulations on the relationship with the population, the soldiers had few opportunities to correct their image. Therefore, the mutual distance remained great, and a fairly one-sided perception of the local reality was able to mix with the prejudices and stereotypes that they had absorbed before the deployment. To this can be added the hardships, isolation, uncertainty and feeling of uselessness that sometimes gave rise to Dutchbat members reacting against the population. This cannot be seen so much as anti-Muslim behaviour as the difficulty experienced with, or the inability to deal with, a complex situation.[997]

Moreover, in discussing the attitude of Dutchbat members and the local population to each other, it is not a matter of a snapshot, but of a development in the course of time. There was indisputably an interaction in the relationship between the peacekeepers and the population of Srebrenica. It is also relevant that Dutchbat I originally had many opportunities to do something for the people in the enclave. In the first phase, the battalion had regular supplies and therefore had an ample stock of medical goods and maintenance material. This originally led to the Dutch being given a positive reception. The local population derived new hope for the future, also because five new OPs were established and an extensive system of patrols was set up.

When Dutchbat I arrived, the enclave had been a Safe Area for less than one year. The longer the Safe Area existed, the lower the expectation of the population of an improvement in conditions became. They started to wonder how long the isolation would continue, and hoped for rapid change. New Dutchbat units arrived, but no new hope of change; the Bosnian-Serb army continued to occupy its positions and obstructed the supplies increasingly often. At the time of Dutchbat II and III, the fear and the despondency among the population grew because the VRS increasingly took the enclave in its grip, so that ever fewer convoys arrived.

At the time of Dutchbat I, all parties still had to get accustomed to each other, and the situation was still somewhat open. At the time of the arrival of Dutchbat II, the contact rules had already been tightened up, and both the ABiH and the VRS units in and around the enclave were experienced in testing how far they could go with the Dutch blue helmets. In a debriefing in February 1995, a Dutchbat II soldier expressed the fear that the warring factions would walk all over the next battalion.[998]

It goes without saying that on its arrival, Dutchbat I was more open-minded than its successors. The fact is that there was hardly any question of information from previous units and the notions about the local state of affairs mainly came from the Dutch media and scarce Canadian information on the ground. At the time of Dutchbat I's departure to Bosnia, the drift was that the Serbs were the aggressors and the Muslims the victims.

All in all, Dutchbat I maintained reasonably workable relations with the local ABiH, and also with the surrounding VRS brigades. There were shooting incidents at the OPs, but they had no serious consequences. Nonetheless, the Dutch did find the local political situation 'nerve-racking'.[999] By the time of the arrival of Dutchbat III, the situation had already deteriorated. There were few supplies, if

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[997] Interview C.P.M. Klep, 13/02/01.
[998] 101MIPel. Military debriefing report DUTCHBAT II 09/02/95.
[999] Sitrep 115 construction company in: *Genie* 7/94 p. 17.

any, which made it extremely difficult to provide the population with material help, and this was clearly not beneficial to the relationship.

This raises a fundamental problem in the relationship between attitude and views on the one hand, and actual behaviour on the other. This will be discussed in more detail when the morale of Dutchbat is considered in the next chapter. The assumption is that a specific attitude, for example the assumed anti-Muslim attitude, does not necessarily have to lead to corresponding behaviour. Neither does a particular behaviour always have to point to the existence of a particular attitude[1000]. In principle there is no fixed connection between attitude and behaviour, neither individually nor collectively. Whether the attitude of Dutchbat members towards the Muslim population of the enclave can be related to forms of discrimination in Dutch society towards immigrants remains an open question. If indigenous Dutch in daily life have difficulty with the habits and customs of people of foreign origin, this could also apply to Dutch soldiers. This report, however, is exclusively concerned with the phenomena that could have influenced the performance of Dutchbat. Chapter 9 goes in more detail into the results of an investigation by the Royal Netherlands Army and the Public Prosecutor into the possible misconduct of Dutchbat members.

The main question must be what consequences did the attitude of the battalions towards the Muslim population and extreme right-wing tendencies have for the contact with the population of the enclave. In the reporting after the event, a direct connection is laid between extreme right-wing expressions and 'anti-Muslim-behaviour'. The question is whether the course of events justifies laying this direct causal link. The role played by Dutchbat officers is of great importance in this regard. It is expected of officers that they provide a clear command and a good example, and furthermore act against forms of misconduct towards the population. In this respect, a lack of empathy and respect, whether towards their own men or the local population, can be particularly harmful.

An example is the frequent use of the term 'locals' by UNPROFOR to refer to the civilian population. Some Dutchbat members objected strongly to this, because they considered it a condescending term, which was 'synonymous with the term native'.[1001] On the Dutchbat III Dressing Station, the term was forbidden because of the negative connotation.

The everyday interaction between the blue helmets and the population must be weighed up in the assessment. The question then is whether the attitude of Dutchbat members towards the local population can be derived from the circumstances in which they jointly found themselves. Under the extreme circumstances in the enclave, for example, the care of soldiers for their personal hygiene played an important role in their attitude towards the local population. As soon as the peacekeepers began to see and experience the civilians as carriers of lice and contagious diseases, the danger emerged that the population itself would be branded as 'vermin'.

This survey leads to the following questions about the attitude and the behaviour of Dutchbat towards the population of the enclave: to what extent did the Dutch relate the behaviour to which they objected to the fact that the population was Muslim; to what extent could misconduct on the part of Dutchbat members be related to what could be referred to as an anti-Muslim attitude; to what extent did the population perceive anti-Muslim behaviour from Dutchbat, and did they find it objectionable; and: should or must expressions of right-wing extremism be considered to be anti-Muslim behaviour, or should it be concluded that this is a separate issue? Finally - all things considered - must account also

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[1000] Christopher Browning's *Ordinary men. Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland,* New York, 1992 illustrates the problem under consideration, albeit in a far more extreme context. The participation of this battalion in mass executions of Jews in Poland could not be attributed to a clear anti-Semitic attitude of the members of this battalion. There were also a number of members of this battalion who did not want to participate in the executions, but their refusal does not indicate a Semitophile attitude.

[1001] NIOD, Coll. Schouten .Diary Schouten.

be taken of the possibility that prejudices and a negative attitude can be neutralized in principle by a professional outlook.[1002]

## 15. The extent of anti-Muslim behaviour

It is important for this discussion to distinguish 'regular' misconduct (such as dealing in drugs and weapons, prostitution, black market and smuggling) from misconduct directed against the population arising primarily from aversion to Muslims. Members of Dutchbat III came into contact with the population only through local personnel or in connection with patrols. The social control in such contacts meant that there was hardly any question of misconduct; practically the only opportunities were at the compound fence.

There was also a 'grey zone' in the behaviour that could possibly be deemed to be 'anti-Muslim' behaviour. This could vary from the Dutchbat member who stuck his tongue out at a Muslim woman, to a Dutch Major who sold his combat boots to a Muslim for DM 130 (more than they cost to buy new) shortly before the fall.[1003]

The Commanders of the Dutch battalions, and in particular Karremans - at least if they were aware of the situation - acted forcefully against misconduct towards the population. The soldier who had stuck his tongue out at a Muslim woman was fined. Behaviour of this kind should also partly be observed and dealt with at company level. It cannot be established exactly how the various company commanders approached this situation, but information exists that indicates that the Commander of B Company in Srebrenica town, Captain Groen, followed his own line of conduct. His attitude is strikingly pragmatic (in the sense of 'the solution is always in the middle') and his attitude was little oriented to creating understanding for what the Muslim population perceived.

A typical example is formed by an incident involving Dutchbat T-shirts carrying a text and illustration that was offensive to Muslims: a UN soldier is grasping a small boy by the throat who is begging for sweets ('bon bon'), to which the Dutchbat member answers with the word 'Nema'. This incident became an issue when a member of the Social Coordination Committee visited a sick B Company soldier and saw the T-shirt in question. The officer concerned went directly to the Military Police to determine whether an offence had been committed; there was a staff meeting in the evening, and he announced what he had seen. The battalion staff were unaware of the matter, and they came to the conclusion that the T-shirts must have been made during the last leave of absence and brought into the enclave; a soldier on leave had indeed brought the T-shirts in. The Military Police approached Franken on this incident on 17 April 1995, but no action was taken. Major Franken did order Groen to confiscate all the T-shirts. In response to this, Groen ordered his men not to wear the T-shirts outside in future; indoors and as sportswear were permissible. This led to a new staff meeting on 18 April: Karremans and Franken were angry about the way in which Groen had executed the order. Another day later, Medical Lieutenant Colonel Wertheim, a staff officer with the Army Crisis Staff in The Hague, spoke during a visit with the Social Coordination Committee about the blurring of moral standards that had been observed in B Company. Wertheim undertook to take the matter up with the operational staff in the Hague. He took along a photo of the T-shirts concerned, but the Social Coordination Committee heard no more about the matter.[1004] To their great surprise, members of the Social Coordination Committee saw a soldier walking around with the T-shirt at the first Dutchbat reunion.

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[1002] This refers to the fact that it is certainly not unheard of in many professional groups for fellow professionals to speak their minds about clients, but that those clients themselves would never notice anything.
[1003] Interview Hasan Nuhanovic, 05/08 and 06/08/98.
[1004] When asked, Wertheim confirmed that he had handed the photo to General Pollé in The Hague, after which nothing more had been heard. Neither was any response forthcoming from The Hague on the report by the Dutchbat III military security officer.

The actual number of incidences of misconduct towards the local population - based on data from various investigations - does not seem to be particularly large. The T-shirt affair did acquire considerable political significance because it was referred to in the public discussion as 'anti-Muslim' behaviour. However, it was never made clear in the media who the reports of anti-Muslim behaviour related to. This happens to be of great importance, because a number of examples of actual misconduct - which we will return to in Chapter 9 - did not relate so much to Dutchbat, but to the transport company.

Most of the symptoms were limited to verbal remarks, mostly within their own group and not usually noticed by the population. The Dutchbat interpreters could possibly have passed on the comments, because they spent a considerable amount of time with the Dutch soldiers. Little emerged about this in the interviews conducted with them, however. The interpreters were also well-nigh permanently present in the compound.

In answering the question about the effect of 'anti-Muslim' behaviour on the relationship with the local population, it must be pointed out that for most Dutchbat members it was difficult to form an attitude towards a very mixed group of people who they were supposed to protect, but some of whom showed little gratitude.

On the one hand there were the Displaced Persons who desperately needed their help, and who also appreciated it greatly, while on the other hand Dutch soldiers were put into perilous situations by ABiH soldiers when they opened fire on the VRS from behind Dutch positions. Dutchbat members were therefore not very inclined to have much compassion for the ABiH soldiers: in their eyes they were soldiers, and they should also take the associated consequences, both positive and negative. Humanist counsellor Hetebrij recalls a mood among the Dutchbat members of:

> '.....hatred and contempt towards the Muslim fighters, especially those of their own age, between 15 and 25, who often behaved with open hostility towards the UN during patrols in the town; this was also evident in the mortar attack on the Srebrenica compound, where, in addition to Muslim citizens, ABiH soldiers were also wounded, and Dutchbat 'just left them lying there.'[1005]

When asked about the background to denigrating remarks made by Dutchbat members towards the local population, the B Company Commander, Groen, considers that they usually would have been the result of frustration. Groen:

Frustration was a constant theme. There were so many sources of frustration, you had to lash out at something. The men could not even have a pleasant evening out. You think you're going to help people; then it turns out that the Muslim population who you are closely involved with just rummages through your belongings, and it seems that things go missing, that things are stolen, that washerwomen throw trousers over the fence to be taken away, that diesel is stolen from OPs: events like this make you look at the matter in a different light. If someone is then approached aggressively and sworn at in the town for the umpteenth time, then all these incidents build up until at a certain point, as an expression of frustration, the occasional insult may be uttered. Does that make you guilty of discrimination? If you call someone a bastard, then you are insulting him. But if you say 'Muslim cunt', then you are being discriminatory, although you're actually doing the same thing. It is as an expression of frustration. That is how I saw it.[1006]

A. Vogelaar, a KMA trainer, attempted to analyse the factors that could lead to undesirable norm-transgressing behaviour by soldiers towards the local population. He points to individual character traits of the soldiers concerned, which could cause them to go off the rails. Among the possible causes of frustration are conditions such as heat, pain, too many people in a small space, fear,

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[1005] Interview B. Hetebrij, 16/11/00, Hetebrij himself was not actually present at that time, and this is an account that was told to him.

[1006] Interview J.R. Groen, 14/01/00.

boredom or the use of alcohol and drugs. He also sees a possible connection with the selection criteria that applied to the combat units in particular, which sought out people with a certain lust for adventure and psychological and physical hardness. If soldiers with such a background start to get bored, problems are likely to occur, because they signed up in the first place because they were attracted by the military aspects of the work. However, their professional qualities become dysfunctional if the situation is different from what they expect.

Vogelaar continues by explaining that the training is oriented to building up the soldiers' self-confidence through 'skills and drills', heavy physical training and stimulating pride in their own unit. Such socialization practices are functional on the battlefield, because this is the way to deal with dangerous situations as a team and never give in. On the other hand, this cultivation of unit pride can give the soldiers the idea that they have to uphold the honour of the unit at the expense of everything else. Everyone from outside or inside who attacks the honour of the unit is seen as an enemy.[1007]

To the extent that there was an element of an 'anti-Muslim' attitude in Dutchbat around the fall of the enclave, then it was mainly directed against the men of the ABiH. The departure of the regular ABiH troops from the enclave on 11 July, but especially the death of soldier Van Renssen, intensified the already existing anti-ABiH feelings in Dutchbat. The enthusiasm to do something for these units sank to a low point. Corporal Broeder recalls the consequences of the death of Raviv van Renssen as if it was yesterday:

The Muslims murdered Raviv. That came as a bombshell. It was as if everyone had been shaken awake. This was reality. But I think that no one was panicked by the thought that a Muslim had done it, by throwing a grenade at the turret, and not the Serbs. Because the Serbs had given them the chance to pack their things and go, everyone thought: those Serbs will probably do nothing to us. They are more likely to let us go or they will take us with them. One of the two. They wouldn't just shoot us up! Occasionally Muslim fighters came to the gate, and they could have a big mouth. 'If the Serbs come, we will shoot them to pieces! Then we will smash them down!' But when it actually started, we didn't see them, they had already gone. I was more afraid of the Muslims.'[1008]

However, as will be described in more detail in Part III of this report, many Dutchbat members, in particular B Company, which was stationed in Srebrenica town, also showed a great feeling of responsibility for 'their Muslims' during the fall of the enclave. However - as a consequence of all the events in the preceding months and the death of Van Renssen - this mainly involved women, children, the wounded and older people. Anti-Muslim remarks and feelings were primarily oriented towards the local ABiH, who were identified with 'the Muslims'.

In retrospect, other factors could also have played a role. One could be a certain feeling of guilt towards the population coupled with shame that Dutchbat had been unable to prevent the capture of the enclave by the Bosnian Serbs. A feeling of guilt can be accompanied by self-reproach: the idea that they should have had other ideas, or acted and felt differently. In extremely threatening situations people are often less able to think clearly, and they become paralysed or panicked by fear. After the event, they can start to think that the choices made because of fear or panic were actually deliberate and consciously taken. They therefore consider themselves to be guilty of the outcome of the situation. Such disillusion and the sense of their own failure is sometimes resisted by holding the victims themselves responsible for what happened. As the British author M. Ignatieff expressed it: 'Blaming the victim is one of the temptations of disillusion'.[1009]

Nevertheless, opposite examples of 'anti-Muslim' behaviour by Dutchbat members there are also examples of helpful behaviour. There were soldiers who did much for civilians - and much more than they were obliged to in the line of duty. The Hague, however, was opposed in principle to 'individual relief actions'. In September 1994, the Deputy Commander in Chief of the Royal

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[1007] See A.L.W. Vogelaar, 'Norm Violation during Peace Support Operations: a Social-Psychological Explanation' in: Vogelaar & Muusse & Rovers (eds.), *NL Arms*, pp. 131-132.
[1008] Interview A.E. Broeder, 03/05/00.
[1009] Michael Ignatieff, *'The Warrior's Honour. Ethnic War and the modern Conscience'*, London, 1998, p. 99.

Netherlands Army, Major General Reitsma, sent a letter to all commanders in the former Yugoslavia in which he set out the points of departure of the action. According to Reitsma, soldiers must be strictly neutral in their attitude and behaviour and, irrespective of their personal feelings, must refrain from any political - and also any unilateral social - activity. The instruction ended with the announcement that 'each (humanitarian) action organized by Dutch soldiers for residents of crisis management areas, how well-intended and understandable they may be, other than those supervised centrally from the Netherlands by the Ministry of Defence, is forbidden by me'.[1010] Also, the Commanders of Dutchbat II and III were, as stated above, apprehensive of the individual help that was provided to the population by some soldiers, because it could encourage favouritism[1011]

Such assistance to the population was provided not only by medics, but also by 'ordinary' soldiers. Almost every Bosnian Muslim interviewed by the NIOD could provide examples of an exceptional Dutchbat member who he or she had much contact with and who had done a great deal for him or her. Dutchbat members who maintained relationships with individual Muslims, in particular with Displaced Persons, often showed a more positive attitude towards the population than those who did not have such contacts. The first saw the Muslims less as a group that had collective characteristics, but more as a collection of individuals. Such involvement was present especially on the OPs, and with Dutchbat members who took initiatives to make the acquaintance of the population and to enter into friendships. It must be remarked here that such contacts were against the orders of the battalion leaders, who had actually forbidden contacts of this kind with the population.

An example of what form the individual help took in practice can be derived from a letter from a Dutchbat III doctor, containing recommendations to his (assumed) successor[1012]:

If you go to Srebrenica, you will be mobbed by children. They want sweets (bonbon), writing material (pen), cigarettes and, if necessary, your underwear. Your will find yourself surrounded by thirty or so of them. There will be two boys among them: Nihad (we call him Nico) and Jasco. I 'adopted' Jasco. They both speak reasonable English, and we have often used them as interpreters. If you adopt them, they arrange everything for you. If you do not want to be surrounded by children, and you say so, they will be chased away. They are two little rascals who will fix everything for you that you ask. And small gifts maintain the friendship. A bag of sweets, a couple of pens, occasionally more expensive gifts (a packet of coffee for mother, or sugar, or salt) go a long way. They go to the intermediate school in September. I gave them exercise books and pens and calculators. I gave Jasco an old short wave receiver. He was delighted. If you want to hand out sweets, you give them to the boys, and if necessary you tell them: only for poor children, or for their friends. The occasional cigarette and cigarette papers help enormously. They are able to go to the 'cinema' for five cigarette papers or 1 cigarette. I thought Jasco was a fine chap. He cried out loud when we had to leave. Nico is a little bigger and older. Many families, certainly those with family in the Netherlands (and there are many of them) are eager to invite you into their homes. You could serve as a sort of halfway point between the two families. Officially it is forbidden, but so are many things here, so I didn't take much notice. If you start in that way, you would have to keep things on a very small scale.[1013]

There are many examples of individual acts of assistance. This could involve, for example, consignments of medicine, messages from family, clothing and cosmetics. After the fall, it was almost impossible for Dutchbat members to provide help because of the enormous chaos: an older Muslim woman related that on 12 July she asked a Dutchbat member in the compound for some headache pills, which he regretted that he did not have. Instead, he put his arms around her and kissed her on the forehead, as alternative medicine.[1014] Finally, cases are known of where Dutch soldiers made strenuous

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[1010] CRST. Letter Major General R. Reitsma 26 September 1994 no. CRST/974 to distribution list.
[1011] Interview Th.J.P. Karremans, 01/12/00.
[1012] NIOD, Coll. Schouten. Letter Schouten 04 /05/95.
[1013] NIOD, Coll. Schouten. Letter from Schouten to his successor from Srebrenica 25/05/95.
[1014] Interview Mehmed Malagic, 22/10/97.

personal efforts immediately after the fall of the enclave to arrange for people to travel to the Netherlands, which was sometimes also successful.

## 16. The attitude towards the Bosnian Serbs

In the discussion of the relationship between Dutchbat and the Bosnian Serbs, it is of great importance to recognize that the representatives of this group that the Dutch came into contact with usually came from a different social group. The question is whether the blue helmets recognized this sufficiently, and whether it influenced the picture that they had. On the way to Bosnia, the soldiers first passed through the apparently Western Zagreb, and subsequently they travelled through Bosnian-Serb terrain to the enclave. On the way there was 'the Serf Stefano', a hamburger bar that functioned as a stopping place for UN convoys. The owner attempted to pamper the men with hamburgers and drinks.[1015] Moreover, Dutchbat dealt with well-dressed Bosnian Serb businessmen in Hotel Fontana in Bratunac, and with VRS soldiers. Dutchbat had no contact with the Bosnian-Serb population in the surroundings of the enclave, let alone with Bosnian-Serb Displaced Persons.

On the other hand, the Muslims that Dutchbat had to deal with were the extreme poor, and the Displaced Persons especially were in extraordinarily wretched circumstances. This distorted the difference between 'the Bosnian Serbs' and 'the Muslims'. In view of the circumstances, it was not surprising that the average Dutchbat member was struck by the fact that the Muslims that they encountered in the enclave 'stank' and 'begged'. The Dutch themselves would soon enough have undeniable problems with hygiene. Other views that quickly became heard were such generalizations as: 'the Muslims' looked terrible because they had nothing, they stole, they were unreliable and they were never on time. This negative stereotype contrasted with the more positive picture of the Bosnian Serbs with whom Dutchbat came into contact. They looked respectable, were well-dressed, had food to eat and were punctual. The Bosnian Serbs belonged to the middle class or above, while most of the Muslims compared poorly with them.

In addition, Bosnian-Serb soldiers, at least around Srebrenica, were more readily identifiable as regular soldiers than the men of the ABiH. Locally, the latter sometimes resembled an irregular combat group, which was consistent with an assumed 'Balkan tradition'. In this respect, the relationships between the two parties around the enclave were different from elsewhere in Bosnia. The psychologist Venhovens often observed an attitude of Dutchbat towards the appearance and organization of the VRS that verged on awe. He remarked that soldiers can usually get on best with fellow soldiers. They understand each other's professionalism and codes of behaviour, they are usually subject to a comparable discipline and think in the same language of strategy and tactics. The ABiH soldiers, on the other hand, were seen by Dutchbat not as professional soldiers, but as an 'irregular rabble'[1016]. At the start of the Dutchbat III deployment, the VRS regularly allowed supply convoys through, and at first sight, the daily problems with the population of the enclave were greater than with the Bosnian Serb army. This influenced the mood, although the increasingly inflexible attitude of the VRS towards the supplies would not remain without consequence.

Around the fall of the enclave, the contact with the Bosnian Serbs became more intensive as a consequence of the constraints imposed by the circumstances. VRS men stole from Dutch soldiers and took them hostage, but at the same time they gave them cigarettes and food. The treatment was apparently not as bad as might be expected, as is apparent from the statement of Sergeant Ceelen, who was taken hostage after the fall of OP-K, that he did not 'feel like a prisoner of war'.[1017] The VRS

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[1015] Stefano's hamburger bar was an 'approved' stopping place for the UN convoys on the way from and to the enclave. The Dutchbat security department sometimes had concerns about Stefano because he spoke and understood Dutch reasonably well, and they were afraid of spying.

[1016] Interview psychologist P. Venhovens in: C. van der Laan, 'Dutchbat heeft niets van bevolking Srebrenica begrepen', *Nieuwsblad van het Noorden,* 26/07/95.

[1017] Interview A. Ceelen 02/07/99.

treated him and his men correctly and attempted to make their forced stay in Milici as pleasant as possible by offering soft drinks and cigarettes and providing the opportunity to phone the Netherlands. Otherwise, the Dutchbat members had no idea of the massacre at that time.

## 17. Humanitarian assistance in Srebrenica

General Cot, the Force Commander of UNPROFOR, paid a visit in December 1993 to the Canadian battalion in the enclave. Cot wrote an extensive report on his findings, and in early January 1994 Colonel Bokhoven forwarded the parts that related to the enclave from headquarters in Zagreb to the Crisis Staff in The Hague.[1018] In his report Cot covered both the military and the humanitarian aspects of the mission and referred to a number of urgent problems. The General expressed his admiration for the NGOs, in particular *Médecins Sans Frontières*, and for the Canadian battalion. He mentioned the problems surrounding resupply by air, the still unresolved border issue and the state of affairs with the checks by the Bosnian Serbs, which the blue helmets found particularly degrading.

Cot recorded how difficult it was to demilitarize the enclave. He wrote moreover that the population felt insulated and let down: he feared that the humanitarian situation could only deteriorate because of the winter. He also referred to problems surrounding the Swedish Shelter Project, that had been built in a dangerous location.

Chapter 4 described how the UNPROFOR doctor worked closely with *Médecins Sans Frontières* and the local hospital. The French UN General asked the Norwegian battalion in Tuzla to allow medical specialists to go every week from Tuzla to Srebrenica to provide help. According to Cot, 'this task was very important to keep up confidence in UNPROFOR and should be given priority'.[1019] Furthermore, he ordered UNPROFOR to bring material for *Médecins Sans Frontières* from Split and to deliver it to the enclave.

The care that the Force Commander took in the specific case of Srebrenica with the humanitarian and especially the medical relief was consistent with the new interpretation of the UN mandate in Bosnia-Hercegovina that took effect from late 1993. The way in which Dutchbat was to give shape to this humanitarian side of the mission was the subject of discussion before, during and also after the mission. This report contains a separate Appendix in Part III under the title Dutchbat III and the population: medical issues, which goes into various aspects in more detail.

Even before the departure of Dutchbat I, the Army Crisis Staff in The Hague already had the relevant parts of General Cot's report at its disposal. One month before, a Dutch reconnaissance team was furthermore sent to Srebrenica and Zepa. Because the Bosnian Serbs refused permission, that visit was unable to go ahead, however. The unit did produce a comprehensive reconnaissance report with the necessary plans, which was based on information from the Canadian and Ukrainian battalions, and from *Bosnia-Hercegovina Command*.[1020]

This report contained an appendix on medial assistance, which stated that medical personnel could be employed in the treatment of the local population, under the responsibility of a local doctor or UNHCR, who must not be allowed access to military medical establishments. Under the heading of civil 'health aspects', it is stated moreover that military medical personnel were permitted to assist the local doctors under their responsibility in matters such as medical examination for evacuation. They could also provide specialist help to the hospital or the dentist and could issue supplies. The report concluded that 'the medical personnel can be used in support of civilian public health'.[1021]

A report by a reconnaissance team of Medical Major Ruikes, dated 12 February 1994, chose a rather looser wording:

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[1018] CRST. Fax to Crisis Staff from H.A.J. Bokhoven Zagreb, 04/01/94 no. 93/518 subject: situation in Srebrenica.
[1019] idem, p. 5.
[1020] BLS. 'Recnnaissance report Srebrenica and Zepa' to BLS for the attention of CS Crisis Staff of 11 Infbat LUMBL GG (APC) / Dutchbat 12/12/93 signed by the C-Dutchbat C.H.P. Vermeulen.
[1021] Idem, appendix B.

> 'Within Dutchbat duties, there is an element of provision of humanitarian medical assistance to the local population. To this end, medical personnel can be used to provide medical treatment. This was to occur exclusively with the consent of the coordinating doctor of NGOs (*Médecins Sans Frontières*, UNHCR, and the International Red Cross). The medical responsibility resided with a local doctor, *Medicins sans Frontières* or UNHCR'.[1022]

In late 1994, Cot's successor as Force Commander, General De Lapresle, also justified the presence of UNPROFOR in Bosnia with reasons including the delivery of humanitarian assistance. De Lapresle stressed that especially the many-facetted humanitarian work of the battalions on a local level 'from assisting the most needy to repairing schools, hospitals and roads and caring for the wounded' deserved all possible attention,[1023] even though strictly speaking this did not form part of the UNPROFOR mandate. Especially after the change in the political and military situation around the end of 1994, it was widely stressed on an international level that the importance of UNPROFOR lay especially in its ability to guarantee humanitarian relief. The broad interpretation that the Dutch battalions gave to the mandate was in any case in the line advocated by UNPROFOR and Bosnia-Hercegovina Command. Force Commander General Cot and the Bosnia-Hercegovina Commander General Rose asked the policy question of how much space within the framework of the peace operation there must be for humanitarian relief, in the discussion on the interpretation of the UNPROFOR mandate.

Cot and Rose emphasized the importance of 'the battle for hearts and minds' in realizing the objectives of a mission. The fact is that local commanders had to encourage a good relationship with the local population, which was easier it they showed willing to do something for the population. Apart from the moral motive of helping people in need, a role was also played by ready military considerations in the area of Security and Intelligence. Major General of Marines E. Klop expressed this general insight in 2001, in a contribution to *NRC Handelsblad.*[1024] According to him, peace missions cannot succeed without the support of the local population. If they turn against the peacekeepers, the mission will fail. If only to achieve the mission objective, it is necessary for the units involved to be given the space to help the people on the spot.

During the deployment to Bosnia there were also ready moral and practical reasons for the UN to make every effort to offer humanitarian assistance to the distressed population of Srebrenica. The question remains as to whether the political and military consequences of such assistance, also for the unit on the ground, were actually sufficiently well thought out. Humanitarian relief in combination with peacekeeping, in spite of all good intentions, entails the danger that the first may contribute to the failure of the second.[1025] The warring factions will never consider assistance to be wholly neutral or impartial. The experiences of the UNHCR around Srebrenica - described in Chapter 4 - illustrate this problem. In the provision of food, local soldiers took priority over civilians and bought weapons with money that they earned with the trade in relief goods. The local population was less inclined to view the humanitarian relief as a gift from the international community, which saw itself as a 'neutral player', but sooner as from the unit stationed in the area.

Lastly, the problem also has a professional aspect: humanitarian relief is not the core business of soldiers. Such relief can form a particularly motivating and satisfying task for soldiers, especially if they doubt the possibility of realizing the main objective of the mission. This also applied to Dutchbat III in Srebrenica. At times when it was clear that the set task and duties were not feasible, the battalion

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[1022] CRST. Fax 12-2-1994 from Medical Major Ruikes to: C-infbat lumbl d.t.v. C-reconnaissance party Dutchbat subject: Medical care Dutchbat.
[1023] UNNY, DPKO, coded cables UNPROFOR: Z-1676 De Lapresle to Annan, 04/11/1994, appendix 4: Force Commanders conference on Bosnia and Hercegovina, 6.
[1024] See interview with Klop, in *NRC Handelsblad,* 11/08/01.
[1025] See for this, for example, Dennis C. Jett , *Why Peacekeeping Fails,* New York, 1999, pp. 133-135.

leaders remained motivated by 'walking into town and looking at those wretches, and I would think: If we leave, things will definitely get out of hand, and that is why we are here'.[1026]

By way of illustration, a parallel can be drawn from the literature with another peace operation. This concerns a study by two American researchers into the American experiences during the humanitarian operation Restore Hope in Somalia in 1992 and 1993.[1027] The American soldiers were 'trained to be warriors for national security' and were sent on an international humanitarian mission.[1028] The researchers describe three phases that the soldiers involved went through. The first phase, while they were still in the United States, was that of 'high expectations'. On the basis of poor information, the soldiers thought that the starving Somalian population would receive them with open arms and that they would be able to perform fantastic work. They had hardly any background knowledge of the causes of the catastrophic famine or of other local circumstances, such as the constant wars between various clans, anarchy, misuse of power and violence.

This led to a second phase in the operational area, that of disillusion as a consequence of lack of clarity about the end date, stress, health problems, a partly hostile population and incomprehensible events.[1029] In the first place, the units had to protect themselves, and in so doing they lost sight of the objective of the mission. Immediate assistance to the population was forbidden[1030] and only a small proportion of the soldiers actually came into contact with the distressed, starving population. Mixed feelings and mistrust of the population arose quickly, because it was unclear who were the good guys and who were the bad guys. The greatest problem for the Americans, however, was that they, who saw themselves as saviours in distress, were treated with hostility rather than with gratitude. The last phase was that of reconsideration, and consisted of two components. The first was that of the warrior strategy: the combat soldiers started to attribute the behaviour of armed members of combat groups and other troublemakers to the entire Somali population. This turned all Somalis into potential enemies. A second behaviour pattern arose from a 'humanitarian strategy': the soldiers who were actually involved in the relief tried to break negative stereotypes about Somalis. They attempted to avoid the use of force and to consider the political and cultural background of the behaviour of the population.[1031]

This American investigation shows a number of similarities between the mission to Somalia and the deployment of the Dutch battalions to Srebrenica. Firstly, in Bosnia too, soldiers who had been trained for large-scale military conflicts were required to facilitate and protect humanitarian relief. To this end, they were required to establish a workable relationship with the local population and its leaders. A second complicating factor in Bosnia was that the population also consisted of different groups, each with its own agenda and corresponding attitude to the foreign soldiers. Thirdly, the soldiers in Srebrenica were likewise unsure of the nature of their mission and the disposition of the local population. All this led, fourthly, to the Dutchbat members also dividing roughly into two camps regarding the attitude to the population.

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[1026] Interview R. Franken, 04/05/01.

[1027] Laura L. Miller and Charles Moskos 'Humanitarians or Warriors? Race, Gender, and Combat Status in Operation Restore Hope', in: *Armed Forces & Society*, Vol. 21(1995)9, pp. 615-637.

[1028] Miller & Moskos, 'Humanitarians or Warriors? Race, Gender, and Combat Status in Operation Restore Hope'. in: *Armed Forces & Society*, Vol. 21(1995) p. 615.

[1029] For example, the population refused MREs (Meals Ready to Eat) from the American army, because they believed that the food would be harmful to the intestines of, or fatal for, people who had suffered hunger for a long time, as a result of a high cholesterol or protein content. It happened in Bosnia that Muslims refused American food parcels after food drops because they contained pork.

[1030] The most important task of the soldiers during Operation Restore Hope was the protection of NGOs, including Unicef, Oxfam, Care etc. It was difficult for many soldiers to accept that during this humanitarian mission they were not allowed to provide direct assistance to the population and were shot at.

[1031] Miller & Moskos, p. 618. There has been other research into the subject of the changing attitude of soldiers in general, and peacekeepers in particular. Although the number of phases can vary, a clear phasing is evident in the research (e.g. into WW I, Vietnam, Cyprus or Sinai). In their article, Miller and Moskos briefly deal with a number of these investigations. It struck them that there had been almost no sociological investigation into humanitarian missions.

Some of them, because of negative experiences with a part of the population, came to consider the entire population as 'the enemy', and withdrew into the military part of their duties, which could put the humanitarian objective at risk. Others still tried to make a distinction between the soldiers and the profiteers on the one hand, and the actual destitute victims on the other. They had an open mind for the dreadful situation in which the Muslim population found themselves and tried to understand why the population of the enclave reacted as they did.[1032] A factor in both Somalia and Srebrenica was that this category of soldiers had insufficient insight into the culture and history of the population group that they were dealing with. Because the training was not oriented to this aspect, they were unable to properly understand what was afoot, nor to sufficiently correct the defensive reaction of others.

## 18. The field of tension between the military and the humanitarian duties

After the fall of Srebrenica, Dutchbat was reproached from various sides that it had done little or nothing for the civilian population. This criticism was often couched in very general terms and it was moreover not always clear which period was being referred to. Therefore we provide here a list of the activities per battalion. The Dutch blue helmets were able to provide humanitarian relief mainly in the margin of their duties, and it should be noted that according to their terms of reference they were to facilitate humanitarian relief by third parties. The question as to whether they could also provide 'extra' help was relevant to promoting good relations with the population. Providing relief also gave soldiers a feeling of really doing something useful for the people in the enclave.

Nevertheless, a tension persisted between the idea that they could win over the population through humanitarian work and therefore make the operational action easier, and on the other hand the strict order from the Commanders of Dutchbat II and III to avoid informal contact with the population. In practice this led to a lack of clarity for the soldiers. A survey shows that the Dutch blue helmets developed a large diversity of 'own' activities, all of which could be placed under the heading of humanitarian relief. In addition to the normal tasks, there was medical assistance, support to the engineers, transport and a wide variety of support on the socio-economic front. If applicable, the following overview will deal briefly with the question as to what extent this influenced the performance of the duties.

An important part of the task was the supervision of UNHCR convoys. Dutchbat I started to develop humanitarian tasks in a later phase of its presence, because local conditions were then quiet, and such matters were possible. Furthermore, they attempted to give all involved a feeling of safety through the maximum visibility of the blue helmets. The battalion leaders felt that they should support the population where possible, for example through direct medical assistance and support from *Médecins Sans Frontières*. They did not ask for permission for the 'extra' activities from the UN, who nonetheless turned a blind eye. The costs were covered largely by the Netherlands. At the time of the first battalion, the engineers had to perform a large amount of work for their own unit, and therefore hardly had an opportunity to make capacity available for humanitarian purposes.

Politicians in The Hague constantly showed an interest in humanitarian relief. As early as the summer of 1994, Commander Vermeulen received a letter from the Ministry of Defence requesting information on the way in which the battalion interpreted UN instructions 'to establish conditions favourable to the improvement of the living conditions of people' and 'search for accurate information on local needs concerning food, heating, sheltering and medical care'.[1033] Vermeulen replied that discussions were held every week between Dutchbat, the various relief organizations and the local civilian authorities on the conditions in which the population in the enclave found themselves. Dutchbat identified two problem areas: that of the drinking water supply and the situation surrounding

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[1032] Miller and Moskos described these two groups as the 'warriors' and the 'humanitarians'.
[1033] CRST. Letter from Ministry of Defence 31/05/94, no. V94013865 to Dutchbat Commander.

the schools, and made recommendations for improvements in both areas.[1034] Specific humanitarian projects were the following: a toy project for orphans; a school supplies project, set up in the first instance by battalion chaplain Van der Heijden; improvement of the water supply for the local hospital; repair of water pipes and electricity supply; and repair and maintenance of the refuse truck. Furthermore, Dutch medics performed operations in the local hospital three times a week, there was a doctor's surgery ('*ambulanta*') three times a week, and, for the same purpose, the battalion doctors visited the surrounding villages twice a week.

Dutchbat II took these activities over and continued them. It now proved possible to engage the engineers in work on the infrastructure, especially road maintenance and improvement. The engineers took care of the power supply for the town's elderly and mentally handicapped people's nursing home, by tapping electricity from the compound in Srebrenica town. They also contributed to the building activities of *Médecins Sans Frontières* and the Swedish Shelter Project. The Explosives Ordnance Disposal Unit detected landmines and rendered them safe. The service also provided information to schools, in which the children were told of the dangers of various types of ammunition and mines.

The medical care was expanded in various ways. At the time of the second battalion, the battalion dressing station started to play a more important role in the relief. The dressing station only had the task of providing medical care to the unit itself, but relief was soon also provided to the local population. *Médecins Sans Frontières* started to make use of the expertise of Dutchbat's laboratory assistant, dentist, medical technician and X-ray assistant. Echo scans were performed on three afternoons a week for the local population. The doctors of the dressing station started a general practice surgery on Friday mornings in Potocari and on Saturday morning in Brosevici. They made use of the resources of *Médecins Sans Frontières*. Dutchbat II in turn supplied limited quantities of medicines to both the hospital and *Médecins Sans Frontières*. Medicines were also issued in emergencies to the Bosnian Serbs in Bratunac.[1035]

The surgeon held a surgery every Monday afternoon in the hospital in Srebrenica town and shared the patients to be operated on with the surgeon of *Médecins Sans Frontières*. Eligible patients were operated on in the dressing station. An out-patient surgery was held on Wednesday afternoons and they also helped the wounded and sick who regularly came to the gate. In total, an average of 55 patients a week were treated at the dressing station, and 3 to 10 a week were operated on.[1036] Civilians or other sick residents were also taken back by ambulance after operations. After much effort and the necessary negotiations with the Bosnian Serbs, Dutchbat II succeeded in sending a total of approximately thirty civilians who were seriously ill or had life-threatening injuries to Tuzla or Sarajevo. Occasionally this would take place by helicopter or otherwise with a convoy.

Minister Voorhoeve of Defence said he was very impressed with Dutchbat's humanitarian activities during a visit to the enclave in September 1994. He asked his fellow Minister, Pronk, of the Ministry of Development Cooperation, to make 500,000 guilders available for humanitarian projects in Srebrenica and Bratunac. The *Defensiekrant* reported that 'with the donation from the Ministry of Development Cooperation it will be possible not only to make an improvement in the living conditions of the local population, but also to contribute to creating confidence in the blue helmets'.[1037] Voorhoeve also suggested, in the interests of a balanced approach, to offer humanitarian relief to the Bosnian-Serb population of Bratunac.

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[1034] DCBC, 90. The relevant parts are 1.B pt 2c and pt !.C 5b. The message arrives from C-Dutchbat HQ Srebrenica: Crisis Staff BLS for the attention of LCol M.C.J. Felix archive Comcen Crisis Staff 178/42 undated probably summer 1994.
[1035] DCBC, 1114. Fax Army Crisis Staff (G2 Aoi Topper) to DCBC, 301625B Aug 95. Dutchbat II, deployment period from 110794 to 210195, summary of delivered humanitarian support in the deployment area. Author Head of Sie 1, Cap Van Dijk, 30/08/95.
[1036] Information from Jansen & Stinis & Smits (ed.), *Dutchbat on Tour,* pp. 93-94.
[1037] *Defensiekrant*, (1994) p. 24.

Pronk agreed, but he issued the guideline that no more than 40 per cent (originally 25 per cent) of the money was to go to the Bosnian Serbs. If it should happen that the share for the Serbs was greater, Pronk feared that the relief would overshoot its mark - which was to ease the burden on the population in Srebrenica. The Minister of Development Cooperation also wanted the Commander of Dutchbat 'to make it abundantly clear' to the Bosnian-Serb side that no humanitarian projects would be executed there unless it was possible at the same time to undertake projects for Srebrenica.[1038] Voorhoeve subsequently informed Pronk of the actual state of affairs in the area.[1039]

Everts, the Commander of Dutchbat II, expressed pleasure with Pronk's offer, because he assumed that humanitarian relief would contribute to a better relationship with the warring factions. He felt that the relief could indeed alleviate the problems of the populations on both sides of the border, and expected more goodwill with the population and better motivation for the personnel. Everts proposed tackling the water treatment and schools for both parties, and also improving the orphans' home and nursing home in Srebrenica. The Battalion Commander did feel that UNPROFOR's neutrality principle assumed that the money would be distributed on a 50-50 basis. He wanted to prevent the Bosnian Serbs feeling badly done by. The local UNHCR was also in favour of such an attitude. Therefore the Commander himself applied the 50-50 distribution, as opposed to Pronk's proposed 60-40 ratio. This was accepted by all parties.[1040]

Dutchbat II, from the ever shrinking reserves, also provided diesel for the ambulance, the water supply machinery and the refuse truck. When the harvest had to be brought in, the battalion leaders decided to make diesel available for agricultural equipment. The Dutch also contributed to the maintenance and repair of the agricultural machinery, the refuse truck, the fire truck and the ambulance. In order to make life in the enclave more pleasant and varied in another way, Radio Dutchbat started news broadcasts and Dutchbat organized sporting competitions and tournaments in which the Dutch also took part. The project for providing schools with teaching materials was a combination of private actions by individual soldiers.

Where possible, Dutchbat III continued the above-mentioned work of providing the population of the enclave with humanitarian relief.[1041] This applied to the dressing station, the engineers, the Explosives Ordnance Disposal Unit Service (EOD), the repair and medical platoon and the supply platoon. The Dutch battalion continued supporting the humanitarian organizations and contributed to maintaining the drinking water supply and the maintenance of roads and bridges. The toy project, the supply of teaching materials and the care for the orphans' home work continued under the third Dutch battalion. As its predecessors had done, the Explosives Ordnance Disposal Unit attempted to educate the population of the enclave in dealing with unexploded missiles. For example, children had the habit of bringing missiles to the gate in exchange for sweets. The Explosives Ordnance Disposal Unit decided only to reward the children if they took them to the place where they found the arms. Furthermore, the service provided information to schools. The Explosives Ordnance Disposal Unit also had its frustrations: because the minefields counted as a defensive measure of the warring factions, they were not allowed to be cleared, in spite of the dangers for the local population.[1042] Major Engberts worked hard to continue supplying the schools with teaching materials.

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1038 KAB. Letter from J.P. Pronk to J.J.C. Voorhoeve 22/11/94 reference NH-680/94.

1039 Actions of this type - 'buying' access to besieged population groups by offering the same help to communities on both sides of the demarcation line - was not applauded by everyone. According to S. Wolfson, a UNHCR lawyer, this type of action represented a violation of the relevant humanitarian principles, in which 'need' was deemed to be the only criterion for providing relief. Contracts of this kind can furthermore, according to him, easily lead to a dangerous chain reaction. See: for example S. Wolfson 'Samen werken:UNHCR en de Krijgsmacht' in Ted van Baarda and Jan Schoenman (eds.) *Werelden Apart? Militairen en burgers: vredeshandhavers and hulpverleners',* Den Haag, 1997, p. 50.

1040 DCBC, unnumbered. Fax from the Army Crisis Staff Col. Brantz to C-RNlA Crisis Staff 4 December 1994 no. CRST/1412 subject 'Hum. Relief DUTCHBAT'.

1041 An overview of the humanitarian activities of the Dutch battalions can be found in a DCBC, 1114. Fax from the Army Crisis Staff J. Topper to Col. Van Dam 30/625 B AUG 95.

1042 Interview of counsellor Bart Hetebrij with Ronald Geval in *Ego* 1995 pp. 6 and 7.

On 29 March 1995, Dutchbat supplied a total of 835 exercise books, 8 large exercise books, 31 thin exercise books, 2 small packages of 200 pens and 4 packages of photocopier paper. Attempts to bring in school books on a regular basis, via the Civil Affairs Department in Tuzla, stranded because the Bosnian Serbs deemed the Muslim books to be 'politically incorrect'.

The Dutch kept a close watch on relief of this kind to check whether the relief actually arrived with those for whom it was intended. They also had to keep an eye on another aspect of maintaining the balance between the two parties. To secure cooperation with the convoys carrying humanitarian goods and to demonstrate that the UN was impartial, in the winter diesel was also sent for heating the lower school in Bratunac. A form of a relief that became increasingly necessary was the food supply. The shortage of food in the enclave increasingly became a daily concern for Dutchbat.

In February the Dutch brought much food to the social kitchen of Srebrenica town. This was usually food that was close to the end of its shelf life, such as spaghetti, eggs, rice, potatoes, custard powder, sauce and turkeys. The social kitchen offered food to the most distressing cases. Before the war, the manager of the social kitchen was a bank manager, and he was very involved with the fate of the population. B Company in the town had more or less 'adopted' the nursing home for psychiatric illnesses and elderly people. If any food was left, it always went to that address, and this involved fairly substantial quantities: 20 February brought: 50 kilos of onions, 4 bags of potatoes, 1 bag of rice, powdered milk. On 30 March 23 bags of rice (25 kg. per bag) went to the social kitchen, as well as 61 bags of potatoes (25 kg. per bag), 30 turkeys, 41 boxes of 360 eggs.[1043] As their own stocks became scarcer, and the convoys stopped, relief of this kind also stopped, of course.

Battalion Commander Karremans explained at the end of April 1995 at the UN medal parade how important the humanitarian work was for the motivation of his men. What their work was ultimately all about, according to him, was as follows: 'trying to help the population. That is our motivation'.[1044] However, there was also tension as a result of the explicit ban by the battalion leaders of Dutchbat II and III on informal contact with the local population. The population considered the termination of the more or less amicable relationship as a hostile action. As mentioned, this was most forcefully applied by Commander Groen of Dutchbat III Bravo Company. While the Dutchbat II doctor still held a daily surgery in the compound in Srebrenica for both Dutch and Muslims, Groen made an end to this immediately after his arrival. Neither would he still give permission for holding surgery outside the compound. Neither did this meet with complete understanding internally: at a certain moment, the C Company ambulance drove into the B Company area to provide medical support to the population there.[1045]

## 19. Medical assistance

The medical assistance to the population of the enclave raised a number of fundamental questions about the desirability, the opportunities and the priorities of the military doctors. Until the deployment in Bosnia, the Army's most recent experiences with organizing such relief went back to the Dutch participation in UNIFIL in Lebanon. The situation in Lebanon, however, was entirely different to, and less difficult than, in Bosnia. In Lebanon there was less violence and furthermore the medical infrastructure there was still more or less intact. In Srebrenica, on the other hand, the local population - as discussed in Chapter 4 - had to resort to the team of medics from *Médecins Sans Frontières*, who put public health back on its feet and worked in the local hospital. In UNPROFOR's conception, medical assistance to the population was a task for non-governmental organizations and not soldiers, except in emergencies. On the other hand, however, the two Dutch Ministers of Defence involved in the

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1043 Taken from the notebook of S5 A.E. Rave DUTCHBAT III, Col. NIOD.

1044 *The inner Circle*, no. 27, 27/04/95.

1045 KAB. Memorandum from MID CDRE H.J. Vandeweijer to Minister of Defence and SG 05/07/99 no. DIS99003213 subject: extreme right-wing behaviour Srebrenica, received: 05/07/99 no. 1444 Top Secret. Appendix C Strictly Confidential.

deployment, Ter Beek and Voorhoeve, were supporters of Dutchbat providing medical assistance to the population of Srebrenica.

Within the Dutch Armed Forces, there were no guidelines for providing humanitarian relief and medical assistance to the civilian population in missions such as in Bosnia. As a rule, these matters evolved in practice, and they depended on the initiative, engagement and judgement of the commander of the unit concerned.

The general question of whether military doctors should have to provide medical assistance to a civilian population in peace missions - and if so in what form - is not new. The Royal Netherlands Navy in Cambodia aided the local population as a 'regularly occurring' exception if they needed urgent medical assistance. Most patients there had been injured by landmines or other ammunition.[1046] the structural medical support to *Médecins Sans Frontières* and the population really got under way in the period in which Dutchbat II was in Srebrenica.

Wertheim, the medical contact in the Army Crisis Staff, was unable to give a general answer to the question of when medical personnel should have to help the population, but he felt that it was not a formal obligation. The Dutchbat III anaesthetist, Schouten, asked him for a definitive answer, to which he was told that 'If you should see no need at all to operate, then you don't have to, any more than you have to collaborate with *Médecins Sans Frontières*.'[1047]

Questions relating to what could or could not form part of medical assistance also arose in the dressing station. In addition to regular medics, the Dutch battalion also had a dressing station, which consisted of an operating theatre, dispensary, intensive care and an X-ray department. This was set up in Potocari, because it was expected that, in addition to company doctors, the Dutch battalion would also need second-line health care (a dressing station with operating theatre). The Scandinavian battalion in Tuzla did have a hospital, but the distance from there to the enclave was too great, all the more so because the VRS had closed the shortest route from Srebrenica to Tuzla. Because the dressing station as such only needed to be brought into action if there were seriously wounded patients, the Dutch doctors had enough time to provide medical assistance to the population of the enclave. Because a medical orderly was required to accompany each patrol, this had the automatic consequence that there was a medical orderly at each OP, who also functioned as a doctor for the local population. If necessary, support could be requested from the OP from *Médecins Sans Frontières* or Dutchbat.

Commander Vermeulen of Dutchbat I was unable to gain an overall view in the first two or three weeks of whether he was able to provide the local population with medical care, and, if so, of what kind. He did not yet know the battalion's own needs and he assumed that the dressing station had not been brought along for the population. He did recognize that the doctors would have to maintain their skills, and that they had started to become bored. To counteract this boredom, the doctors let themselves go on their fellow soldiers. As a consequence, there were quite a few 'lads walking around with bits cut out of their faces, because every pimple or lump was cut out'.[1048]

After an introductory period, it appeared that, with the dressing station, Dutchbat would be able to provide an additional 'humanitarian accent' to its presence. Vermeulen nevertheless wanted to avoid 'generating consumption', as it was referred to in the *Defensiekrant*, and he therefore felt that civilians should go in principle to the town hospital, or should be treated by Dutchbat only after being referred. He did want to make an exception for the severely wounded.[1049]

The collaboration with *Médecins Sans Frontières* soon got under way. Three times a week, mobile surgeries were held in a village or in the local hospital, where Dutch doctors assisted *Médecins Sans Frontières*. Civilians could report for medical assistance to the Dutchbat compound with a note from the hospital in Srebrenica. After some time, however, it appeared that the hospital manager was charging

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[1046] S. Stienstra, 'Noodbloed in het arsenaal van de militaire arts' ('Emergency blood in the military doctor's arsenal'), *Armex* 77(1993)10, pp. 21-23.
[1047] Interview A.A. Schouten, 21/02/00.
[1048] Interview C.H.P. Vermeulen, 09/06/99.
[1049] 'Continu spreekuur voor 'driving doctors' ('Continuous surgery for 'driving doctors'), *Defensiekrant,* 26/05/94 p. 4.

exorbitant prices for the notes, which prompted a change in the organization. The dressing station was closed for the population and exceptions were only made for serious cases or patients who were referred by *Médecins Sans Frontières* or the Dutch doctors. The dressing station doctors also carried out operations in the local hospital in Srebrenica. The practice described was developed and continued under Dutchbat II.

Dutchbat III originally continued the *ambulanta*. However, the practice ended in late May 1995, when a conflict arose between *Médecins Sans Frontières* and the Opstina (see the Appendix 'Dutchbat III and the population: medical issues'). In Potocari the medical orderly on duty decided whether a wounded person was to be allowed in or sent to the hospital in Srebrenica. Some people had to be examined further or treated in the compound, for which they were given a special pass marked with the date and time. Others were referred to the hospital in the town. A list was drawn up every week of the sick or wounded who were in the hospital in Srebrenica or reported to the surgery. Because the number of accompanying family members of the patients concerned became ever larger, and the compound consequently became ever busier, each patient was limited to one accompanying person.

If there was a medical necessity, patients were admitted to the ward, but Dutchbat usually admitted them to the *Médecins Sans Frontières* hospital in Srebrenica. A guideline existed that help was only to be provided to civilians who arrived at the gate without an appointment if they needed life-saving or limb-preserving treatment. In practice it was usually wounded women and children who were treated.

The limited medical supplies meant that the personnel were able to provide less humanitarian relief than they would have liked, however. Civilians who could still walk were increasingly referred on, because Dutchbat's quantity of dressings and medicines was limited. It was always necessary to tread a fine line between the wish to provide humanitarian relief and the question of how many resources were available. The shortage of fuel also disrupted the provision of relief; it therefore had to be decided to no longer transport sick civilians.[1050] The search continued for ways for patrols to take wounded that were close to a patrol route.

A persistent question in medical assistance to the population was whether it was permitted under the UN rules: in the Appendix 'Dutchbat III and the population: medical issues' this question is discussed in more detail.

The medical staff of Dutchbat felt that there was insufficient understanding in the Crisis Staff in The Hague of the difficult situation in which they had to work in the enclave. On 20 October 1994, for example, Medical Lieutenant Colonel J.H.G. Lankhorst of Dutchbat II received a memorandum from Major P. Madern of the Crisis Staff with regulations for requesting medical supplies.[1051] The numerous rules appeared to be completely inapplicable to the daily practice in Bosnia and Srebrenica. Furthermore, the Major concluded with the remark to the doctors in Srebrenica 'that there was not much use in fighting the UN regulations'. Lankhorst in turn answered that if UN regulations were deviated from, there were always good reasons: according to him 'the practical experience that had been built up was so large that the lack of understanding, the interference and the lack of experience only made people laugh or made them angry.'[1052] In an extensive commentary, Lankhorst further vented this mood. He wrote 'that what Dutchbat needed was not a detailed instruction, but someone who would bring an end to the pointless stream of faxes, full of nit-picking, inaccuracies and statements of the obvious'. He also drew the Crisis Staff's attention to a painful misunderstanding in the memorandum received from The Hague: Srebrenica was not a Serbian area, but a Muslim enclave, surrounded by a

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1050 DAB. Report of the Health Inspector p. 23.
1051 CDPO/GNKD. From g4 Dtch Army Crisis Staff P. Madern for o.m. 1 (NL) UN Infbat faxref. 4666/1 date 20 October 1994. The rules are given in appendix F (Medical service goods) under logistics instruction G4 Army Crisis Staff morning sheet for units under the command of UNPROFOR.
1052 CDPO/GNKD. From 1 (NL) UN SPTCMD LtCol Lankhorst MD to: G4 Crisis Staff 18/11/94 subject: defibrillators/Comments on fax 4666/1.

Bosnian-Serb area. Lankhorst concluded with the remark that 'there was no need for unworkable regulations dreamed up in an ivory tower.'[1053]

Meanwhile it had become apparent that the extensive relief provided by Dutchbat was a thorn in the flesh of the UNPROFOR command. For the UN troops, the rule was that this, except in emergencies, was a task for the non-governmental organizations. Dutchbat, however, with the support of the Netherlands Army top and the Ministry of Defence, continued to adhere to its own view. Immediately after the arrival of Dutchbat III, Colonel Brantz as Chief of Staff of the Army Crisis Staff identified two main problems.[1054] The first was concerned with medical supplies to the battalion and the second the question of who was to pay. The best possible medical assistance to the population, as favoured by Minister Voorhoeve, proved to be no longer possible because of the lack of supplies. Because an increasing amount of medical assistance was being provided to the residents of Srebrenica, the battalion was rapidly running through its stocks, and the stocks were not being replenished by or at the expense of the UN.

The two Netherlands Army doctors, Colonel E.G. van Ankum and Lieutenant Colonel W.J. Wertheim, who paid a working visit to Dutchbat in January, responded to complaints from the battalion doctors about insufficient medicines by checking out the entire 'chain' of medical supply.[1055] The doctors themselves felt that this was attributable to roundabout application procedures, a limited range at the UN and limited import from the Netherlands. The medical specialists Colonel K. Schnabel and Colonel F. Kamerling of Dutchbat expressed the fear to Van Ankum and Wertheim that the care for their own soldiers was also in danger. They therefore had an emergency supply (known as an 'iron reserve'), which was sufficient for twenty operations on their own personnel.[1056] Van Ankum and Wertheim asked for a meeting with the Army Crisis Staff on these problems. They felt that that there was a need to establish in principle whether medical assistance to the population should be allowed. There would then have to be firm agreements on the size of the reserves to be set aside for such purposes.

In the meantime, Battalion Commander Karremans was greatly concerned about the possible consequences of reducing or stopping medical support to the population. In a letter to the Commander of the Crisis Staff he therefore pressed to be allowed to continue this help. Karremans feared otherwise that the good relationship with the local administration and the population would be damaged and the execution of his duties would be put in peril. He called the medical assistance to the population the most visible part of Dutchbat's work, whether they provided it directly, or in collaboration with *Médecins Sans Frontières* and the other non-governmental organizations.[1057] The command of the Netherlands Army decided that the medical assistance could indeed continue, on the understanding that it must not lead to an erosion of the primary responsibility: the medical care of Dutchbat soldiers.[1058] This formulation contained the core of the problem that would arise around the fall of the enclave, almost a half year later, when the involvement of the doctors with medical assistance to the population would lead to great difficulties. This is covered in more detail in the Appendix 'Dutchbat III and the population: medical issues'.

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[1053] CDPO/GNKD. From 1 (NL) UN SPTCMD LtCol Lankhorst MD to : G4 Crisis staff 18/11/94 subject: defibrillators/Comments on fax 4666/1.
[1054] CDPO/GNKD. RNlA Crisis Staff internal memorandum: C.L. Brantz to: C-Army Crisis Staff, DOKL and BLS 26/01/95 no. CRST/1637 subject: 'the problems surrounding medical care'.
[1055] See CRST. Working visit UNPROFOR of Van Ankum and Wertheim January 1995.
[1056] Idem.
[1057] CRST. Letter from Commander DUTCHBAT III Karremans to C-NL Crisis Staff 22 January 1995 subject: humanitarian medical assistance to the local population.
[1058] DCBC, 2052. Memorandum PCDS (LGen Schouten) to the Minister and Junior Minister, 08/03/95, no. S95/061/1014.

## 20. Collaboration of Dutchbat with the NGOs

The United Nations peace mission in Bosnia had both security and humanitarian aspects. It was therefore fairly natural for the UNPROFOR military authorities to collaborate with institutions of the UN, specifically the UnCivPol police unit, the UNMO observer corps, as well as with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) for assistance in the area, specifically the International Red Cross (ICRC), *Médecins Sans Frontières* (*MSF*) and others. The activities of these relief organizations and their relations with the enclave administration were discussed above in Chapter 4. The battalion leaders opted to make a contribution especially in the medical area.

Dutchbat worked closely in the Srebrenica enclave with the various NGOs. It must be borne in mind that the assumptions and priorities can differ fundamentally between military and civil organizations, which can lead to conflicts of interest and disputes.[1059]

The position of the NGOs was strictly neutral in principle, although the way in which they interpreted this neutrality could vary. The starting point of some organizations was that they had to help both parties in equal measure, whereas others felt that help must be concentrated where it was most needed. The question of whether collaboration with Dutchbat could be successful depended not only on the formal collaboration, however. The fact is that it was on the informal level that the personal qualities and professionalism of the people involved played a role in terms of creating a solid foundation for collaboration through the acceptance of the various objectives, points of departure and mandates.

Most NGOs considered collaboration with the UNPROFOR units to be a mixed blessing. On the one hand, they needed the information facility, security and assistance on a wide front, which Dutchbat was able to offer. On the other hand, they did not want to be too closely confronted with the military side of the UN action, because the warring factions did not consider the blue helmets to be neutral a priori. In certain situations, the NGOs needed a military guard or escort for their personnel, but were wary of, for example, using too many military transport resources, to prevent identification.

Information exchange between NGOs and blue helmets was also a sensitive point, not so much with respect to data on the humanitarian situation or the reporting of incidents, but more in connection with information of a military nature, such as the observation of firing positions or troop movements. As a relief worker expressed it: 'the farther we are from the guns, the better we feel'.[1060]

It remains questionable whether the NGOs succeeded in maintaining the 'neutral' image in East-Bosnia. However, it can be observed that in Srebrenica the collaboration of the blue helmets with the various organizations was usually excellent. Relief workers and soldiers showed a great deal of appreciation for each other, probably inspired by the joint efforts to make something of the situation in spite of all the misery. The battalion did have to be on its guard not to take tasks over from the humanitarian organizations.

The obstructive attitude of the ABiH and the Opstina threw Dutchbat and the NGOs, as it were, into each other's arms. The three successive Dutchbat Commanders were prepared to give active support to these organizations. In the increasingly difficult circumstances in which Dutchbat, the NGOs and the population itself came to find themselves, Karremans also looked constantly for opportunities to support both the population and the relief workers. For instance, it was possible to achieve a military-civil collaboration that could go some way towards making daily life easier for many civilians.

Problems that had played a role elsewhere in the collaboration between soldiers and humanitarian organizations, were largely absent in Srebrenica.[1061] The Dutch doctor H. Wijnhoven,

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[1059] A number of examples are given in an article by S. Wolfson 'Samen werken: UNHCR en de krijgsmacht' in *Werelden apart? Militair en burgers: vredeshandhavers en hulpverleners*, Den Haag, 1997, pp. 43-52.
[1060] Daniel Byma (et al.), *'Strengthening the Partnership' Improving Military Coordination with Relief Agencies and Allies in Humanitarian Operations*. Prepared by Rand for United States Airforce, Santa Monica, 2000, p. 104.
[1061] See for example . Wolfson 'Samen werken: UNHCR en de Krijgsmacht' pp. 43-52.

who had been dispatched by the Belgian department of *Médecins Sans Frontières* to Srebrenica hospital, felt that the enclave was one of the few places in Bosnia where relief organizations and soldiers cooperated very well.[1062] He did observe some irritation in the relationship with the International Red Cross, which, because of its specific mandate in conflict situations, simply was not allowed to work directly with UN soldiers. The collaboration with UNHCR generally proceeded well, but Dutchbat protested from the outset against the black market practices of the drivers from this organization, and also against hiring in Serbian drivers. Dutchbat I also made video recordings to back up their accusations and confronted the UNHCR with them.

Furthermore, Srebrenica was of course a small-scale collaboration, in which the people involved got to know each other well. The contact was usually maintained by commanders of OPs, officers of the Explosives Ordnance Disposal Unit and the doctors. The isolated position meant that the soldiers involved in the relief and the relief workers each depended on the other. The specific situation in the enclave also meant that it was not a problem if social contact existed between staff of the NGOs and blue helmets, because it was hardly visible. The relief workers' adage that 'walking into a bar with an officer can hurt our impartiality'[1063] was hardly applicable, if at all, which contributed to a good working atmosphere.

Colonel Vermeulen, the Commander of Dutchbat I, did want to make a distinction in this regard between the various NGOs. In contacts with his battalion, he did observe differences in professionalism, the will to collaborate and - correspondingly - the degree of success of that collaboration. The one organization was more inclined to see the blue helmets as an 'improper competitor', while the other was more pragmatic and saw the Armed Forces mainly as a source of information and safety. Vermeulen therefore recommended promoting mutual understanding and knowledge in the future by organizing joint training and reciprocal work exchanges well before a mission.[1064]

The relief organization *Médecins Sans Frontières* worked closely with Dutchbat in the enclave. The organization was given regular briefings on the security situation and incidents that had taken place. Dutchbat also offered military protection for *Médecins Sans Frontières* activities at the edge of the enclave. The collaboration in the medical area was, as mentioned above, intensive. Immediately on arrival, the Dutch battalion made contact with *Médecins Sans Frontières* and raised the subject of the humanitarian ambitions of the mission. They discussed the proposal for repairing the water supply and for collecting school materials in the Netherlands for the lower school in the enclave. Plans also rapidly emerged for specific medical collaboration.[1065] A report from *Médecins Sans Frontières* worker Alain Wilmart from July 1994 provides a view of the relationship with Dutchbat; Wilmart advised his successors as follows:

> UNPROFOR: 'Take care to entertain good relations with them, despite their military mentality, for the sake of both the medical and logistic assistance they are able to give us. From a logistical point of view, many promises of aid to the whole of the population were made but they have not as yet materialized. Only the medical company assists us fully with the medical visits and the operations.'[1066]

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and J.J. van Soest 'Lokale Hulporganisaties: Onbekend maakt Onbemind', pp. 75-83. Both in: Baarda & Schoeman (ed.), *Werelden Apart?* Donna Winslow also wrote an article here about 'NGOs and the Military. Strange bedfellows in Humanitarian Crises' in*: Militaire Spectator* 169(2000)10, pp. 525-534.

[1062] 'Continu spreekuur voor 'driving doctors'*, Defensiekrant* 26/05/94, p. 4.

[1063] Daniel Byma (et al.), *'Strengthening the Partnership 'Improving Military Coordination with Relief Agencies and Allies in Humanitarian Operations*. Prepared by Rand for United States Airforce, Santa Monica, 2000, p. 106.

[1064] C.H.P. Vermeulen, 'Humanitair optreden als militaire missie', in: Baarda & Schoeman (ed.), *Werelden apart?*, pp. 91-92.

[1065] MSF report Apr. 1994-25 included in K. Thorsen *'Medecin Sans Frontieres. Humanitarian Aid Programme in Srebrenica* 4/12/1992-21/7/1995, 23/01/01.

[1066] MSF report 21/07/94-37 included in Thorsen.

The last *Médecins Sans Frontières* team arrived in the enclave in June 1995 and reported on their not entirely problem-free introduction to Dutchbat:

> 'In terms of our first contact with them as a new team was very good. The liaison team and the Commander seem to be a bit cynical about *Médecins Sans Frontières* and not very supportive. On 27/6 they just forgot to tell us that they were going to blow up mines, so we are a bit uncomfortable.'[1067]

The greatest problems between Dutchbat and *Médecins Sans Frontières* occurred during the fall of the enclave.[1068] This will be elaborated in the Appendix 'Dutchbat III and the population: medical issues.'

The Bosnian doctor Dr I. Pilav, who worked in Srebrenica hospital told the Ministry of Defence after the fall of the enclave that he was initially impressed with the Dutch medical detachment. The Canadian battalion had only had first aid for its own people at its disposal; the Dutch had doctors, a field hospital and very good medical equipment. The Dutchbat doctors were keen to cooperate and he accepted their offer, because there was a lack, particularly of diagnostic equipment, in Srebrenica hospital. They operated jointly on Mondays, with the Dutchbat surgical team helping with diagnosis, echoes, X-rays and laboratory work.

This collaboration was not hindered by the three-monthly change of medical team. Pilav was the only civilian surgeon in the enclave and he therefore had the most contact with the military medics. Personal friendships were established with the surgeons, but ultimately, around the fall of the enclave, Pilav would become extremely disappointed in the collaboration with his Dutch colleagues. This matter will be dealt with in more detail in the Appendix 'Dutchbat III and the population: medical issues'.

## 21. The military-civil liaisons: Civil Affairs

Comprehensive peacekeeping operations by the United Nations such as those in the 1990s in the former Yugoslavia, implied that blue helmets were involved in a wide variety of tasks that also fell within the competency of the civil authorities. Soldiers were used in jobs that did not actually exist in 'traditional' peacekeeping operations. Collaboration with the civilian administration and social organizations, medical and humanitarian relief, reconstruction of the infrastructure and society, escorting relief convoys by road and the protection of Displaced Persons all demand regular consultation in an effective and structured way. NATO used the term Civil-Military Cooperation to refer to this complex of tasks and jobs - oriented to both local authorities and NGOs. At the time of the UNPROFOR mission, the long-familiar UN term Civil Affairs was still in use, within the military part of the organization also known as G5 or, on battalion level, S5. This related to the officer, or the section, that maintained the contacts with representatives of the warring factions, the civilian administration and the international organizations in the field. They were also referred to less formally as the 'liaison officer' or 'liaison section'.

UNPROFOR, UNHCR and NGOs worked together in Bosnia intensively. To coordinate the performance of humanitarian relief duties as well as possible, an effective Civil Affairs section was very important.[1069] It is a fact that the commanders of the UN units demanded a large degree of flexibility in all possible areas. This firstly involved diplomatic capacities in dealing with the warring factions; in practice in Bosnia there was a lack of agreement between them on the presence of the UN. It was therefore of great importance during the mission to get the warring factions as much as possible to the negotiating table. Secondly, collaboration with the other UN organizations and NGOs demanded considerable organizational competence. Thirdly, the relationship with the population was important. It

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[1067] MSF report 01/07/95-39 included in Thorsen.
[1068] MSF report 09/07/95-42 included in Thorsen.
[1069] See Edward Flint, 'Civil Affairs: Soldiers Building Bridges' in D.S. Gordon and F.H. Toase (eds.), '*Aspects of Peacekeeping*' , London, 2001, pp. 231-252.

required knowledge of the local conditions, language and culture, and furthermore the necessary social skills and stamina. It was, for example, particularly useful to have someone in a unit who knew what public holidays or other special days were observed in a given district. Furthermore, they had to be alert that the distribution of relief goods did not arouse jealousy among different groups.

It was also important to understand that the UN mission started as a blank sheet of paper. Regardless of the hostilities between the warring factions, the various relief agencies were already present locally when the peacekeepers arrived. The local civil and military leaders had adopted their positions and any action that was considered could in principle involve long-term and complex negotiations. The arrival of a large group of soldiers in an area also entailed all manner of practical problems, which had an influence on the relationship with the civilian population and that must not put the success of the mission in danger: the employment of local people, prostitution, black market and the use and purchase of local resources such as wood, water and building materials.

In the battalions, negotiations were conducted in the first instance by the liaison officers. If they did not achieve a satisfactory result, the Deputy Battalion Commander was called in, and if that did not help, the Commander would have to find a way out. Otherwise, the Muslims and the Bosnian Serbs tried similar negotiating tactics. Of course, this could only succeed in the presence of good collaboration and considerable mutual trust between the battalion leaders and the liaison section.

A good Civil Affairs section could put a unit in a position to anticipate a wide variety of problems, or, if necessary, to solve them. A liaison officer could put military action into the context of a social background, so that the commander could have useful additional tactical information at his disposal, and the soldiers in the field could receive the necessary information and practical advice on the local conditions.

The Civil Affairs tasks were organized in a variety of ways by the various countries. Specific units exist in the American and more recently also in the British Armed Forces. Other countries entrusted this work to individual officers, who were assigned the task for the duration of a mission (mostly 6 months).

Douglas Chalmers, a former Civil Affairs officer of the British UNPROFOR troops in Bosnia in 1992, described his liaison task as peacekeeping multiplier.[1070] In 1992, the British, like the Canadians in Croatia, had established that a good liaison structure in the contact with the warring factions was also essential in Bosnia. The experience was that much more could be achieved through personal relations than through regulations or orders, especially with commanders of the warring factions. Good liaison officers acted as the 'ears and eyes' of their own commander and were an important source of information in an obscure environment. Chalmers used the term 'directed telescope', which he borrowed from the military historian M. van Creveld. Van Creveld goes even further by saying about the role of these officers that they:

> '.....prevent the commander from becoming a prisoner of his staff (...) and would enable him to cut through the regular command hierarchy and take a look at any part of the army or obtain any kind of information that might be required at the moment.'[1071]

In the contact with the commanders of the warring factions, liaison officers were essential for the peacekeeping operation. It appeared that a good personal contact always offered an opening for negotiation, coordination and, if necessary, protest. Sometimes, simply finding the right commander as a discussion partner was a complex and time-consuming task. The individual liaison officers had the task of building trust with the different parties with whom they had to maintain contact. The British

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[1070] Douglas M. Chalmers *'Faction Liaison Teams: A Peacekeeping Multiplier'* ,School of Advanced Military Studies United States Army Command and General Staff College Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, 2001, p. II.

[1071] Martin Van Creveld 'Command in War' p. 97, quoted in: Douglas M. Chalmers '*Faction Liaison Teams: A Peacekeeping Multiplier*'.

and Canadians rapidly saw the crucial importance of effective liaison teams, which was based on the selection of the officers concerned. Weak or poorly performing liaison officers are in the most favourable case ineffective, but can even endanger the success of the entire mission. According to the study by Chalmers, it came down to such qualities as tact, initiative, resilience and self-confidence.[1072] It seems logical to add intelligence, and insight into human nature.

At the time of the deployment to Bosnia, the Netherlands had no fixed rules for assigning the liaison or civil affairs tasks. In Lebanon, the contacts were maintained by the commanders or their deputies with the assistance of an interpreter, who was often Dutch. In practice, the interpreters relieved the commanders of much work, they prevented misunderstandings, and they sometimes even fulfilled the function of political adviser. When the first reconnaissance exercises took place in Bosnia for Dutchbat, it was decided on the recommendation of the Canadians to send a separate group for negotiation and mediation.

In September 1993, an orientation visit by the Chief of Staff of the Army Crisis Staff and the Commander of the 11th Infantry Company produced the recommendation that Dutchbat should take a section of liaison officers. Interpreters, however, would be made available by the UN.[1073] The liaison section was to maintain both military and civil contacts on behalf of the commander. After Lebanon, this was an innovation, because the commander and the section leaders there had maintained the contacts themselves. The liaison function had to be given shape in practice.

The selection of the liaison officers was formally a task of the forming unit, the brigade. In practice, the Army Crisis Staff designated the people. The staffing of this section was a great problem, especially for Dutchbat II and III, so that hardly any attention was paid to who ended up in a particular position, as long as someone did. This is how the crucial position of responsible liaison officer (S5), for which highly specific demands had to be made on the person concerned, came to be filled by arbitrarily assigned Majors, because it was deemed necessary for the task to be performed by a Major. A Dutchbat officer described this Netherlands Army system as 'making a pile of building blocks, not assigning tasks'.[1074] Therefore, the selection was not based on insights into human nature, judgement, social intelligence and background knowledge. It would appear that the responsible bodies were satisfied if they were able to find officers who 'would just go and sort the job out'; the question of whether they could collaborate productively with individuals from other (operational) cultures remained in the background.

Then there was the problem of communication. The Dutchbat II liaison officers were given a couple of hours of language training, whereas their colleagues in the first and third battalion received none at all. Because they could have a Dutch interpreter only in the initial period, convoys usually embarked without anyone who spoke the language. This problem became extremely pressing when a Dutchbat II relief convoy was held up in December 1994. It then proved impossible to talk with the Bosnian Serbs, because they spoke no English; only their commander spoke a couple of words of French. The convoy commander, who was also the liaison officer, spoke only a couple of words of Serbo-Croat and also a little French, which proved to be insufficient for an exchange of views, and after a number of attempts they had to give up.[1075]

Because of the hybrid duties, a peacekeeping operation makes more demands on a liaison unit than a conventional military operation. Dutchbat had to perform its military task as well as actively working on an improvement in the living conditions of the population. The peacekeepers had to maintain contacts with the various civil and military parties as well as helping to facilitate the work of the relief organizations. There were also differences between 'green' and 'blue' action with respect to the

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[1072] He recommended that only volunteers be taken on for this position, and for their suitability to be assessed during the training.
[1073] CRST. Appendix A to internal memo 101 Gngevgp 27/09/93 no. 10929 'First impression report orientation visit UNPROFOR'.
[1074] Interview J.H.A. Rutten, 26/09/01.
[1075] Sie LL. Debriefing report SM Krouwel 1995.

liaison task. Captain Jellema of Dutchbat I describes this as follows: in 'green' exercises, the operations officer always functioned as the nerve centre. 'Blue' peace action set other requirements on the role of the staff officers: now it was mainly the liaison officer and the Intelligence officer who informed the battalion commanders which actions were appropriate.[1076]

It was decided on these grounds to assign a Major and a Warrant Officer to Dutchbat I, who were to act as liaison section, reporting to section 1 (Personnel). In practice, two men proved to be too few, because the battalion was distributed over two areas (Simin Han and Srebrenica). Therefore, at the rotation with Dutchbat II, the liaison section was expanded to two soldiers in Simin Han and three in the enclave, both under the leadership of a Major. The section was then placed as an independent unit directly under the Battalion Commander. Dutchbat III also had two Majors and a non-commissioned officer in Srebrenica; although, in practice, the military security officer also acted as a member of the liaison section. The Dutch interpreter Captain P. Lindgreen, who served in both of the first two battalions, found the first construction clearer for all parties concerned.[1077] He felt that the Muslims also failed to understand a theoretical division between the civil and the military part of the liaison task: 'because it was war, everything was military in principle'.[1078]

The task of the liaison section had to be given shape in practice. The officers made and maintained contacts with military and civil organizations inside and directly outside the enclave on behalf of the Battalion Commander. The consultation with the various relief bodies and the civilian population was also within its scope. They attended official meetings, celebrations, cultural evenings and sporting events. Occasionally there were also visits to people's homes. Successful collaboration demanded regular contact, and preferably involving the same people. Therefore, the Dutchbat II and III liaison officers arrived in Bosnia earlier than the rest of the battalion so as to have more opportunity to take over the laboriously built-up contacts and goodwill.

## 22. Liaison in Dutchbat I and II

It soon became clear to Dutchbat I that the military part of the task was very ambitiously formulated, and probably too ambitiously. With the resources available it would be practically impossible to effectively seal off the enclave and to secure the borders. Therefore they set themselves as a minimum the goal of maintaining the status quo in the enclave and creating calm. This meant that the population of the enclave would have to be given the opportunity to regain some prospects for their existence, and that the Bosnian Serbs would have to take account of the presence of Dutchbat. Captain H. ten Have arrived ahead of schedule in the enclave and started to investigate the military situation after consulting his Canadian counterparts. The head of the liaison section, Major A. Derksen, occupied himself in the first instance with the civil matters.

Battalion Commander Vermeulen and Derksen had to assume that Dutchbat was not in a position to respond to all incidents by military means. They therefore tried to identify the most useful attitude in the relationship with the population, and opted mainly to talk and to listen to them a great deal. In addition, the battalion should not adopt too high a profile; the attitude towards the local population was shaped by the idea: 'these men have been through terrible things, they have experience'.[1079]

Part of the introduction was also that Dutchbat was confronted with all sorts of problems by the Bosnian Muslims and was also tested out. There were regular demonstrations at the gate of the compound, which were apparently centrally orchestrated. Dutchbat developed strategies to deal with issues of this kind. For instance, Dutch made video recordings, demonstrating, for example, possession

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[1076] Jellema & Klep, *First-In*. p. 165.
[1077] Sie LL. Evaluation report Paul Lindgreen, 6/12/94. Internal Memorandum MID/KL. Personal and confidential.
[1078] Interview P. Lindgreen, 22/02/01.
[1079] Interview A.J. Derksen, 10/04/01.

of weapons. This meant that there was a record of events, which was a good starting position in discussions. These video recordings were also made of Serbian artillery around the enclave border.[1080]

The first task of the liaison section was to establish contacts with the VRS and ABiH and to gather as much information as possible. This information was bundled in the highly informative volume *'Info t.b.v. Sie 5*.'[1081] There was a weekly meeting with ABiH leaders in the enclave. The contact with the VRS was more difficult; a request had to be submitted first and it was always unclear whether the meetings would go ahead. In the beginning there was daily consultation with the civil authorities, because of the tense situation that prevailed, whereas later twice a week proved to be sufficient. Usually these were attended by the Vice-President and sometimes also the President of the Opstina. The contact with the humanitarian relief organizations was nearly a daily occurrence. In these meetings, they exchanged information and made agreements on collaboration.

In the first instance, Dutchbat I had only a Muslim interpreter available, and that made it difficult to make contact with the VRS. The Commander of the first battalion was very pleased that 'when I arrived with an endless lament, [I] was given a Captain Interpreter, who was worth his weight in gold, and gave us what we needed'.[1082] This Dutch interpreter, Lindgreen, was formally allocated to the commander, but he would also take part in the liaison work and was involved in preparing for and conducting discussions. He was familiar with the culture and was therefore able to give the correct instructions and evaluate discussions. Lindgreen's knowledge of local customs and his mild-mannered nature enabled him to calm tempers or break the ice in a tense situation.

When he was on leave, the liaison section immediately felt the repercussions. As a Dutch interpreter, Lindgreen did not depend on the local rulers, and therefore the population dared to speak more freely with him than with the local interpreters. On the other hand, he could also take more liberties, for example, a true-to-life translation of Derksen's fit of rage.

The personal interpretation of liaison functions was extremely important. This was evident not only in Lindgreen's case, but also in that of Dutchbat I's formal liaison officer, Derksen, who was also commander of the commandos attached to Dutchbat. Derksen informed and coached his commander in negotiations and consultation. Vermeulen called Derksen 'a crucial figure', who had contacts on various levels in and around the enclave and was very well informed of the situation. Derksen was able to get on with everyone: with VRS Colonel Vukovic he talked about his fascination for Eskimos and with Oric about special forces.[1083] Naser Oric looked up to Derksen and addressed him as 'fellow commando-commander'.[1084] Derksen fulfilled his liaison function with support from Lindgreen, and during his leave he was replaced by the Intelligence officer, Ten Have.

The first battalion succeeded in getting the ABiH and VRS around the negotiating table a couple of times for discussions on such subjects as the borders of the enclave, the exchange of mortal remains, evacuations and family reunification. These meetings, by way of exception, took place in the compound. Consultation with the local authorities or with the ABiH leaders in the enclave usually took place in the PTT building in Srebrenica, where the UNMOs were based. Derksen also tried systematically to explain to the soldiers the meaning of respect for the population: for example, not throwing sweets, but simply handing them out. His assumption was that the blue helmets had arrived not as an occupation force, but as guests. This fact should determine their attitude and behaviour. Derksen also saw no problem if someone returned from leave with a present for a Muslim. This was later to be strictly forbidden.

In July 1994, the originally congenial atmosphere between the Dutch battalion and the ABiH began to turn. Members of the aid station team, after a report that a pregnant woman needed help, ran into an obstacle at the Swedish Shelter Project consisting of thirteen iron bars each with fourteen

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[1080] Interview J.W. Brinkman, 11/10/99.
[1081] See archive Section Lessons Learned KL.
[1082] Tabak (ed.), *Tussen hamer en aambeeld*, pp. 49-50.
[1083] Tabak (red.*), Tussen hamer en aambeeld*, pp. 49-50.
[1084] Interview P. Lindgreen, 31/03/00.

spikes. The battalion decided to suspend medical assistance to the Swedish Shelter Project for a week to make clear that incidents of this kind were unacceptable.[1085]

Derksen also faced the task of building a workable relationship with the Bosnian Serbs. He tried to find some sympathy for their rhetoric and showed willing to listen to hours of stories, sometimes without an interpreter, to be in a position to do business with them later. Derksen told the NIOD that he once threatened the VRS General Zivanovic that he would leave with the entire battalion when they started to curse him. In contacts with Muslims and Bosnian Serbs, Derksen tried where possible to create an atmosphere of mutual respect and a willingness to solve problems together. This occasionally led to success: when Bosnian Serbs smuggled ammunition into the enclave at OP-P, he succeeded in persuading VRS Major Nicolic to intervene.[1086]

The bundle *'Info for Sie 5'*, which was prepared by the Dutchbat I Intelligence and liaison sections, contains a number of conclusions and recommendations. It firstly points to the significance of interpreters who form 'a terribly important link' in the conversation with the two parties. It also observes that 'acceptance of the liaison team by the parties involved in the conflict and being completely familiar with the prevailing problems is an absolute must'. There is also a recommendation 'to expand the organization of 12 Infbat (Airmobile), in other words the later Dutchbat II, on deployment to the former Yugoslavia by at least 3 liaison teams.'[1087] As mentioned, there would be an expansion, but not on the scale proposed.

At the time of Dutchbat II, the nature of the various contacts gradually changed.[1088] Consultation with the Bosnian Serbs was less frequent; Vukovic was still the most approachable. The weekly meetings with the Opstina were continued. The Vice-President of the Opstina, Hamdija Fejzic, was increasingly often the contact. In the first period of the deployment, the Dutchbat II liaison section still had the availability of the experienced Lindgreen. After his rotation, a Dutch soldier who spoke Serbo-Croat and could interpret was available. He was less in a position to fulfil the liaison role than his predecessor, but he too was able to contribute to the progress of the contacts.

At the time of Dutchbat II and III, it was increasingly the observation post commanders and the medics, as opposed to the liaison officers, who maintained contacts with the local population. The liaison officers concentrated ever more on civil and military leaders rather than on civilians in general.

After his stay in Srebrenica, Dutchbat interpreter Paul Lindgreen wrote an evaluation for the Dutch Military Intelligence Service and added recommendations for the following interpreters. The document reads as a lessons learned analysis, not only for liaison officers and interpreters, but also for all Dutch soldiers on a peace mission.[1089]

Lindgreen advocated, for example, that the training should pay attention not only to superficial cultural differences, but also discuss the associated practical side. For example, blue helmets should not only take off their shoes before entering a Muslim house, but should also write their names in the shoes. The children of the family would often be told to clean guests' shoes, and this measure would save the owners endlessly searching for their own shoes. Lindgreen also advised that the men should always have an 'airmobile mug' with them, so that they could always drink from a clean mug if they were invited anywhere. It was very important now and again for peace soldiers to put themselves in the position of 'the other': 'How would you react, driven from hearth and home, your family murdered, and a foreigner comes and tells you what to do?' He wrote: 'remember that you are a guest in the most beautiful country in the world and with the nicest people'.

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[1085] Jellema & Klep, *First-In*, pp. 165-166.
[1086] Interview A.J. Derksen, 10/04/01.
[1087] Sie LL. *'Info for Sie 5'*.
[1088] For the description of Section 5 within Dutchbat II, use is made of F.A. Ebbelaar, *'Sectie 5: modieuze 'uitzendballast'?* ('Section 5: fashionable 'deployment ballast'?'), *Militaire Spectator* 164(1995)7 pp. 319-324.
[1089] Sie LL. Evaluation report P. Lindgreen 06/12/94 Internal Memorandum MID/Netherlands Army Personal and confidential.

Lindgreen also had comments on the way in which contacts with the warring factions were maintained. He pointed out that at Bosnian Serb or Croat checkpoints, the commander should be treated with complete respect, and was therefore always right. He had observed how tense or even anxious Dutch soldiers were in transit, and how officers sometimes appeared extremely irritated in confrontations. This made a poor impression on the soldiers of the warring factions. The crew of the checkpoints often understood well what the Dutch were saying to each other, because they always had someone among them who had worked in the Netherlands or Germany. What is more, he had noticed that, in addition to the Dutchbat men, several officers and non-commissioned officers had an insufficient command of English, which was a further obstacle for the battalion's external communication.[1090]

Under Dutchbat I, it already rapidly became clear how much time and trouble was involved in building and maintaining a wide spectrum of contacts with the various parties in and around the enclave. It was therefore no luxury to have specialists for this work. In the civil area, there were furthermore so many diverse subjects involved that the liaison officers also had to coordinate within the unit. However, there were no clear terms of reference, and there was therefore a large degree of freedom in interpreting the task. In this way, significant differences developed in the accents applied by each officer and each battalion.

## 23. Liaison in Dutchbat III

Karremans, the Commander of Dutchbat III, felt afterwards that the preparation of his unit was deficient with respect to how the liaison task should take shape on the ground: 'I didn't have the faintest idea what they had to do'. According to him, the Netherlands Army provided too little substance in advance: 'It was a matter of trial and error, because we had never worked with an S5. I also just had them thrust upon me. The brigade or The Hague did the selection.'

The Dutchbat III liaison officers (S5s) concerned also perceived this lack of clarity and lack of training and information. They were assigned to be the liaison section of the battalion, while no one had a view of what their task should be and how the preparation could best be organized. Ultimately they raked together some information themselves and took advice from their predecessor from the first battalion.[1091] They did follow the negotiating course at Clingendael, where they were taught how to deal with an interpreter. The ardent attempts made by Karremans before the deployment to have a Dutch interpreter allocated to his battalion failed, however. They had to resort to local interpreters. The training did not cover the possibly related problems.

In general, the Dutchbat III liaison section continued the practice of their colleagues in the previous battalion. The section held a coordination meeting every day in the Srebrenica PTT building with UNMOs, UnCivPol and NGOs. In addition there were weekly separate discussions with the VRS (Colonel Vukovic disappeared from the picture), the ABiH and the Opstina (usually in the person of Fejzic).

The ABiH appeared to be considerably less impressed with the Dutchbat III liaison section than with their predecessors. Ekrim Salihovic, the ABiH liaison officer, recalled that he found it difficult to work with the battalion's two liaison Majors; according to him, they did not listen, knew everything better and were patronizing towards Muslims.[1092] The civilian administration was satisfied with the liaison officers. Irritations in the ABiH sometimes involved simple matters, which a properly trained liaison officer could have prevented. For instance, there was a severe shortage of salt in the enclave, which had immediate consequences for public health. The salt prices on the black market were also extremely high, up to DM 40 a kilo. Under these circumstances, it was perplexing for the Muslim

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[1090] Sie LL. Evaluation report Paul Lindgreen 06/12/94 Internal Memorandum MID/Netherlands Army Personal and confidential.
[1091] Interview P. Boering, 17/12/02.
[1092] Interview Ekrem Salihovic, 02/12/98.

personnel in the compounds to see salt thrown on the floor in the kitchen after frying chips, to stop it being slippery.[1093] Karremans himself admitted that he would have preferred to have seen two liaison people with each of B and C Company, and six with the battalion staff (three civil and three military), and in addition a separate person for contacts with the NGOs. 'Which quickly brings you to ten people'.[1094] They were simply not available; the battalion therefore had to learn to live with this structural scarcity.

## 24. The psychology of the peacekeeper

The recent United Nations peace missions make great demands on the participating soldiers, in terms of both military qualities, and adequate preparation and mental stability. It has been shown above how much this was also applicable to the deployment of Dutchbat in Bosnia. By way of concluding this chapter on the civil side of the peace mission, there now follows a summary of a number of its problematic aspects, which will be related to insights from recent literature on peace missions in the former Yugoslavia and elsewhere.

In the international literature on *peacekeeping* operations, attention has been paid to the consequences of deploying soldiers for peace operations. A much-repeated quote of the former Secretary-General of the United Nations, Dag Hammerskjøld, was made for good reason: 'Peacekeeping is not a soldier's job, but only a soldier can do it'. This adage suggests that peacekeeping is somewhat different from war. In addition to clearly military capabilities such as discipline, the ability to cope with violence, or to perform under difficult circumstances, supplementary skills are also required. This involves a wide spectrum of qualities: properties such as flexibility, social intelligence and knowledge, as well as skills including experience with negotiating techniques, language proficiency and the capacity to cope with provocations and threats. These qualities were all the more necessary in the conflict in Bosnia; with his statement, Hammerskjøld appeared to be way ahead of his time.

In an article, the Canadian anthropologist, Donna Winslow, who carried out an extensive investigation into Canadian peacekeepers in Somalia, assumes two fundamental differences between peacekeeping missions and regular armed operations. The first is the principle of 'impartiality', and the second the principle of 'non-coercion', which is the achievement of objectives without exacting them by force.[1095] In peace operations, the keywords happen to be 'patience', 'empathy' and 'diplomacy'.[1096] It is not about defeating the enemy but of controlling or if possible resolving a conflict. Winslow calls this problem 'a paradigmatic shift for the soldier involved, who now needs to see the conflicts as the enemy, not the belligerents'.[1097] The goal of the military action is therefore no longer the military victory over an enemy, but stabilization and elimination of the conflict.

The American Franklin Pinch addresses the problem that the decision whether and under what conditions to deploy soldiers in the first instance is a political one. The political decision-making will usually follow its own agenda, which can be in conflict with the 'train-up' time that is necessary for an effective deployment of troops. In particular, the creation of realistic expectations relative to the task to be performed is a very important part of the preparation, but also extremely time-consuming.[1098]

In the case of Dutchbat, the plan and the preparation were partly problematic. The political string-pulling with the UN about Dutchbat's destination meant that it was impossible in the preparation

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1093 Confidential interview (85).
1094 Interview Th.J.P. Karremans, 01/12/00.
1095 Winslow, D. 'Should combat Soldiers be Peacekeepers'? in *Peacekeeping Canada*, Canadian Council for International Peace and Security, Ottawa, 1998.
1096 See also A.J. van Leusden 'Ethiek bij noodhulp. Reflectie op normen en waarden naar aanleiding van recente (noodhulp)operaties' ('Ethics in emergency relief. Reflection on norms and values in response to recent (emergency relief) operations'), *De Militaire Spectator* 165 (1996).
1097 Winslow, D. 'Should combat Soldiers be Peacekeepers'?, p.4.
1098 Franklin C. Pinch 'Screening and selection of personnel for peace operations: a Canadian Perspective, in: David R. Segal, *Peace Operations: Workshop Proceedings U.S. Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences,* Virginia, 1994, p. 59.

period to anticipate the situation on the ground, and the nature of the problems there. Practically all the available time and energy had to be spent on a 'conventional' manner of training and preparing, and this coincided with the main interest of the men. The preparation on the civil and humanitarian part of the mission was pushed aside, but it was actually extremely necessary. Dutchbat I could still take corrective measures, but the later battalions encountered increasing problems with this part as a consequence of the lack of people and resources.

During the training and preparation, there was hardly any time and attention for reflection on the meaning of the specific standards and values, historical and social background to the conflict, tolerance towards other cultures, language proficiency and related subjects. It is perfectly plausible that such skills should form part of regular training.

An evaluation of peace missions in the former Yugoslavia in fact observed the necessity for a reorientation:

> 'In a peacekeeping mission, the retraining of a combat soldier to a peacekeeping role is vital. Training of the mind is as important as physical training. Soldiers must be able to understand the culture and attitude of the local population and to de-escalate critical situations.'[1099]

Insufficient insight into the social and political background to the conflict can lead, for example, to participants in a peace mission having insufficient respect for the worth of people in need. A notorious example is the way in which soldiers in Mogadishu (Somalia) threw bread from a truck to the starving population, as if they were feeding animals. An example of a respectful attitude, on the other hand, is the way in which Karremans dealt with the issue of waste food in Srebrenica. By having good food packed and sent to those most in need.

Winslow investigated the experiences of UNPROFOR officers, which revealed that nine out of ten officers found the standard military training insufficient as a preparation for deployment as a UN officer. They themselves identified the deficiencies in the training, such as the knowledge of local culture, training in how to remain friendly in hostile surroundings, and dealing with the media.[1100] According to the American researcher Dana P. Eyre, soft skills such as training in cultural awareness and negotiation skills are among the most important instruments of peacekeepers, especially for those in command. According to Winslow, the Canadians also took along reservists for this reason, because they usually performed better in the relationship with civilians.[1101]

Age and experience of life are of great importance. Major Wieffer, the Dutchbat III Intelligence and operations officer endorsed this for the deployment to Srebrenica:

> 'The problem is that you come into a world that in any case is not the world of an 18 to 21-year old - and that is the average age around there - and are unable to understand a number of things. Perhaps there are also a number of things you do not want to understand. Of course, this does not contribute to a correct view, a correct understanding.'[1102]

One of the Dutchbat members, who afterwards publicly admitted misconduct towards the Muslims, stated that it happened because of being too young to be to deployed: 'I was still an adolescent, and then it is hard to comprehend a war that is not your own.'[1103] An experienced Dutchbat III non-

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[1099] Wolfgang Biermann and Martin Vadset (ed.), 'From UNPROFOR to UNPF. Peacekeeping with Peace Support but without Peace' in Biermann and Vadset (eds.), *UN Peacekeeping in Trouble: Lessons Learned from the Former Yugoslavia,* Aldershot, 1999, p. 55.

[1100] Biermann & Ugland 'Lessons Learned in the Field', pp. 94-95.

[1101] Interview with Donna Winslow in the magazine *Civile/Militair* (2001)1, p. 5.

[1102] Interview E.G.B. Wieffer, 18/06/99.

[1103] A. Kranenberg, 'Moord op de witte muizen', *De Volkskrant* , 22/07/00.

commissioned officer acknowledged with hindsight that many soldiers had difficulty accepting people as they were, in particular the inexperienced young people. When asked how you should train people to be peacekeepers he answered: 'First send them back to their mothers to learn normal manners, normal social behaviour'.[1104]

The mission in Bosnia that followed UNPROFOR and the Dayton accords was IFOR (Implementation Force), and it also involved Dutch soldiers. A study of their experiences shows how important the above is.[1105] The investigation was set up with the negative experiences of the Dutch UNPROFOR soldiers in mind. The experiences of the IFOR soldiers were completely different: the mandate was clearer, the soldiers had more authorities, the mission was better led, they were more robustly armed and there was a peace agreement to maintain. It was possible to tailor the preparation to these more favourable circumstances, and likewise the motivation.

The Dutch blue helmets in the Srebrenica enclave had to contend with problems with motivation as a consequence of the lack of meaning given to the mission and the related 'working and living conditions'. The symptoms were not applicable exclusively to the experiences of the Dutch battalions and to the situation in Bosnia, as is apparent from studies from Canada, the United States, Great Britain and Sweden.[1106] The Swedish researcher Eva Johansson studied the experiences of the Swedish UNPROFOR soldiers.[1107] She concludes that the cumulative experiences of 'low intensity stress' formed a greater burden on the soldiers than the tension as a consequence of one-off confrontations, of shooting incidents or life-threatening situations. She assumes that experience of life, with an adequate preparation on all levels, is of great importance in performing missions of this kind well.[1108]

Johansson points out how important it is during the mission to keep informing the participating soldiers about the situation on the ground, and specifically also about the social and cultural aspects, traditions, and standards and values of the different population groups. It was evident in each succeeding Swedish unit how the tension between the unit and the local population increased the longer the stay lasted, and confrontations with the ABiH took place. The neutral attitude of the soldiers did not match the expectations of the population, and in their eyes they served the local interests insufficiently. Neither could the blue helmets fulfil the hope of peace and security. This created dissatisfaction and frustration among the population towards the soldiers, which they, in their turn, found it difficult to cope with.[1109] Just as with the Dutch battalions, it appeared as if the first Swedish battalion had the most positive experiences and the successive later units had increasing difficulty. Johansson also identifies the following as capacities that can contribute to a successful peace mission: flexibility, patience, diplomacy, tolerance and modesty.[1110] A Swedish soldier quoted by her expressed even more succinctly what it was actually about: 'in the first place, to be a good human being, not just a good soldier'.[1111]

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[1104] Confidential interview (85).
[1105] A.L.W. Vogelaar, J.L. Soeters and J.B.G. Born 'Working and Living in Bosnia: Experiences of Dutch IFOR Soldiers', pp. 113-131.
[1106] Paul T. Bartone and Mark A. Vaitkus, *'Stress, Cohesion and Morale in Peacekeeping Operations' Proceedings of the International Stress Workshop*, pp. 38-42; Laura L. Miller and Charles Moskos 'Humanitarians or Warriors?: Race, Gender, and Combat Status in Operation Restore Hope. In: *Armed Forces & Society*, Vol. 21(1995)4, pp. 615-637.
[1107] Eva Johansson 'The Role of Peacekeepers in the 1990s: Swedish Experience in UNPROFOR', in: *Armed Forces & Society*, Vol. 23(1997)3, pp. 451- 466 and E. Johansson 'Swedish Lessons from Bosnia' in *NL Arms* 1998 p. 193-202.
[1108] E. Johansson 'Swedish Lessons from Bosnia' in *NL Arms,* 1998, pp. 196, 1998 and 201.
[1109] Eva Johansson 'The Role of Peacekeepers in the 1990s: Swedish Experience in UNPROFOR in: *Armed Forces & Society*, Vol. 23(1997)3, p. 459.
[1110] Johansson, E. 'Peacekeeping and military Professionalism-The experience of the Swedish Bosnian Battalion' Inter-University seminar on Armed Forces and society, paper presented at the Biennial international Conference, Baltimore 1995.
[1111] Eva Johansson 'The Role of Peacekeepers in the 1990s: Swedish Experience in UNPROFOR in: *Armed Forces & Society*, Vol. 23(1997)3, p. 464.

The skills and attitudes that soldiers have acquired to be able to operate and survive in possibly large-scale military conflicts are insufficient for coping with the problems of modern peace operations. It is not possible to rely purely on standard procedures, the chain of command and orders from above to deal with unexpected and unpredictable situations in the most productive way. Peacekeeping missions in obscure conflicts such as in Bosnia are often systematically associated with lack of clarity, in the form of vague assignments, unworkable Rules of Engagement, lack of knowledge of the circumstances on the ground and queries about the mission objectives and their own role in it. Concerning the giving of meaning, it is of great importance for peacekeeper activities to be blended in with the 'military self image'.[1112] This also demands good preparation and training.

The psychological aspects of peacekeeping missions are of a completely different order than those of combat missions. In peacekeeping operations such as in Bosnia, there is often an element of multiple, difficult to distinguish parties, where the interrelationships are often also difficult to assess. The soldiers have to determine their attitude not only towards the warring factions, but also to a multitude of humanitarian organizations, UN institutions, national governments and media. In addition, they have to be constantly alert for shelling, other hostilities and the confrontation with barbarity. To be able to establish a position in this, the participating soldiers need more than the familiar distinction between 'the good guys and the bad guys'. The basic training also nearly always assumes a clearly identifiable enemy. Training and preparation that assumes a more complex situation is especially relevant to peace missions. For the participating soldiers this implies a great tolerance of complex situations and associated frustrations.[1113]

Peacekeeping demands a different mental constitution of individual soldiers. Soldiers can no longer react according to customs and procedures learned during training. Furthermore, peace operations are on a smaller scale and therefore soldiers are much more directly confronted with the consequences of their actions and decisions. The Israeli military psychologist Reuven Gal points to contradictions between the mental preparation of soldiers on combat duties and the execution of peace duties. He points out that they are motivated and trained in principle for the first category. They have been professionally geared up for fight as opposed to flight; they work on the assumption of group cohesion, confidence in their commanders and involvement in the nature of the conflict.

Where peacekeeping operations are concerned, matters are entirely different. The fact is that in their profession soldiers are hardly trained to deal with civilians and civil organizations.[1114]

The team spirit within the unit can also suffer through a lack of the familiar group cohesion. This was not an issue for Dutchbat, but units often functional in their composition and are drawn from several countries. Most soldiers then no longer work in the unit in which they were trained, and the commander is often not the original superior officer. A familiar orientation point such as patriotism can no longer function as a motivator, and the feeling that they are working for a good cause can rapidly be overshadowed by an obstinate reality.[1115]

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[1112] See also Thomas W. Britt , 'Psychological Ambiguities in Peacekeeping' in: Harvey J. Langholtz (ed.), '*The Psychology of Peacekeeping',* Westport/London, 1998, pp. 111-128.

[1113] See for example Franklin C. Pinch, 'Screening and selection of personnel for peace operations: a Canadian Perspective' in: Peace Operations: Workshop Proceedings David R. Segal U.S. Army Research Institute for the Behavioural and Social Sciences, Virginia, 1994, p. 59 and Winslow, D. 'Should combat Soldiers be Peacekeepers?' and Olivier A.K. MacDonals 'Peacekeeping Lessons Learned: An Irish Perspective in: *International Peacekeeping*, Vol 4(1997)47, pp. 94-103; see also A.J. van Leusden 'Ethiek bij noodhulp. reflectie op normen en waarden naar aanleiding van recente (noodhulp)operaties' in: *De Militaire Spectator* 165(1996)4.

[1114] According to Reuven Gal, this contains a double paradox. Much military action is diametrically opposed to human instinct and reflexes. This instinct involves flight in response to impending danger. However, it is expected of a soldier that he actually puts himself in that danger. He is therefore trained in unnatural behaviour. In peacekeeping operations, however, he must await developments again. In this sense, the profession of peacekeeper is doubly paradoxical. Reuven Gal in: J. Schoenman 'Peacekeeping als dubbele paradox' ('Peacekeeping as a double paradox'), *Maatschappij en Krijgsmacht,* August 1996, pp. 10-13.

[1115] J. Schoenman, Reuven Gal in 'Peacekeeping als dubbele paradox', *Maatschappij en Krijgsmacht* August 1996 pp. 10-13.

In 1999, Winslow and her Dutch colleague, Christ Klep, compared the peace operations in Somalia and East-Bosnia, with the telling title *Learning Lessons the Hard Way*.[1116] The reason was that at first sight there were many similarities in the reactions to the events by the soldiers, politicians, media and public opinion in both countries. While concentrating on the topics of military-civil relationships and the way in which military organizations deal with scandals and crises, they indeed identified a number of clear similarities. In both peace missions, 'combat soldiers' were deployed, but they were given no 'non-combat' training. The actual destination was only announced at the last moment. The decisions to deploy were taken under public and political pressure. In both cases 'airmobile' battalions were involved, which were given armoured personnel carriers, so that they were forced to act as armed infantry.

Furthermore, the missions were crippled by confusion about the Rules of Engagement, extremely deficient information, stress through difficult living conditions and the feeling of being threatened and deceived. The statements in the media and the public response also showed close similarities: in both cases it not only concerned the reputation of the Armed Forces and the deployed units, but there also appeared to be some erosion of national pride. What specifically was not discounted in this remote perception was a number of factors, which were identified above. As peacekeepers, the Dutchbat men had to rely on characteristics and capacities on which they were neither recruited nor selected. The men of the Airmobile Brigade were selected on physical qualities: for them, the service was mainly a sporting challenge, in which the core task consisted of applying force to achieve a particular objective. On the other hand, the Bosnian peace mission required in the first place patience, diplomacy, restraint, a clear understanding of unclear terms of reference and a knowledge of local issues.

## 25. Tension between the objective of the mission and the motivation of the participants

In Srebrenica, Dutchbat's duty was to safeguard the enclave against hostilities, to protect the population through its presence, to demilitarize the Muslims and generally to create conditions in which humanitarian relief could be provided. In practice, they took the last point to mean that the Dutch battalions should also provide humanitarian relief, which brought some of the soldiers into direct contact with the population. They tried to enforce protection against hostilities through regular patrols, manning observation posts and a very large number of reports. The units were sent on the basis of the time-honoured concept that their presence - showing the flag - would reduce hostilities between the warring factions and could so lead to peace negotiations. In practice, this proved to be infeasible: the battalions were in fact powerless. Although the presence was indeed important for the population of the enclave, the entire situation deteriorated more and more. The tasks that were executed by the battalions appeared to have an insufficient or undesirable influence on the warring factions.

In due course this was particularly harmful to the motivation of the participants. Sergeant Major W. de Wildt, who had often been deployed himself, confirmed that the Ministry of Defence fairly often fails in its preparation of what people were going into. He feels that above all people must be given realistic training, and that they must be told that they will be confronted with dilemmas. According to him, the Defence organization must ensure that soldiers are not given the idea that they 'are going to make the world a better place in six months'.[1117]

The information on the everyday practice in Bosnia was inadequate, and the ABiH and the VRS showed no respect, not to mention appreciation towards the blue helmets. The VRS blocked the access

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[1116] Christ Klep and Donna Winslow 'Learning Lessons the Hard Way-Somalia and Srebrenica Compared' in: *'Peace operations between War and Peace'*, Vol. 10 (1999) 2, pp. 93-137.

[1117] Interview W. de Wildt in: 'In zes maanden kun je de wereld niet verbeteren' ('You can't make the world a better place in six months'), R. Gerharts, *Carré* 22(1999)1, pp. 20-21.

roads and humiliated the men passing through; the UNPROFOR Rules of Engagement did not permit a forceful response and the Bosnian Serbs knew it.

While Dutchbat was deemed to protect the Muslims in the enclave, the ABiH in the enclave also fired regularly on the Dutch soldiers, obstructed them and denied them access to certain parts of the area. In this way, the Dutchbat members became increasingly overcome by the feeling that the way in which they carried out their duties - in so far as that was still possible - was no longer of much relevance.[1118] Under these circumstances, positive experiences with the civilian population could still have contributed to giving meaning to the mission, to the feeling that at least there was a group that had an interest in Dutchbat's presence. As has been mentioned, such contacts were strictly constrained with a view to impartiality and security.

The crises around the Bandera Triangle in January 1995 brought the issue of how to act against the warring factions sharply into discussion. The temptation to do so probably did exist in Dutchbat, but UN headquarters remained on the line of impartiality: the order 'press hard' came from Tuzla, but that did not imply the order to use force: according to the Rules of Engagement force was to be used if only their own unit was attacked, not to restore Freedom or Movement. As Major Franken remarked afterwards to the NIOD: 'I have a vivid imagination, but how do you present that to the soldiers?'[1119]

The notion of keeping the warring factions apart through observation and patrols was furthermore unrealistic. There was no buffer zone between the warring factions. The reality that Dutchbat found in East Bosnia turned out to be different from what New York and The Hague had imagined. The warring factions did not uphold the UN resolutions and did not allow themselves to be disciplined by blue helmets. While the Dutch regularly had to put themselves in dangerous situations, they could often take no action against violations, because the Rules of Engagement did not permit it.

An important dimension of the problem was also in the tension mentioned above between the requirement of impartiality of the peace mission and the will to provide humanitarian relief to the population of the enclave. According to analysts, one of the most important lessons of the entire UNPROFOR operation in Bosnia was the risk of mission creep.

Formally, the task of the peace mission included facilitating humanitarian relief by UNHCR and other organizations through its presence. According to the VRS, neutrality or impartiality suffered when UNPROFOR started not only to protect aid convoys and civilians but even also wanted to help the people in the Safe Area*s* themselves.[1120] Under such circumstances, the VRS resorted to restricting convoys just as much as an offensive act such as mortar shelling. This could lead to escalation and to a state in which the UN itself would be considered to be a party and no longer an impartial third party. The discrepancy between the formal and the actual mission became ever larger.

Altogether, for Dutchbat this meant that the battalion was unable to solve the problems in the enclave, but on the contrary would actually increasingly become part of the problem. Looking back on this development, General Van Baal pointed out in 1995 how important it was that for all Dutchbat members to be clear in advance whether they were participating in a purely humanitarian mission with limited military support or a peacekeeping mission with associated humanitarian aspects.[1121] Furthermore, according to him, the nature of the mission must not be changed without a corresponding change in the associated mandate: otherwise the soldiers would run the risk of becoming a plaything of the warring factions. The problem in Bosnia was actually that from the outset the nature of the mission and the mandate were unclear, so there was also considerable opportunity for Dutchbat to become the plaything of the warring factions.

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[1118] See also: Dijkman (ed.) *Dutchbat in vredesnaam,* p. 328.
[1119] Interview R. Franken, 04/05/01.
[1120] For example, Stephen M. Hill and Shahin P. Malik '*Peacekeeping and the United Nations',* Aldershot, 1996, p. 191.
[1121] Van Baal quoted in: H. van den Vijver, 'Trends: dilemma's in humanitaire hulpverlening' ('Trends: dilemmas in humanitarian relief'), *Maatschappij en krijgsmacht* 17 (1995)1, pp. 11-17.

## 26. Evaluation of the deployment of 'airmobile' as peacekeepers

Th. Karremans, the Commander of Dutchbat III, afterwards answered a question from the NIOD whether the battalion should actually have been sent:

> 'Yes and no. In terms of training level I would say 'yes'. That is what I also told the parents. Also in view of the circumstances that we were then aware of I would say 'yes'. But with respect to the question of whether the battalion was operationally ready, I say 'no'. We should have arranged the final exercise differently. Being without medicines, ammunition (...) We never anticipated that. A possible transition back from 'blue' to 'green' was also never considered during the advance training. But at a certain moment you are caught up in a process. You know that the 12th [Airmobile Battalion, or Dutchbat II] is waiting anxiously for you. At that point you cannot ask for another two months extra preparation. If the upper level had judged the circumstances better, then they would have done so and we would have been better prepared for a worst case scenario. But I myself always thought that we would manage. And let's be honest: if the fall had not taken place, we would have heaved a deep sigh of relief and at most discussed internally that we had pulled through with the necessary good luck. That did not apply only to us. In that respect you could also place question marks on the deployment of Dutchbat II. '[1122]

The deployment of the Airmobile Battalions did not involve a conscious selection of Dutchbat I, II and III specifically: it was sooner a matter of them being the only available BBT units (fixed-term contract professional soldiers).

Opting to deploy Airmobile Battalions nonetheless had consequences because the 'Red Berets' were not selected on capacities that would assure the success of the mission. For instance, boredom and drudgery for them entailed a certain risk for a peacekeeping mission, because during their combat training the men had actually built up an aggressive disposition. Lieutenant Colonel Vermeulen, Commander of Dutchbat I, says of this:

> 'There are some things that are not in your control. You have to wait and see. If in the battalion you have trained eager beavers, red berets, to be aggressive, and you have to keep putting up with so much. That really hurts, it really hurts those lads, too.'[1123]

In a discussion with the NIOD, Major Franken confirmed that fighting units prepared in this way were actually not suited to the task: according to him it is not good 'to train lads so severely and then to use them as car park attendants. You then spoil an elite unit and you are asking for problems'.

Franken was alluding here to a remark made by the American General Colin Powell in response to a reduction in the American troops in Bosnia. Powell had said that he could not ask 'his 82nd Airmobile Division to take children to the *kindergarten*, it would destroy those units.'[1124] Other countries also experienced that typical warrior units are less suited for peacekeeping operations. Besides the American 82nd Airmobile Division, this also applied to the British Parachute Regiment and to the deployment of Canadian paratroopers in Somalia in 1994. The last case showed how serious the

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[1122] Interview Th.J.P. Karremans, 01/12/00.
[1123] Interview C.H.P. Vermeulen, 09/06/99.
[1124] Interview R. Franken, 04/04/01.

consequences can be 'when a formation equipped with an exaggerated war-fighting ethos is inserted into an operation in which such an orientation was inappropriate.'[1125]

Vermeulen also says that to carry out peacekeeping operations, the acquired 'green' skills must partly be unlearned again. If this was not made sufficiently clear to the men it could lead to confusion, all the more so because there definitely are 'green' capacities that can positively influence the success of 'blue' action: for example, discipline and a professional image are factors that are of great importance as a first step in commanding the respect that a peacekeeper needs for carrying out his duties.[1126]

The great differences between regular military action ('green') and working in a UN context ('blue') are the core of the problem for the Airmobile part of Dutchbat. For example, the fact that they had to be visibly present wrong-footed not only Dutchbat but all the units that were deployed. They ran up against the practical question of what precisely a UN soldier is. Captain Groen told the NIOD the following:

> 'The men were not quick to allow themselves to be intimidated if they were fired on in a patrol. This is extremely 'blue' action, in essence. These lads were trained from the outset to respond aggressively immediately. So that did not happen.'[1127]

According to Major Franken, in view of the situation in the area, a battalion should never have been sent without the necessary escalation capacity at its disposal, in the form of heavier weapons or tanks. According to him, the deployment to Bosnia was based on the idea that no major problems were to be expected there, otherwise the decision to deploy the Dutch was incomprehensible to him.[1128]

It has already been mentioned that, in Karremans' judgment, the men had little experience of life, the diversity of the unit was too large, as well as the emphasis on the physical elements in winning the red beret. Dutchbat II Commander Everts also acknowledged afterwards the problems attached to deploying young people, who were selected mainly on the motivation to do challenging work: 'Above all, we send them into such an environment and we appeal to feelings such as 'get stuck in.' He therefore does not find it surprising, but nonetheless extremely dangerous, that someone there would let go occasionally.[1129]

Dutchbat I still consisted of ex-conscripts, as opposed to the usually less highly educated BBT personnel (professional soldiers) of both Dutchbat II and III. They were ill-prepared for being away from home for so long. According to B. Snoep, the chairman of the General Federation of Military Personnel, they were too caught up in an 'eight-to-five mentality' and the experience that - also in the case of exercises on the north German plain - they would be away from home for no longer than fourteen days. According to him, the battalions also never learned to operate independently and in isolation in a hostile area.[1130] The last two Dutch battalions in particular had problems caused by the short preparation time in combination with the late personnel recruitment and the youth of the soldiers.

The short preparation time was insufficient for the very necessary team building. The cultivation of group cohesion is of great importance to a properly functioning unit. It is not just a matter of keeping morale high, but also of maintaining their own standards and values. The fact is that they must dare to challenge each other on undesirable behaviour. On the other hand, too strong a team spirit can actually exclude others, even within the battalion, as was mentioned in the story about B

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[1125] See Christopher Dandeker, 'Military Culture and Strategic Peacekeeping', in: Leena Parmar (ed.), '*Military Sociology. Global Pespectives',* Jaipur, 1999, pp. 117-138.
[1126] C.H.P. Vermeuelen, 'Humanitair optreden als militaire missie' in: Baarda & Schoeman, *Werelden apart?*, pp. 85-93.
[1127] Interview J.R. Groen, 14/01/00.
[1128] Interview J.R. Groen, 14/01/00.
[1129] Interview Peer Everts in *'Mars in Cathedra'*, 1995*,* pp. 2973 and 1995.
[1130] Interview B. Snoep, 26/03/99.

Company. The points mentioned have been identified as risk factors for success also in international evaluations of recent peace missions.[1131] There were also elements of the peace mission that were difficult to train for in practice. Examples include operating in life-threatening situations and the associated stress and mortal fear, but it also applies to being crammed together and isolated for months with a minimum of comfort, or the long-term separation from family, the drudgery and the boredom.

The Canadian researcher Winslow believes that her investigation into the experiences of Canadian peacekeepers shows that specific training is necessary also during missions. The preparations lasting a couple of months or weeks before the deployment appear to be insufficient to integrate the usual military skills with non-traditional soft skills.[1132] Combat units are trained to survive under severe conditions. This carries the risk that they resort to the military survival mentality as soon as the conditions in a peace mission become more difficult. A similar argument for amending the training and information was made by Ch. F. Turpijn in the early 1990s in the Netherlands. He argued for an expansion of the familiar instrumental values of the Armed Forces such as effectiveness and efficiency. According to him, other types of values including, for example, those of a humanitarian, expressive, social and affective nature should also play an important role for a soldier.[1133]

If peacekeeping becomes a fundamental task of the Armed Forces, then it is to be expected that the training will be oriented accordingly. The necessary social education and personality building, which, for example, has been part of police training for a considerable time, will then also be applied to the individual soldier. Police officers are trained in dealing with conflict situations without there necessarily being a question of being armed: their approach is more oriented to de-escalating and resolving conflicts. This is also reflected in the Netherlands Royal Military Police training. C. Vroom, a former professor at the Netherlands Royal Military Academy, feels that, also in this specific respect, the Ministry of Defence has insufficiently made the shift from the pure military exercise to preparation for peace operations. The soldier who is required to act as a policeman in a peace operation feels uncomfortable if the training was deficient in that respect. A soldier's job is to control violence, whereas that of a policeman or policewoman is to reduce violence.[1134] For a soldier, what it comes down to is being stronger than the opponent, whereas the policeman has to see through a difficult situation and come up with a solution in order to maintain public order. In peacekeeping operations, the participating soldiers have no enemy, and they actually have to position themselves between the factions, which demands more 'police' insight and 'police' capacities.

For peacekeeping, it is of great importance that the soldiers are well trained and are able to work with clear Rules of Engagement and an unambiguous mandate. Information on the background of the conflict and the political and cultural relationships on the ground appear to be just as indispensable, however. Major of Marines P.A. Grootendorst, who was sent to Cambodia in 1992 as Company Commander of a marine battalion, sees thorough information on the political, cultural and historical aspects of the country and its population as a necessary supplement to military training. It also appeared to be necessary for senior officers to have clear insights and skills in dealing with interpersonal and intercultural aspects. According to him, respect for and knowledge of the local population is a prerequisite for a UN operation such as the one in Cambodia.[1135]

In February 1995 Everts was to clash with the department in The Hague when on his return he gave a lecture in which he reflected on the deployment. In this lecture, he first spoke about a growing

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1131 See e.g. E. Johansson *'Swedish lessons from Bosnia'* (1998) and A.K. MacDonald *'Peacekeeping Lessons Learned: An Irish Perspective* (1997), E. Muller *'Geweldsexcessen bij vredesoperaties: Somalia 1992-1995'* ('Violent excesses in peace operations: Somalia 1992-1995'), *Militaire Spectator,* 168(1999)9 pp. 501-508.

1132 Winslow, D. '*Should combat Soldiers be Peacekeepers*'?, passim.

1133 Ch. F. Turpijn 'Vorming tot Verantwoordelijkheid' ('Educating for Responsibility') in *Kernvraag* 1992 (99). In: Peacekeeping Canada (Ottowa 1998), Canadian Council for International Peace and Security.

1134 Interview C. Vroom in: 'Professor Vroom over toekomstdebat: Verstandige zet' ('Professor Vroom on the debate about the future: a sensible move'), J. Oosthoek, *Legerkoerier* 49(1999)2, pp. 13-15.

1135 Interview P.A. Grootendorst in: G.C. van der Klis, 'Een solide trits van opleiding, trainingen en oefeningen' ('A solid trio of training, practice and exercises'), in: *Kernvraag* 1996/1 no. 108 p. 15.

anti-Muslim sentiment among his men.[1136] Everts stated that he had done everything possible to call his men to order, but, according to him, he was 'fighting a losing battle'.[1137] In his lecture, Everts stated that apart from the animosity towards the Muslims, he had been confronted with a number of other problems in Srebrenica. He also addressed the question of what it meant for a commander to be responsible for the men during what he called 'a sentence in the largest open-air prison in Europe'. Everts described his deployment as heavy in comparison with other peace missions. He pointed out that the outside world automatically viewed Dutchbat II to be a professional battalion, while they had only been active for between half a year and a year. The expectation was, however, that an excellently prepared professional battalion was ready and waiting.

The response of the Ministry of Defence was an attempt at damage control with respect to the publicity. The problem that Everts raised was ignored, there was no investigation and neither were measures taken to try to prevent similar developments during future deployment to Bosnia. The Deputy Director of the Information Service informed Minister Voorhoeve and the Commander that texts written by Lieutenant Colonel Everts would in future be screened by him, and that Everts would be accompanied during lectures by someone from the Information Services Department staff.[1138]

In the relationship with the population of the enclave the Battalion Commander had to set the tone. The leaders had to impress on the soldiers that they had to behave correctly towards the population, and accept people for what they were. In times of tension, for example, it is inevitable that opportunities present themselves within their own group for making cynical jokes. If they are about people in a difficult position, then it goes without saying that they must not get to hear them. Violations in dealing with the local population must be punished, to hold up the standard to colleagues and to show the host country that disrespectful behaviour is not tolerated.[1139] Military discipline is extremely important during peacekeeping operations, but it is questionable whether the rules are sufficiently tailored to individual behaviour, which can actually have consequences for the battalion as a whole. The fact is that the population sees the battalion as a unit. If one soldier does something objectionable to the population, the following week another soldier will have a stone thrown at his head.

Everts had arrived in the enclave with clear-cut ideas of how he intended to set to work. After spending some time in Srebrenica, he amended his ideas: the regime became less rigid, Everts became more flexible with respect to the local population and he made an effort to establish humanitarian projects to give new substance to the meaning of the mission.

The same happened during Karremans' command. After a time the rules became more flexible and Karremans attempted, in spite of the difficult situation, to do as much as possible for the population. It is noteworthy that out of many discussions with ex-Dutchbat members, it emerged that they did not think of Karremans as a 'man of the troops', but that he did have a great deal of heart for his personnel. The former can probably be explained by the commander's detached style of command and his personality. It was noticeable that Karremans spent little time with his soldiers in the evenings. The extraordinarily difficult conditions aggravated this: almost all his attention was taken up with arranging, telephoning, drawing up plans, and meetings.

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[1136] This lecture was given by Lieutenant Colonel P.L.E.M. Everts on 23 February 1995 at a meeting of the Netherlands Royal Association for Military Studies. The lecture was published in the journal '*Mars in Cathedra'* pp. 2970-2977. This item aroused the interest of the Ministry of Defence because a Volkskrant journalist quoted parts of the lecture in an article.
[1137] E. Nysingh, 'Niet alleen Nederlanders anti-Moslim', *De Volkskrant,* 02/09/95.
[1138] Memorandum from the Information Services Department H.P.M Kreemers to Minister, SG BLS e.a. 1 September 1995 no. V95016779 subject 'Remarks made by Lieutenant Colonel Everts'.
[1139] For this item use has been made of the written correspondence on the subject with Reinoud van den Berkhof. Van den Berkhof went to work with MSF after his career in the navy, and took part in many missions to war zones as a member of the Psycho Social Care Unit.

## 27. Evaluation: the training relative to the population of the enclave

The requirement that the training must provide a firm foundation for dealing with the local population obviously also applied to the mission to Srebrenica, where the Dutch soldiers, as it were, were held in a confined space with the local population.

In the deployment, however, little appears to have been learned from the experiences of the marines. The Royal Netherlands Army apparently wanted to reinvent the wheel. The marines in particular, on the basis of earlier missions, paid much attention to *team-building* and cultivating communication skills, and the Commando Corps had also started as early as 1993 on compulsory lessons in ethics, precisely as a preparation for deployment in crisis situations, which appeared to serve them well in Srebrenica. The Airmobile Brigade therefore lagged behind with respect to acquiring similar skills in training.

In response to the discussion on the need to establish a code of conduct in the Armed Forces, the supporters put forward the argument of the changed terms of reference of the Ministry of Defence, and the subject of relationships with others was also raised: this, however, was only in 1996. Otherwise it is an interesting question whether this imposed system of moral principles (standards and values) actually contributes to a reduction of the assumed blurring of moral standards. In some respects, the content of the code of conduct is oddly formulated. For instance, according to these rules, a soldier is supposed to have respect for his fellow humans, 'even if they belong to a different people'. Otherwise it is an interesting question whether this imposed system of moral principles (or standards and values) actually contributed to a reduction of the assumed blurring of moral standards. Even odder, certainly in view of the previous item on prejudices in the training, is the content of the code of conduct. For instance, it states that a soldier must have respect for his fellow humans, 'even if they belong to a different people.' It is also curious that similar problems again occurred in the mission in Eritrea and that no lesson was learned from Srebrenica: Minister de Grave announced that 'if he is in a position to do so, the soldier provides military assistance to fellow people in need, irrespective of their status or origin'.[1140]

According to Marine Commander Grootendorst, the power of a commander to correctly assess the local situation and to build up a network is just as important for the safety of a unit as bullet-proof vests, helmets and foxholes.[1141] The marines and commandos could usually assign somewhat older, better trained and more experienced soldiers, among whom the 'UN skills' initially generated more interest than among the young, often less highly educated 'Red Berets'. The starting level of marines and commandos was also higher, in terms of training, and mental and physical skills. The social work coordinator of the BNMO centre in Doorn, W.H. Barmentloo, likewise felt that there was little attention in the preparation for the political and social reality in the enclave. According to him, no questions were raised as to how the population of the enclave mentally braced itself against the long-term isolated and life-threatening situation and what the repercussions were on the behaviour of the population towards the peace soldiers, who came in the conviction that they could help. What, in their turn, the soldiers saw as 'typical Muslim behaviour', was largely determined by psychological reactions to the long-term stress situation.[1142]

During their training, the Dutchbat members were told that if they entered a Muslim's house, they should take off their shoes. It was added that it was impolite to refuse alcohol in Serbian (!) company. Nonetheless, it was at least as important to know the consequences of the war for the population, and to know what it is like to be a displaced person. In Srebrenica, the people were purely interested in survival, and that had an unmistakable influence on the way in which they dealt with the

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[1140] Draft rules of conduct, version 25/04/97.
[1141] Interview P.A. Grootendorst in: G.C. van der Klis 'Een solide trits van opleiding, trainingen en oefeningen', in *Kernvraag* 1996/1 no. 108, p. 16.
[1142] Interview W.H. Barmentloo, 17/08/01.

standards and values from peacetime. There was a considerable lack of insight into the social consequences of the conflict.

The consequence was that many Dutchbat members looked upon the events in the enclave through 'Western spectacles' and from, under the circumstances, too limited a perspective. They did observe hostility between the various groups, but particularly questioned the role of their own unit. No thought was given to the excessive use of force by the warring factions, not to mention the possibility of a massacre, because of the lack of knowledge about the conflict and its background.

Many Dutchbat members indicated afterwards that the preparation time of three months was too short. This was partly a consequence of the fact that the new battalion had been formed shortly before and they had still to become accustomed to each other and develop group cohesion. In the case of a unit that had existed for a longer time, the three month training period would perhaps have been sufficient.[1143]

On the other hand, for many soldiers the operational interest of the lessons on the culture in Bosnia was also unclear. Their attitude was that it was very nice to know about such matters, but they did not know what they were supposed to do with it. There was a need for clear examples drawn from the practice of peace missions. The order to avoid contact with the population impeded the development of greater understanding. Together with frustrations, this led to many Dutchbat members becoming detached from the population in the course of time, and for that matter also from the staff of other UN organizations and NGOs.[1144]

What certainly contributed to a negative attitude to the population of the enclave was the hardening that most soldiers underwent during the mission in Srebrenica, which was caused by factors such as becoming inured to all the misery around them, the urge for self-preservation and the need to work through shocking experiences. For a fairly large group of predominantly young soldiers the combination of pity and powerlessness formed a major problem. A - conscious or unconscious - way out was the creation of an enormous mental and emotional distance from the Muslims.

Captain Dijkman, the Dutchbat III social worker, originally did see much pity. Soldiers requested the home front to send packages. These mainly contained soap, toothbrushes and toothpaste because 'we naturally found them filthy and grubby'.[1145] After a short time, the attitude of most Dutchbat members changed, however. A young battalion member described this process in *De Volkskrant*. In the beginning, the Muslim population - starving and dirty - did attract sympathy, but that sympathy turned into aversion. They then consciously started to torment Muslim children.[1146] Such hardening and the underlying blurring of moral standards would affect some Dutchbat members, but others less so, or not at all.

Dutchbat found itself in increasingly difficult circumstances, and that nourished feelings of tension and frustration, both within the battalion and in relation to the population. For some, 'anti-Muslim' feelings were created during the deployment. These could be further reinforced by a wide variety of matters such as 'whining children' or theft, the action of the ABiH ('drawing fire' around the OPs, not cooperating in the demilitarization, the theft of relief goods and weapons, intimidation and suchlike) and through irritation with the local authorities. Some officers allowed self-interest to take an extremely high priority. There was much political intrigue and conflict of interest, as was discussed in Chapter 7. Dutchbat members were extremely offended when they saw how the measures of the Opstina sometimes ran directly contrary to the interests of the Displaced Persons. They reproached the Opstina for lack of solidarity with the poorest groups, and likewise reproached the ABiH in Srebrenica and its commanders.

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[1143] See e.g. Debriefing statement by L.J.L.M. van Meer, September 1995.

[1144] 'Norm Violations during Peace Support Operations: a Social-Psychological Explanation' by A.L.W. Vogelaar in: *NL Arms Netherlands,* pp. 131-148.

[1145] Interview E.B.Dijkman, 29/06/99.

1146[1146]A. Kranenberg, 'Moord op de witte muizen', *De Volkskrant,* 22/07/00.

The Dutch soldiers - as stated above - found such lack of solidarity incomprehensible, and such a lack of understanding regularly led to prejudging the behaviour of the Muslims as a group. This built on the deficient and one-sided representation of the Muslims in the preparation of the deployment and in the media, especially that the Muslims formed a homogeneous group. As a consequence of these developments, the Dutchbat members became more detached from the population and hardened their attitude. The reverse side of this was that mentally they withdrew more into the unit itself. Dutchbat III in particular became increasingly introverted, and concentrated on its own misfortune. The capacity for empathy with the fate of the population declined, and they fixed their attention on their own performance. This is clearly apparent, for example, from the way in which Captain Groen of Dutchbat III B Company reflected on the mission in discussion with the NIOD:

> 'That is really brilliant. I actually have very good memories of the deployment. I had a really good time there. It is absolutely the most important period of my military career. What I learned there and went through and experienced, was a wealth of experience. A thoroughly splendid time! Got on really well with all the lads. It is unfortunate that it is often all portrayed so negatively.'[1147]

## 28. Evaluation: the perspective of the commanders

The role of the commander in peacekeeping situations differs from that during military operations. The majority of the officers in the 1990s were still trained in the time of the Cold War and were prepared for a large-scale military encounter. Army units in that time actually only had experience with traditional peacekeeping such as UNIFIL in Lebanon. At that time, it still appeared fairly simple to politicians in The Hague to deploy soldiers as an instrument of foreign policy. However, when the deployment to Bosnia presented itself, it is questionable whether they understood that it would be a completely different type of mission.

The assignment given to the successive commanders of Dutchbat I, II and III was derived from the order given by the UN to the Bosnia-Hercegovina Commander. In his memoirs, General Briquemont said the following about this:

> 'My order came down to stopping the war without waging war (...) finally I had to help and protect the population without the necessary resources.'

He responded to these dilemmas with a military solution: 'I was given an order and would do the impossible to fulfil it'.[1148]

Because the Lebanon experience was important for a number of significant Dutchbat officers for their view of the mission to Bosnia, it is useful to compare the missions. There are a couple of striking differences. In Lebanon there was a conflict largely involving two parties. The mission in Lebanon was never a mission impossible. The buffer task that UNIFIL had to fulfil was accomplished with reasonable success. For the population of South Lebanon the presence of the UN meant fewer actions towards Israel, therefore fewer reprisals, therefore more calm. UNIFIL was therefore perceived positively and was involved in many social activities of the population. The task of the Dutch in Lebanon was not isolated.

A completely different situation existed in Bosnia, in which Dutchbat members operated in a Safe Area which was like an island within the terrain of one of the parties. One party, the VRS, could impose all sorts of matters by force, such as the use of roads, supplies, and rotations. The other party, the ABiH and population, were with Dutchbat in the enclave and regularly behaved in such a way that

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[1147] Interview J.R. Groen,14/01/00.

[1148] Briquemont , *General*' , p. 48; U.S. Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences. p. 93.

they provoked hostile actions from the VRS, which also had repercussions for Dutchbat. The consequence was a growing mistrust and antipathy towards the Muslims among the peacekeepers.

An important difference with the mission in Lebanon was that the battalion commander there always had two Dutch interpreters or regional experts at his disposal, who would act as advisors and mediators. They could separate the sheep from the goats and supported the commander with advice and assistance. As well as the battalion commander, the company commanders could also make use of these experts, who resolved incidents, developed social contacts with the population and gathered information. The Dutch battalions did much in the way of humanitarian projects so as to create goodwill with the population. In Lebanon, the local population was hardly, if at all, permitted in the compounds and posts, so that a number of matters that caused problems, such as theft and black market trading, also hardly cropped up.

Dutchbat II and III had more the idea that they were entering a war zone. They originally compared this with the situation in Lebanon and wanted to keep the danger as much as possible at bay. It was typical that the battalion staff never went into town without protective vests. The population perceived this attitude as fearful and tense. Ramiz Becirovic, the local commander of the ABiH in Srebrenica, felt that Vermeulen of Dutchbat I acted the most resolutely. Like his Canadian predecessor, in the event of conflicts on the occupation of certain positions, Vermeulen was liable to approach VRS soldiers, and if necessary to push them back. The later commanders no longer did so.[1149] Nonetheless, it is clear that Everts and Karremans had a very positive attitude towards setting up humanitarian projects. It was clear for them, probably partly because of their Lebanon experience, that the blue helmets had to gain the confidence of the population.

Everts, the commander of Dutchbat II, arrived at a conclusion on the basis of his experience in Lebanon which he wanted to apply to the situation in Bosnia: the men must be trained as 'green' as possible, and only at the last possible moment 'blue'. The short training period meant that choices had to be made, and because it was war, they must in any case learn all skills and drills of the battlefield. It was furthermore essential to work hard on team-building. He decided on the basis of experience to have a rotation over the posts: the same people must not always remain at the same post. The battalion staff must also take part in operational tasks and it was important to maintain the unity of dress.[1150]

In this way, the Lebanon experience of a number of officers worked through into their anticipation of the state in Bosnia.[1151] It was not only Everts and Karremans who had Lebanon experience, but also Major Wieffer, the Intelligence and Operations Officer of Dutchbat III. Wieffer said to the NIOD afterwards that the Lebanon experience was actually no frame of reference for him for Bosnia. He had quickly come to understand that things would be different there because of the unclear mandate. According to him, the action of the UN peacekeeping force in Lebanon was clear to all parties, as a consequence of a clear mandate, which made a curfew possible, for example. Anyone who failed to comply knew that he would be shot on site by UNIFIL. The force instruction was also much more clear: return fire with the same sort of fire.[1152]

In the recent UN missions, commanders sooner had to resort to their common sense, insight and diplomatic skills than on their weapons. Essential items were social intelligence, authority, negotiating techniques, knowledge of local culture and history, and knowledge of the working methods of international organizations and NGOs. A unique combination of attributes was demanded of the commanders; according to Winslow, they had to 'continue to train their people in military skills (...) but at the same time they must know how to deal with highly complex human relations and to work as a

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[1149] Interviews Ramiz Becirovic, 2 and 05/02/98.
[1150] Interview P.L.E.M. Everts, 05/04/01.
[1151] The current Commander in Chief General Van Baal referred to this briefly in general terms during a lecture in the autumn of 1996 by saying 'One warning; successful units in a specific peace support operation are probably not so successful under other circumstances. So select experience critically.' In: *Anglo-Dutch Peace Support Operations Seminar* Issued by Defensie Leergangen Rijswijk (Rijswijk, 1996) p. 54.
[1152] Interview E.G.B. Wieffer, 07/05/01.

diplomat.'[1153] They did not have to win a fight, but to achieve de-escalation; they must negotiate, bring about ceasefires and build confidence among all parties.

Negotiating is a specialism in its own right. Preparation can be made by asking what the subject of the negotiations is to be, which promises can be made, what the internal role patterns are, and what follow-up is aimed for. The position they will adopt must be well thought out: courteous and respectful, or conversely imposing and threatening. Politeness and respect must be maintained during negotiations.[1154] The conduct of negotiations can impose a great psychological burden, and the commander is also very dependent on his own negotiating team.

C. Homan pointed out in *NRC Handelsblad* that the soldier of today as well as being a warrior also has to be a diplomat, and must possess the associated qualities, such as enormous mental stamina, self-control and diplomatic talents.[1155] This applied all the more to the battalion leaders. In the preparation of Dutchbat, the Commanders were offered a couple of hours of negotiation training at Clingendael, but it was not linked to knowledge of the local conditions or military culture. Such important background knowledge therefore remained underexposed. During the final exercise of Dutchbat III, the simulation of negotiations - as described in Chapter 5 - even led to a conflict between Battalion Commander Karremans and the exercise leader. Negotiating skills and social intelligence are 'like a physician's bedside manner or a lawyer's courtroom presence, it can make the difference between success and failure.[1156]

The Dutchbat Commanders carried a particularly heavy responsibility. It included interpreting what was and was not necessary or permissible within the mandate; for example, to interpret the 'right of self-defence', because the practice constantly shifted. Another problem was the isolation of the three battalions, which were in fact closed off from the rest of the world and had great trouble in carrying out their work through the lack of freedom of movement. Everts saw the great lack of understanding in the Netherlands for the situation on the ground as a problem. Correction of the picture became an ever larger problem as the opportunities for communication deteriorated. As an example, he cites the battalion's evacuation plans, which were set down properly on paper. However, if it should come to it, he alone would have to carry the particularly great responsibility for the 700 soldiers that were to be evacuated.

The responsibility for the battalion weighed particularly heavily and could not be shared with others. According to Everts, a Commander, however much he might want to, cannot be one with the unit. He fulfils an official position, is the 'standard bearer' and the leader of the unit, who is personally responsible for all decisions. The Commander can appeal to his staff for support and advice, but must take decisions alone, and can hide behind no one. As a Commander in Srebrenica, he therefore experienced a 'special loneliness', 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, for more than 6 months.[1157] His predecessor Vermeulen expressed himself in the same vein:

> 'It is indeed not easy to be there. The men plug in to the commander day in, day out. One moment of pessimism and the lads multiply it twenty times.

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[1153] Interview Donna Winslow in: *Civiel Militair* (2001)1, p. 5.

[1154] See in this connection also Christian Harleman, 'Psychological Aspects of Peacekeeping on the Ground' in: Harvey J. Langholtz (ed.) '*The Psychology of Peacekeeping,* (Westport/London, 1998) pp. 101-110 and also David R. Segal and Robert J. Waltman, 'Multinational Peacekeeping Operations: Background and Effectiveness' In: James Burk (ed.), '*The Adaptive Military*. Armed Forces in a Turbulent World (New Brunswick, 1998) pp. 183-199.

[1155] C. Homan , *'Militairen hebben gedragscode nodig'* ('Soldiers need a code of conduct'), *NRC Handelsblad* 11/11/94. Otherwise, Homan linked to this the wish that the Dutch soldier on peace missions is able to act on the basis of a frame of reference of commonly accepted ethical standards and values, in which human rights must also be given a place.

[1156] M.D. Capstick and D.M. Last, 'Negotiation training for peace operations: one unit's experience of translating theory to presence*'* in: David R. Segal, *Peace Operations*: Workshop Proceedings by (October 1994).

[1157] Interview P.L.E.M. Everts, 05/04/01.

> Decisions taken that are possibly irritating or can have a negative interpretation, reverberate ten times as loudly.'[1158]

Everts and Karremans were forced by the circumstances to work endlessly on all manner of 'what-if scenarios'. It goes without saying that they needed support from the Ministry of Defence in The Hague, which they also received, albeit not always to their satisfaction. And this is how they were obliged to fight against the idea that they were engaged in the execution of an impossible task.

[1158] Interview C.H.P. Vermeulen, 09/06/99.

# Chapter 9
# How Dutchbat functioned internally until the VRS attack

## 1. Introduction

Attention will be focussed in Part II on the units of Dutch battalions in the enclave carrying out their tasks under continuously changing, often difficult and increasingly very difficult circumstances. The actions and the experiences of Dutchbat III are highlighted here as it was this battalion that was ultimately forced by an attack of the Bosnian-Serb army to abandon its mission and to leave the enclave around 11 July 1995, while the conquerors were to bring about a humanitarian catastrophe and to commit mass murder in the vicinity.

Attention had been paid in the preceding chapters to the political decision-making surrounding the dispatching of battalions, the preparations for a peace mission, the training of three successive Dutchbats and the execution of the tasks. Attention has also been paid to 'factors determined by the surroundings'; these are essential to any real understanding of the conditions under which the peacekeepers had to operate. This chapter concerns itself with the army units of the two warring factions inside and around the enclave, the conditions of life within the enclave, the attitude of the local authorities and the relationships with the humanitarian aid organizations there. It is not the intention either in Part II or in Chapter 9 to pretend wisdom after the fact by describing the total presence of Dutchbat III in the enclave as having been a factor that contributed to the conquest of the enclave and its calamitous consequences. It is clear that this battalion, in the course of its presence there, met with increasing difficulties in the proper execution of its tasks due to the blockade by the Bosnian Serbs. As less and less supply convoys entered the area and resupply finally ground to a complete halt, the functioning of the battalion spiraled downward.

The unit would become more and more isolated; it is no coincidence that the image of 'an enclave within an enclave' came to be used in describing the compound. The personnel thus became focussed primarily on themselves and began to look forward to the rotation of forces or to relief, which was expected in June but was obstructed again and again. This chapter addresses in a detailed way a number of questions concerning the mood, the motivation and the attitude of the Dutchbat I, II and III soldiers. These matters were addressed in public discussions both before the fall of the enclave and in the period after this reverse took place. They were put forth as partial explanation for the course of events and thus came to constitute a number of building blocks for what would later be called 'the Srebrenica affair'. Available sources are being used to conduct an investigation into precisely what happened and how it can be interpreted.

Three things will be dealt with in succession. Perceptions of the morale and motivation of the soldiers concerned will come first. The upheaval in May and June of 1995 resulting from reports of misconduct, in the sense of breaking military criminal and disciplinary law, will follow. And finally, investigations conducted into reports of right-wing extremist utterances on the part of a specific group of soldiers will be discussed. The consequences of behaviour of this sort for the relationship with the local inhabitants and for the execution of their tasks by members of the succeeding battalions will be specifically gone into. The chapter ends with an intermediate evaluation, featuring in particular the differences between the three battalions and the mode of operation of the Dutchbat III battalion leaders. Questions are posed again and again. Is it possible to ascertain with precision what took place and which subunits were involved – were they Dutchbat units or not? What were the consequences for Dutchbat, in terms of executing its tasks and in terms of its the relationship to the inhabitants of the enclave, the warring factions and the humanitarian organizations there? How fully were the details known to both the UN and the Dutch military hierarchy and political leaders and what action did they take?

## 2. The problem of the morale

While Dutchbat was being dispatched and after it had been sent out, a number of voices, both within the country and outside it, stated that the third battalion in particular suffered from low morale. It was and is still being said that this influenced the catastrophic events that took place around the capture of the enclave by the VRS and the mass murder that followed. Two examples serve to illustrate this. The British newspaper, the *Daily Telegraph*, wrote in October of 1995 that Dutchbat was not only 'hopelessly outgunned' by the VRS, but that 'more significantly their morale was bumping to the bottom'.[1159] How the newspaper acquired this information is not mentioned. *The Sunday Times* wrote in May of 1996 that Dutchbat morale had been low and that the leadership qualities of the senior officers were 'questionable'. After such a length of time without supplies, Dutchbat was said to have had enough of Srebrenica and of its unenviable position sandwiched between the warring factions: 'they desperately wanted out'. The newspaper pointed out too that the preceding battalion had acquitted itself well, but that many of the Dutchbat III soldiers had hated the Muslims and held them in contempt. The reasons for this were said to have been complex. The newspaper did not pursue this further than to suggest that the roots for the attitude could perhaps be found in Lebanon, where Lieutenant-Colonel Karremans had served earlier. The interpreter H. Nuhanovic and the British UNMO (United Nations Military Observer) Major G. Donaldson were the sources for *The Sunday Times*.[1160]

The term 'morale', which denotes a collective state of mind of the unit concerned in relating to the joint execution of its task, is rather easily used in common parlance. Usually it refers to the mood of the soldiers, to questioning whether sufficient perspective exists to allow the execution of the assignment and whether adequate motivation still obtains. All sorts of indicators that could answer the question as to this state of mind of the personnel and the leaders are then summoned up and used either implicitly or explicitly to reason toward a pre-determined result or to elucidate this same result. This section contributes to the discussion concerning the development of Dutchbat morale in relation to the circumstances under which the battalion had to execute its task. In contrast to other sections of this Part II of the report, it will reach forward where necessary to the events described in Part III surrounding the fall of the Safe Area.

*The meaning of the concept 'morale'*

For a good understanding of the course of events, it is important not to assume ahead of time that the mood of the personnel determined the result of the operation. It does not seem particularly useful to use a series of impressions of mood to reason towards a result to the effect that: 'the morale of the Dutch blue helmets was low and it is consequently no wonder that the enclave could be overrun by the Bosnian Serbs and that a mass murder would follow'.

It cannot be denied, however, that the whole series of events had a clearly observable influence on the mood and motivation of Dutchbat and of its leaders. And it cannot be ruled out that the state of mind and a number of events mutually influenced each other.

The term 'morale' refers in its original sense to ethical behaviour and is most easily described as attitude or state of mind. This suggests that one can speak of a collective state of mind for a few hundred people. That is in general problematic, but even more so if a rather long time period is added into the equation. More so than the Dutch term *moreel*, the English term 'morale' refers to the spirit of the soldiers concerned, something probably best translated with the terms just noted, 'state of mind' and 'mood'.[1161] These terms leave aside the question of whether or not there is a direct causal

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[1159] Daily Telegraph, 30/10/95.
[1160] The Sunday Times, 10/05/96.
[1161] See for instance Laura L. Miller and Charles Moscos ' Humanitarians or Warriors? Race, Gender, and Combat Status in Operation Restore Hope. In: Armed Forces & Society, Vol. 21 (1995) 4, p. 636.

connection between morale and certain forms of behaviour. It is from this vantage point that the question about the experiences of the Dutchbat soldiers is being posed.[1162]

The concept 'morale' has three component parts: motivation, satisfaction and group cohesion. These elements will appear in the consideration to follow. A high morale is of importance for a unit because it reduces the chance of psychic collapse due to stress; low morale is worrying because it can undermine the performance effectiveness of a unit. For the peace mission in Bosnia, specific circumstances must be assessed in relationship to the morale of Dutchbat III. These revolve around the question of whether individual personnel and units within Dutchbat were still able to carry out meaningful tasks, given their isolation in the enclave and the absence of large portions of the usual supplies. The adverse circumstances in the enclave continually influenced the state of mind of the soldiers as well.

The motivation of the members of the three Dutch battalions suffered continually as these members experienced their powerlessness in the enclave in the face of their far-reaching dependence upon the goodwill of the warring factions. The lack of clarity as to the exact assignment, the obvious inability to carry out a number of its component parts and the lack of insight into the situation made it difficult to stay motivated. The psychologist attached to Dutchbat III, Lieutenant-Colonel Sanders, identified this problem:

> 'I knew that we were going to end up in an isolated situation. There were problems directly connected to one's presence in an enclave: the feeling of being confined, the continuous confrontation with one's own powerlessness and the humiliations, for instance, all the checkpoints when travelling. Still, the beginning was actually quite peaceful, in spite of what happened in the Bandera triangle.'[1163]

It is not easy to make well-founded statements about the morale of Dutchbat, especially not for their last months in the enclave. The fact remains that morale is also a subjective term and it is seldom mentioned in periodical reports. Adequate sources are few and far between; indicators must be treated with a healthy skepticism as to their authority. The NIOD has access to statements from interviews with those concerned, such as those from Sanders, diaries and journals, letters home, newspaper articles and information in the literature. Writers of journals such as Captain Surgeon A.A. Schouten and chronicler Koreman, who made their writings available to the NIOD, as well as letter writer, Warrant Officer P.H. Both, belonged to an older generation of soldiers and not to the Mobile Airbrigade. For this reason they are not solely insiders, but in a certain sense, also outsiders. There are also the memoirs of the Battalion Commander Karremans, unavoidably apologetic in tone and appearing under the title *Srebrenica, who cares?* The book collated by a number of authors under the title *Dutchbat, in vredesnaam* contains a collection of occasionally striking remembrances, but no general reflections.[1164] These sources have been cited or employed where useful – exercising the necessary caution.

Another equally fragmentary category of observations concerning morale comes from visitors to the enclave; these are sparse however. Reports of visits were not always written down, or cannot always be located, but when they are available, it appears that they very seldom say anything about the morale. If visitors did send a note of thanks and happened to mention the situation in which they had observed the unit, then it is very difficult to judge whether what one is reading is simply polite phrasing or an actual impression. Negative impressions were, of course, not so quickly set down on paper.

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[1162] Gerhard Kummel 'The Problem of Morale in the Armed Forces: Some Conceptual Reflections' in Military Sociology. Global Perspectives, Leena Parmar (ed.) (Jaipur, 1999) p. 299

[1163] Interview P. Sanders, 12/12 and 13/12/00.

[1164] NIOD, Coll. Schouten. Dagboek (Diary) Schouten; NIOD, Coll. Koreman. Dagboek Koreman; Veenhof, Srebrenica: oorlogsdagboek of Piet Hein Both, passim; Karremans, Srebrenica, Who Cares?, passim and Dijkema, Dutchbat in vredesnaam, passim.

General Smith, after his visit to Dutchbat on 9 March 1995, wrote a polite thank-you note:

> 'I found the battalion well motivated and in excellent heart. Despite all the problems you are encountering with the delivery of medical aid and supplies to the pocket you have not allowed this to stand in the way of your thorough professional approach to the operation.'[1165]

Smith had given the medical staff a boost by bringing along a supply of the most needed medicines in his car. However, very real doubts about Dutchbat and its leaders existed within the British company, also in General Smith's mind.[1166] It was rumoured that the members of Dutchbat III did not form a solid, tight team. In his autobiography *Trusted Mole: A Soldier's Journey into Bosnia's Heart of Darkness*, Smith's interpreter, the British Captain Mike Stanley (Milos Stankovic), presents a much more negative impression:

> 'Doom and gloom reigned. Morale amongst the Dutch seemed to be rock bottom and they didn't have a good word to say about any of the locals, either besieged Muslims or besieging Serbs.'[1167]

Smith's predecessor, General Rose, already had established earlier that many peacekeepers were suffering from what he called siege mentality, a feeling of being confined. Rose himself attempted to escape from this same feeling by establishing as much contact as possible with the local population, and by impressing upon others that life had to go on as normally as possible. Rose was also against the Blue Helmets wearing fragmentation vests and being transported in armoured vehicles with closed hatches when that was not absolutely necessary. Rose saw the vests and helmets as constituting a psychological barrier between the soldiers who wore them and the population, which could not avail itself of such protection.[1168] The way in which Dutchbat mixed with the local population on its 'social patrols' did not match the concept adopted by Rose in Sarajevo. The Dutch walked these patrols fully armed, wearing fragmentation vests, in a way that could be interpreted as a show of force.

One of the few Dutch reports in which the morale of Dutchbat III is mentioned originated with the Chief of the Defence Staff, General Van den Breemen. He visited the enclave in the company of the Army Crisis Staff Commander, Brigadier General Pollé, on 3 and 4 April 1995. In his report to Minister Voorhoeve, Van den Breemen wrote:

> 'The atmosphere in the battalion can still be called good. Morale is high and even seems to improve as circumstances minimize. Still, a crack is appearing in the motivation to help the Muslims, because they continue to sabotage these efforts. There is, as well, increasing anger directed at the Serbs, for their on-going refusal to allow clearances for convoys of soldiers on furlough. Alertness of all commanders is prescribed in this matter.'[1169]

A Dutch staff officer, who went along on this visit, noticed a stale atmosphere among the Battalion Staff. Communal spirit was lacking and communication among the ranks seemed to have reached low ebb; these matters did not escape the British visitors either. After a stay in the enclave, a lieutenant in the Army Crisis Staff reported that the relationship between higher and lower ranking officers and

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[1165] NIOD, Coll. Schouten. Lieutenant General Rupert Smith to Lieutenant-Colonel Karremans, 09/03/95.
[1166] Confidential interview (80).
[1167] Stankovic, Trusted Mole, p. 420.
[1168] Rose, Fighting for Peace, pp. 25, 39 and 42.
[1169] DS. No. S95/061/1517. CDS to the minister and the junior minister, 06/04/95.

NCOs within Dutchbat seemed poor, such that an unpleasant atmosphere prevailed. He stated that the Battalion Commander was seldom seen by the troops.[1170]

It was also noticeable during this visit that a conflict was brewing between the leaders of the battalion and the medical services. Lieutenant-Colonel Karremans clearly manifested himself as the commander during the visit, while Major Franken took the role of Chief of Staff and regulator. Matters of military tactics did not come up in the briefing of the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS), while a great number of quite obvious items concerning logistics and personnel did, including the rotation date. The visitors interpreted this as a self-absorbed attitude.[1171] Karremans himself made clear to the NIOD that he had, on more than one occasion, revealed to visitors that the further 'in shit' the battalion sunk, the more its morale seemed to improve. This was a paradox quite apt to the situation, in his view.[1172]

One of the last foreign visitors to be able to reach the enclave was the commander of Sector North East, the Norwegian, Brigadier General Haukland. On 19 April 1995, he succeeded in entering Srebrenica with a convoy. It was a short visit. Haukland inspected a number of OPs (Observation Posts); Karremans was on leave and Franken 'who talked like an American Cowboy', according to the Norwegian,[1173] led him around. Haukland did not remark on anything out of the ordinary on that occasion. He did state that Srebrenica was a mission impossible. The most pressing problem at that point was already that of fuel use. A volume of 6500 litres per day was needed, while 350 litres were available.[1174] A short while later, at the beginning of June, Haukland – he said he did so at the bidding of Smith – paid Karremans a compliment. Karremans paraphrased this as follows: 'much admiration for the perseverance and the determination of Dutchbat'.[1175]

However, at the end of May 1995, General Nicolai had to vent, from UN headquarters in Sarajevo, his impression that 'the morale of the Dutch is no longer what it was.' He saw that everyone had had his fill of Bosnia and wanted to get out of there as quickly as possible. An atmosphere best worded as 'none of the parties wants peace, why are we still hanging around here?' permeated Bosnia.[1176] From Zagreb, General Kolsteren also expressed the opinion that the morale of Dutchbat had suffered from the events of the last months of the stay. He too saw the frustration arising from an impossible mission and too few troops as the cause. Of the small number of troops available, one group was on furlough and these soldiers were not permitted by the Bosnian-Serb authorities to return. Some of the equipment could no longer be used because no permission was available for transport and accordingly, maintenance had become almost impossible. The cooperation of the Bosnian Muslims also left a lot to be desired, according to Kolsteren.[1177]

Visits 'from outside' were also meant to cheer up the Dutch Blue Helmets. In February of 1995, the Force Commander, General B. De Lapresle, surprised Dutchbat with a visit. To the amusement of the Dutch soldiers, it was only on his third try that the pilot managed to land the helicopter, bearing the Force Commander, on the right spot.[1178] The French general was briefed by the battalion leaders as to the state of affairs in the enclave. Furthermore, a British UNMO brought him up to date on the question of the Bandera triangle and he was able to speak about this with Naser Oric and Ramiz Becirovic.[1179] What De Lapresle thought of Dutchbat was not recorded.

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[1170] SMG, 1004. Report of talks between Lieutenant-Colonel E.G.M. Otterloo and SMG, 31/07/95.
[1171] Interview J.A.C. de Ruiter, 29/06/00.
[1172] Interview Th.J.P. Karremans, 24/09/98.
[1173] Interview H. Haukland, 03/05/99.
[1174] Interview H. Haukland, 03/05/99.
[1175] Karremans, Srebrenica, Who Cares?, pp. 144-45. In contrast, an American who wished to remain anonymous, judged Dutchbat III and its leaders negatively. The person concerned was a former soldier and had been working in Bosnia since 1992. In the spring of 1995 he visited Srebrenica twice. Confidential interview (75).
[1176] Haagsche Courant, 20/05/95.
[1177] Interview A.M.W.W.M. Kolsteren, 07/10/99.
[1178] The commandos thought this pilot had his very own interpretation of 'slapdash', Groen/Blauw, No. 21, 1995.
[1179] Karremans, 'Bezoeken aan Dutchbat III' (Visits to Dutchbat III) in Dijkema, Dutchbat in vredesnaam, p. 196.

Some important guests were better than others at cheering Dutchbat up.[1180] Karremans sometimes called their visiting activities 'disaster tourism'. Brigadier General Brinkman, Chief of Staff of the Bosnia-Hercegovina Command and formerly commander of the Airmobile Brigade, dropped in, in February in connection with his farewell tour and was extremely negative that evening in the bar about the UN. One Warrant Officer, who knew as everyone did that the General would be leaving again the next day, replied to his complaint: 'But General, we've still got four months to go, you know!' Imagine everyone's surprise when two weeks later in the *Defensiekrant* (Defence Newspaper) the selfsame Brinkman turned out to be the author of a story in which the UN was described as a wonderful operation for which it was a great privilege to work.[1181]

The Director of Personnel of the Netherlands Army, Major General Warlicht, took a long, hot shower during his visit, while the Dutchbat soldiers themselves, due to the fuel shortage, could only take a short shower once a week and then communally. When a number of the soldiers tackled him about this, he reacted with incomprehension. In addition, Warlicht was served the best meal possible.

The already mentioned visit of Van den Breemen and Pollé at the beginning of April was well received. That took place soon after the death of Soldier, J. Broere, of A-Company in Simin Han as a consequence of a shoot out by VRS units. The visitors were present when the company got the chance to see film of the ceremony during which the soldier's body was airlifted by helicopter on its way to the Netherlands.[1182]

The visit of Prince Willem-Alexander on the 21 and 22 March was a high point, especially because he so clearly showed his attitude of being one of them, thus distinguishing himself from most other dignitaries. It made an impression when he refused to continue to sit in his armoured vehicle while everyone else was busy attempting to lift and push cars off the verge of a snowed-in road. The crown prince pitched in and worked with the others until the last car had been returned to the road. No reports have been found documenting his visit but there is an indication of his impressions because he met a delegation of the Dutch Parliament that could not make a working visit to Srebrenica, at the airport in Split. On that occasion, it is said that the prince indicated that the situation in Srebrenica was unpleasant but that Dutchbat morale was good.[1183]

Karremans is of the opinion that 'The Hague' did not feel concerned about the morale. The army's top brass did not see this as a problem, according to him. General Couzy empathized and made sure he was kept informed by the Commander of the Army Crisis Staff, Brigadier General Pollé, who also sometimes phoned the enclave.[1184] Couzy told the NIOD that he had sometimes gone to the Netherlands Army Crisis Staff on an evening in order to phone Karremans and talk to him as an 'understanding colleague'. He did not do that in order to make a point of what had to be done in the enclave, but 'to make him feel better and simply to ask how it was going and how the morale of the soldiers was holding out.' Couzy was of the opinion that the morale was mediocre; he was not blaming Dutchbat, simply making the observation. Dutchbat felt that it had been left in the lurch and the position into which the UN had been manoeuvred was, in Couzy's opinion, 'horribly frustrating'.[1185]

## 3. The role of the Battalion Commander

Cohesion as a building stone for a unit's morale refers both to the cohesion among soldiers themselves and that between the commander and his personnel. There is a connection between the behaviour of the leaders and that of those under their command. The extent to which they can trust each other influences their readiness to exchange information. A climate of trust is necessary as well to allow units

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[1180] For a summary see: Karremans, 'Bezoeken aan Dutchbat III' in: Dijkema, Dutchbat in vredesnaam, pp. 194-202.
[1181] Interview W. Dijkema, 21/09/98.
[1182] Dijkema, Dutchbat in Vredesnaam, pp. 269-270.
[1183] Interview L. Sipkes, 24/01/00.
[1184] Interview Th.J.P. Karremans, 26/09/98.
[1185] Interview H.A. Couzy, 7, 14 and 17/09/98.

to function well. Those in charge can create a climate of trust in many ways but one of these is to be present at moments demanding leadership. Skills, know-how and competence, just and honest actions, open communication about information and ideas, and approachability can all contribute to trust.[1186]

It is important here to address the issue of the relationships among leaders of the battalion and the Dutch Army top in The Hague. A clearly expressed feeling existed in The Hague that the Dutchbat III leaders were not completely capable of doing what was being demanded of them. It was, of course, commonly admitted that work satisfaction left much to be desired on account of the dead-end situation in which the population and the unit found themselves. The battalions had started their assignment rather enthusiastically, but as time went by, they could not help but see that their presence effected little change for the better. The halting of supplies paralysed not only the execution of their tasks but also the provision of aid to the population and that was an extra factor in deadening motivation. The Hague too observed feelings of frustration, powerlessness and cynicism and ascertained that the battalion had turned in upon it and was waiting to be relieved.

One of the few men who managed to visit all three Dutch battalions in the enclave was Brigadier General Brinkman. He was thus able to compare the battalions and their commanders with each other. He visited Dutchbat I when he was commanding the 11th Airmobile Brigade, and Dutchbat II and III when he was Chief of Staff Bosnia-Hercegovina Command. Dutchbat III had only been in the enclave a short while when his visit took place. Even at the time of his very first visit, it was possible to ascertain that Dutchbat was isolated, dependent on the warring factions and experiencing difficulty supervising compliance with locally made agreements. These factors made the battalions susceptible to disillusionment.

Nevertheless, Brinkman found the morale of Dutchbat I, II and III high at the time of his visits. He did identify differences that had to do with the circumstances and the identity of the commander. Lieutenant-Colonel Vermeulen was a man from the very beginnings of the Airmobile Brigade. He was able to work with many, high-level, enthusiastic volunteers. All his requests were honoured prior to the sending out of the soldiers. Lieutenant-Colonel Everts profited less from these advantages. He differed from Vermeulen in being more of a General Staff officer and less a man of practical experience. Brinkman stated that he had affairs well under control. Karremans was also more of a general staff officer. Furthermore, Dutchbat III came from Assen and not from the home of the Airmobile Brigade, Schaarsbergen. Brinkman typified it as being hardly a seasoned Airmobile Battalion but much more an armoured infantry battalion. According to Brinkman, Karremans was not a proponent of 'the idea of air mobility' either and he tended to show how sceptical he was about the role in the beginning. However, it was said later on that he had shaken off this feeling.[1187]

Karremans, in turn, complained about the communication with the Airmobile Brigade. The only time that the commander of the Airmobile Brigade, Brigadier General Bastiaans, contacted Karremans in the Dutchbat III period was in the days after the death of Soldier, Van Renssen on 8 July 1995.[1188]

Karremans was not always positive about the military organization in the home country. The relationship with the Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff, the contact point for reporting problems, was good in the period in which the battalion was dispatched. At that point, Colonel C.L. Brantz was Chief of Staff. He was involved, showed great dedication, but was a know-it-all in Karremans opinion. No one in the Netherlands Army Crisis Staff had any experience in deploying units abroad and this meant that problems manifested themselves during the mission. Karremans felt at that point that he got very little support. There were conflicts about the system for relieving the soldiers and about how

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[1186] These observations are derived from: Royal Netherlands Army, 'De Nederlandse Moreelvragenlijst,' (The Dutch Questionnaire on Morale), Instituut voor Leiderschap, Media en Opleidingskunde te Breda (Institute for Leadership, Media and Training Competence at Breda, the Netherlands). The list refers, among others, to the models and research of Bos, Tibboel and Willigenburg (1994), Deluga (1977) and Butler (1991).

[1187] Interview J.W. Brinkman, 11/10/99.

[1188] Interview Th.J.P. Karremans, 15/12/98.

to get personnel returning from Zagreb back into the enclave. The commander of the battalion criticized the desire of the Netherlands Army Crisis Staff to determine who would be relieved first, 'while I thought that certain personnel should be allowed to go first for personal or business reasons. I only succeeded in getting my way after continuously forcing the issue,' and what's worse, 'I had many more problems with the Army Crisis Staff than with the local authorities. I certainly was fighting a loosing battle.'[1189]

In spite of conflicts of this sort, communication with the commander of the Army Crisis Staff, Brigadier General Pollé, remained open. 'I could tell him things straight, even things that had gone wrong, like in Zagreb.' There were endless negotiations, particularly about the leave: 'I got a bit tired of it all'. Even in the days of the fall of the enclave, talks about the rotation continued, while between the scenes the repatriation of the body of soldier Van Renssen took place. Karremans found this strange indeed. Karremans did not feel that his parent unit, the Airmobile Brigade, adequately supported him. Even though no formal chains of command existed during the deployment, he had expected that more interest would be shown. 'This was also extremely difficult to explain to my subordinates when they asked if there had been signs of interest from the Netherlands.'[1190] The Airmobile Brigade did not react in May of 1995 when alleged misconduct took place in the enclave; this had to do with the 'firelighter affair', which will be dealt with more extensively in this chapter. The problem here was not with Dutchbat III, but the battalion felt itself to have been wrongly discredited. Karremans said that he had had personal difficulties with this affair; a lot of radio stations phoned him up (in consultation with the Directorate of Information, though).

The only time that the Commander of the Brigade, Brigadier General Bastiaans, contacted him was a few days after the death of soldier Van Renssen (on 8 July 1995).

## 4. Sources of frustration and discouragement

To their frustration, the Dutch Blue Helmets experience in the enclave was that the warring factions continuously made it extremely difficult for them to carry out their task, without there being anything effective they could do to change this. This disconcerted and discouraged the soldiers, who, during their training, had been thoroughly persuaded of the idea that, in circumstances of crisis and war, initiative, fast action and – should the use of force be necessary – superiority in escalation were essential. In practice, they were reminded, day in and day out, in every possible way, that they were vulnerable. Sometimes this reminder was provocative (shooting just above the head), sometimes much more emphatic (the death of soldier J. Broere, in Simin Han, on 29 March 1995 and of soldier R. van Renssen on 8 July 1995, as well as the wounding of several soldiers).

The conditions under which the personnel had to work increased in difficulty. The operational quality of the unit was disadvantaged by shortages of basic supplies but it suffered further from the alternation of sometimes long-lasting periods of boredom with periods of stress and anxiety. Boredom, in fact, can be as stressful as overload. One way in which leaders can attempt to counteract boredom is by pretending that there is no lack of things to do and thus inventing work. Tightening discipline is also a technique. Subordinates do, however, usually feel this as the failure of the leaders to provide meaningful work.[1191]

In Dutchbat III, the effects of boredom were visible in mechanics' and Intendance units; they had practically nothing to do because resupply had been halted. The kitchen staff, too, could do little more than boil water and warm up cans of food. It has been said that the Intendance group became a source of rumour; the fact that they were caged in in the compound influenced this behaviour. To get

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[1189] Interview Th.J.P. Karremans, 26/06/98.

[1190] Interview Th.J.P. Karremans, 26/06/98.

[1191] J.M. Ambaum 'Do you want to talk about it? Psychological support in operational conditions' in: A.L.W. Vogelaar, K.F. Muusse and J.H. Rovers, eds. NL Arms: Netherlands Annual Review of Military Studies 1998, Royal Netherlands Military Academy, Breda, 1998, pP. 174-176.

the personnel out of this rut, the battalion leaders decided to deploy them on 'social patrols'. On patrol it became evident that Dutchbat, in comparison to the majority of the populace, still lived in relative luxury.[1192]

Nevertheless, conditions of life for Dutchbat II and III were primarily determined by shortages of basic provisions such as warm water and light. It was necessary to live for weeks on rations. Dutchbat II had not reckoned on this scarcity because Dutchbat I had not experienced it and it had not then been reported. For some, the shortage of fresh food or cans of something to drink led to mutual comparisons of rations and to suspicion. Privacy was limited as well. This led on occasion to minor quarrels that were then quelled by officers, but that left a modicum of tension behind. Due to straitened living conditions and lack of privacy, the motivation of many Dutchbat II soldiers was sorely diminished in the last two months of the stay and they longed even more strongly for reprieve. This frustration was piled on top of a situation in which many no longer saw the point of the mission and in which they were already disheartened by numbing tasks. Some saw Srebrenica as a prison.

Dangerous situations added to the stress. Being on patrol meant being in danger of stepping on a landmine and being shot by either the VRS or the ABiH or both. Being under fire was to some extent a question of getting used to it, but the other side of the coin was that personnel had to ensure that they remained alert. In dealing with danger, the leaders had difficulty establishing to what extent they could subject their own soldiers to danger. They had to ask themselves whether the priority should be their own security or the protection of the inhabitants. The commander of the OP or the patrol made decisions about risks on the spot, but areas that were too dangerous were avoided. A number of personnel was seriously wounded and that always made a deep impression, which went hand-in-hand with feelings of powerlessness, hopelessness, anxiety and revenge.[1193]

Many aspects of the situation in Bosnia in which the Dutch Blue Helmets found themselves were also chaotic and politically unclear. Many Dutch soldiers did not at all understand the attitude of the ABiH soldiers, who thwarted, tormented and manipulated them, as did the VRS. This made them see that it was too easy to speak of one guilty party and one victim in the conflict. The theme emphasized in Dutch media reporting was that of the victim; Bosnian Muslims were portrayed as underdogs. This boomeranged for Dutchbat and the Transport Battalion. People at home were expecting Dutchbat to help and protect the victims, while the original portrayal of the Bosnian Muslim group as an underdog needing protection sometimes gave way after just a few weeks to feelings of frustration, irritation and distrust towards all Muslims: citizens, refugees and soldiers.[1194]

Lack of insight into the Muslim culture played a role here and lack of insight into the experiences and needs of the refugees was added into the equation. The process of taking distance was encouraged because the battalion leaders had forbidden non-functional contacts with the population. The idea upon which this was founded was that the UN had to remain neutral and that contacts with the population could cause problems because favours could be asked for and relationships could be established.[1195] As a matter of fact, there were positive experiences with the population, achieved through personal contacts, primarily at the OPs. Negative experiences seemed to manifest themselves most strongly in the town of Srebrenica. The Dutch soldiers were unable to form a picture of what the intentions of the warring factions were with respect to each other and to Dutchbat itself. The situation was often unpredictable for them; one minute would be peaceful and the next filled with the sound of shooting. Doubt about the usefulness of the mission crept in due to the fact that the warring factions profited from the humanitarian aid. There were no criteria by which to measure the success of efforts expended. That led to the question of whether Dutchbat unintentionally, by its simple presence, was maintaining the status quo and the conflict instead of protecting the Safe Area. The existence of questions of this nature did not make it easy for the leaders to continue motivating the soldiers.

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[1192] Interview Th.J.P. Karremans, 24/09/98.
[1193] Vogelaar, et al, Leiderschap in crisisomstandigheden ('Leadership in situations of crisis'), pp. 52-60 and 165.
[1194] Vogelaar, et al, Leiderschap in crisisomstandigheden, pp. 167-69.
[1195] Vogelaar, et al, Leiderschap in crisisomstandigheden, pp. 30-34.

Frustration was fed by the insight that the designated tasks could not be carried out acceptably and that the intended goals thus could not be achieved. The informal goal of the last two battalions was readjusted again and again until it became, simply, getting the whole battalion home in one piece. Tasks were carried out because the personnel had been assigned to them, but no one still believed in the ideas behind such tasks: 'we could not secure the boundaries but we could guard them – that meant watching everyone who went in and out'.[1196] It was certainly true for a unit like the Red Berets that the boring peacekeepers' existence in the enclave up to that moment was a disappointment. Dutchbat III at a certain moment especially found itself forced to strip its goals down to simply being present and protecting itself from the VRS and the ABiH. The absence of any form of UN support was further disconcerting reinforcing the feeling of being completely alone in East Bosnia.

Practically all the members of Dutchbat II would return to the Netherlands disappointed.[1197] The thought that their presence alone would be enough to keep the peace and that their observation task and patrols would keep the warring factions apart was a mistake. The reality turned out to be something totally different than had been imagined ahead of time. The warring factions did not observe UN resolutions and the UN turned out to be powerless. Patrolling and observing did not improve the situation; quite the reverse was true, as the situation actually worsened. The soldiers became aware that hardly anything they did mattered but they were also regularly endangered. Quite a lot happened which demanded action but the Rules of Engagement did not permit action. Motivation was lost and the soldiers developed an aversion to the warring factions. This expressed itself gradually in a change of mindset which showed the company more and more directed to surviving the period in one piece and less and less to accomplishing the mission. Work that had to be done began to be done more often for the company itself and less often for the Bosnian population or the United Nations. To the extent that one could speak of motivated goals at the beginning of the UN mission, at the end it was quite clear that there were very few left. Frustration, lack of motivation and cynicism about the mission dominated.[1198]

Battalion commander Karremans sketches how the feeling of isolation in the enclave got its grip on Dutchbat III as well:

> 'Just try to imagine how cooped up we felt from about the middle of April, when no one could get out and no one could get in. Pretty much as cooped up as the forty thousand Muslims present in the enclave. As far as that goes, our fate was almost the same, except that our manner of functioning and our relatively luxurious lifestyle compared to theirs made life a bit more acceptable. Nevertheless, all of this did begin to influence the morale.'[1199]

Karremans made this very clear on 5 June 1995 in a letter to the Army Crisis Staff in The Hague: 'since the rotation of both infantry battalions in January 1995 in the enclave Srebrenica, 13th Airmobile Battalion (Dutchbat III) have had to cope with an accumulation of operational, logistic and humanitarian problems.' He emphasized once again that the population, given the increased threat from the Bosnian Serbs, was at its wits' end. It had become completely dependent on the battalion and had placed its fate in the hands of Dutchbat. 'In short, the battalion is confronted with a problem completely impossible to solve,' continued Karremans.[1200] The minimize program and the resultant great amount of walking taxed the soldiers both physically and mentally.

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[1196] Interview R. Franken, 04/05/01. For Dutchbat II, see further, Vogelaar, Leiderschap in crisisomstandigheden, pp. 172-175.
[1197] As published in: Vogelaar, et al, Leiderschap in crisisomstandigheden.
[1198] Vogelaar, et al, Leiderschap in crisisomstandigheden, p. 174.
[1199] Interview Th.J.P. Karremans, 24/09/98.
[1200] SMG. Letter from Th. J.P. Karremans to C- Army Crisis Staff and Bgen Pollé, subject: the situation in Srebrenica, 05/06/95.

Under these conditions, the relationship with the home front was very important for the battalion and any obstruction of this directly influenced morale. Those at home and those away usually communicated by telephone or post. Neither form of communication worked optimally. Telephone calls were limited to a maximum of three minutes. For a much higher price per minute, one could call for longer, but at one's own cost. Because no convoys arrived, no post got through. The home front committee of the third battalion tried to find out if there was anything it could do, when it became apparent that there was no point in sending post.[1201] The cutting off of postal service benefits was a huge problem for the Dutchbat soldiers, and this was certainly so in combination with the knowledge that they simply could not get out of the enclave. Concern about the home front grew as the feeling of being totally isolated and left in the lurch dawned on them. There is little doubt that this increased the stress in the battalion. Media reports about misconduct of Dutch soldiers in Bosnia, to which subject this chapter will return, did not fail to have an effect either.

The families of the soldiers sent out to Srebrenica certainly viewed the situation in the enclave even more pessimistically than the soldiers themselves. The Dutchbat soldiers could at least partially follow the Dutch debate about the situation in the former Yugoslavia in the Dutch press. Newspaper articles were sent by fax from The Hague and information that got through to Dutchbat came from Radio Nederland Wereldomroep (Radio Netherlands World Service), the RTL news and UN situation reports. Reports from the Netherlands often had a negative effect because public debate fed the insecurity in Srebrenica.

It had to wait until several years after the fall of Srebrenica before a home front investigation was undertaken to interview the partners of those who had served in Srebrenica.[1202] This was focused on those who stayed behind. It did not go into the effects that worry on the home front had had on troop morale. The investigation did show that in the weeks just before the end of the deployment period, the home front started to count on the return of the soldiers. Earlier feelings of agitation, loss and despair experienced at the moment the troops were deployed returned at the moment that those staying behind began to expect the soldiers' return. Hopes ran high and emotions ranged from euphoria about the return to worry about the chance of disillusionment.[1203] The huge insecurity about troops relieving Dutchbat and the attack on the enclave by the Bosnian Serbs, combined with the lack of information, undoubtedly will have intensified the alternating currents of hope and anxiety on the home front in this period. And this will not have escaped the soldiers in the enclave.

Because the VRS refused its permission, between sixty and eighty Dutchbat III soldiers were not sent on leave in the period of their service there. Worsening perspectives as to rest and recreation had clear repercussions on the soldiers' state of mind. And the question of when Dutchbat would ever be able to get away began to be imperative as June 1995 began. At the beginning of June, the soldiers already had begun to clean up and pack as they waited for relief. As the month went on, the insecurity about what was going to happen steadily increased; it was unclear whether the 42nd Battalion Limburgse Jagers or an Ukrainian battalion would be relieving Dutchbat III. This will be gone into in more detail in Chapter 4 of Part III.

As a consequence of the severity of conditions in the enclave, practically everyone was mentally exhausted. The general health of the military had begun to worsen as well. Drinking water had to be rationed. Dutchbat had cut its task down to simply being present; the execution of other tasks had largely become impossible. The disarming of the population was stopped in order to prevent a further escalation of tension.

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[1201] 11 Lumbl. TFC Dertien, Buddy Bulletin, report of a meeting on 13/05/95.

[1202] M. Schipper, 'Partner zijn en uitzending: een goede combinatie?' ('Being a partner and being sent out: is this a good combination?'), Kernvraag, (2000)1, pp. 33-41.

[1203] Erik L.J.L. de Soir, 'Hoe beleeft het thuisfront een uitzending? De emotionele stadia bij langdurige inzet' (How does the home front deal with the dispatch of troops? Emotional stadia during long-lasting deployment), Kernvraag, (2001)1, pp. 19-26.

On 11 June, General Couzy was forced to decide that all the stranded Dutchbat soldiers on leave in Zagreb would return to the Netherlands. No extra personnel would be sent to Srebrenica from the Netherlands for Dutchbat III and no one from the battalion could yet go on leave. Because supplies had reached the absolute minimum level, no humanitarian aid could be given to the population. By the middle of June it was clear that the battalion would simply have to wait out the last period until relief came, without being able to do anything meaningful. The frustration grew by the day as military personnel were forced to watch the population suffering more and more intensely from hunger and lack of medical aid, while they themselves were forced to be idle and forced to watch it happen. The food situation had never been worse since Dutchbat's arrival; the VRS had blocked practically all UNHCR food convoys, and the population was practically starved.

## 5. Differences in the morale per battalion

Afterwards most observers judged the morale of Dutchbat I to have been most positive. That is no wonder because the sense of being pioneers created a team spirit that made itself felt in the morale. Dutchbat 1 was also much more able than its successors to help the population, because, as a rule, there were more than adequate supplies of medical goods, food, diesel oil and maintenance equipment. What's more, the population welcomed the Blue Helmets positively. And the period of Dutchbat I's stay was the shortest of all. The succeeding battalions had more difficulty figuring out what their role should be because the pioneers' work had already been done. Compounds and OPs were already built; the work of the predecessors could only be improved upon. In such a situation, it is possible to see how an attitude of 'sitting out one's time' could come into being, complete with disparagements of the predecessors. At the time of Dutchbat II, anxiety and despondency had grown within the population because the enclave had fallen more and more into the clutches of the VRS and because the Bosnian Serbs were letting fewer and fewer supply convoys in. This battalion had to deal with the first serious casualties. Dutchbat III was confronted with the most difficult circumstances of all and it could not add very much to the work of its predecessors. Contact with the population had been reduced to a minimum since Dutchbat II and the atmosphere was more forbidding.[1204]

There is no social science research available on non-operational circumstances of influence on the battalion's functioning. One study by the military psychologist, A. Vogelaar, and fellow researchers, examines the problems confronted by the leaders of Dutchbat II. It offers some insight into the specific problems, dilemmas and frustrations and their effect on the morale.[1205] These insights are not applicable in their totality, though, to the Dutchbat III experiences. It must be remembered that the two battalions did not find themselves in completely comparable positions; the position of Dutchbat III was clearly worse for a longer period. And it is necessary to take into account differences in personnel and in the person of the commander. Nevertheless, Dutchbat II did experience increasing provocation and more violence with time as well; more soldiers were wounded and supplies became more problematic as time progressed.

The longer Dutchbat II remained in Bosnia, the more disillusioned the battalion became about the usefulness of its own contribution to the UNPROFOR operation. The feeling gained ground that patrolling and reporting were of little use. Numerous reports signalling violations of the No Fly Zone had no effect at all and were sometimes even disputed by headquarters in Sarajevo. Everyone felt tied hand and foot by the Rules of Engagement and the relationship with the population worsened. Many of the Blue Helmets felt that the Muslims did not appreciate their protection and were misusing the Dutchbat presence to develop prohibited military activities. It was very bad for Dutchbat motivation that it could not actually start disarming the Muslims. Patrols or OPs were sometimes shot at without demonstrable reason. Humanitarian aid was sometimes misused for military goals. The Bosnian Serbs

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[1204] Interview E.B. Dijkman, 29/06/99.

[1205] A. Vogelaar, et al, Leiderschap in crisisomstandigheden, the following paragraphs are wholly based on this.

blocked convoys, refused to grant permission to those on furlough to leave or enter the enclave and removed personal effects from the convoys. All these things negatively affected the motivation at all levels of personnel. Those in charge had difficulty sorting out positive aspects of the mission to continue motivating personnel.[1206] Negative aspects were reinforced by that already discussed in Chapter 8 regarding preparations and lack of contact with the population.

Lacking better instruments, a means of comparison between the battalions can be found by looking at how many soldiers returned from the mission area ahead of time and the reasons for this. There are disadvantages to this means of comparison also, because a strong commander would tend to send his personnel back home earlier than a weak one. And it also loses its meaning at the point that the VRS no longer allowed replacement personnel to enter the enclave. A comparison between the three Airmobile Battalions does not lead to significant differences. The numbers repatriated – between eleven and twenty – do not differ much, particularly when corrected for the wounded. Interesting is that no wounded personnel and not one non-commissioned officer had to return from Dutchbat I. Relative to the others, it was Dutchbat II which had most personnel and most NCOs returned. Two persons returned from Dutchbat II and one from Dutchbat III because of punishable offences. A comparison of the three battalions with the Communication Battalion, the Transport Battalion and Support Command shows that Dutchbat did not have people returning home for reasons of refusal to obey service orders, discipline, drug use or trafficking, prohibited weapon possession, theft or trade in personal kit or acts of violence; all these things occurred in great numbers in other units.[1207]

## 6. Recapitulation concerning the morale

In this sketch of the morale of Dutchbat I, II and III and the circumstances of influence upon it, it has become apparent that feelings of frustration and powerlessness grew as time went on and that this led to cynicism and discouragement. This state of mind seems to have conflicted hardly at all with the exercise of the battalion's task: there are very few instances of this, a very small number of documented cases in fact, and the functioning of only a few soldiers suffered for a shorter or longer period as a result of shocking experiences. Colleagues and social workers helped those who did suffer in such a way that they could later resume work. To the very end, practically all assignments were carried out loyally and the personnel concerned took up risky blocking positions when the VRS threatened to overrun the enclave after 9 July.

Taking this into account, it would be much too easy to assume that reduced motivation, frustration or problems with state of mind would, as a matter of course, have affected the execution of tasks, particularly in the fighting units, as has been suggested. According to the Military Security Officer, Sergeant Major Rave, the morale of Dutchbat III was 'not bad at all, it was, in fact, very good'. Research carried out later also underscores the feeling of solidarity and its positive influence on the atmosphere. All activities kept right on going, in spite of the physical weaknesses and setbacks such as faltering rotations, postponed leave, post that failed to appear and lack of personnel. Rave did not observe any mental weakening. The fact that rations were pinched off meant that the general condition deteriorated and, with it, the speed of work. A certain indifference made its appearance, according to

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[1206] Vogelaar, et al, Leiderschap in crisisomstandigheden, pp. 25-30.

[1207] DJZ (Director Legal Affairs). Summary prematurely returned military personnel from the former Yugoslavia, 24/05/95. Confi. The comparison fails to the extent that data for the enclave cannot be corrected for personnel of the battalions quartered in Simin Han and that the data for Dutchbat do not go further than 24/05/95. See also SMG 1020/1-4. Repatriation in the first year after deployment, Lessons Learned, 08/02/94, no. 27/Z/1975. An undated summary (08/05/95?) by LColonel, Dr. W. Wertheim (to Lars Poppes) mentions a total number of 273 repatriations, subdivided into BH-Command 5, ECMM 3, Dutchbat 45, Support Command 32, Transport Battalion 84, Communication Battalion 97 and Zagreb 7. By category of personnel, these were 133 conscripts, 88 BBT and 52 BOT . The reasons were 15 dysfunction, 92 medical, 75 psycho-social (including problems at home) and 91 punishable act. (Archive DJZ, file Gedragingen).

Rave: 'the longer you operate under circumstances of that nature, the more normal they become for you. Your own standards start to adapt and then you become more indifferent to certain things.'[1208]

In spite of everything, a number of Dutchbat soldiers deemed the atmosphere good to the very end. The feeling of solidarity was improved by adverse circumstances and the differences between the Red Berets and supporting units lessened. The tense waiting undergone by those on leave in Zagreb proves this feeling of solidarity; practically all of the soldiers waiting there wanted to return to the battalion in Srebrenica.

## 7. Misconduct

In May of 1995, the first publications appeared in the Dutch press, alleging that Dutchbat had been guilty, in the enclave Srebrenica, of serious misconduct affecting the population. This very sensitive subject would continue after that time to catch public attention repeatedly. The Dutch Army and the Public Prosecutions Department began an investigation in May and June of 1995 into the accuracy of rumours about misconduct of Dutch UN personnel in the former Yugoslavia, but this did not lead to criminal proceedings. Nevertheless, the rumours continued to circulate because personnel home from Bosnia revealed new facts about misconduct to the media. This opened the results of earlier official investigations to question once more. The remainder of this chapter deals with the point at which the question arose, that is, with the developments in the months of May and June, until the beginning of July. In addition to the question as to which forms of misconduct were actually reported, the communication among the Ministry of Defence, the Dutch Army, the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee and the Public Prosecutions Department are gone into, as well as the thoroughness of the investigation into alleged misconduct within Dutchbat III.

In preparing to dispatch the Dutch battalions, no one anticipated any special problems in the area of criminal and disciplinary law or any 'misconduct' against the Muslim population as arising from the peace mission. In training the Dutchbat soldiers, military criminal and disciplinary law effective during the period for which they were to be dispatched was dealt with in generalities; lessons were also given in humanitarian military law. The same rules and procedures were valid for the application of Dutch military disciplinary and criminal law during the period for which the personnel were dispatched, as were valid for the Netherlands or for operations in NATO context. Rules of conduct were laid down in Dutchbat's Standing Orders, and to break these could lead to criminal or disciplinary proceedings. UNPROFOR's own rules made up an integral part of these. The peacekeeping force observed a system of major offences, which included use of and possession of drugs, handling weapons and ammunition, trading in UN equipment, dealing on the black market and sexual assault.

Breaking the roles led to official reports being drawn up and possible repatriation to the Netherlands. It was obligatory to report every offence to the brigade of the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee in Zagreb. Whenever a commander judged that there was question of a criminal offence, according to Dutch military criminal and disciplinary law or UNPROFOR rules, he was obliged to report it directly to the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee. Every soldier could report offences to his own commander.[1209]

Within Dutchbat, the battalion and the company commanders were responsible for enforcing discipline. They were authorized to take disciplinary measures for light offences against the rules; for serious offences, it was requisite to involve the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee. Tasks of the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee included all police matters such as traffic control, registration of offences and of criminal acts, and investigating these.

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[1208] Interview A.E. Rave, 13/12 and 14/12/00.

[1209] CRST. Policy volume Commander Netherlands troops in the former Yugoslavia (September 1994). Chapter 1/7. Debriefing file: Standing Orders Dutchbat 2/3, Chapter 1/08.

The Force Provost Marshall was responsible for military police tasks for the UNPROFOR. The UN proceeded from the assumption that troop-contributing countries also sent out the necessary numbers of Military Constabulary and that these formed part of the organization of the Force Provost Marshall. These organizations jointly dealt with 19,000 cases, but further specification as to sort is not available.[1210]

Marechaussee units took action solely within the context of the national contingent. The Netherlands, as a troop-contributor, also contributed to the military police of UNPROFOR. For the exercise of Dutch military police tasks, a brigade of the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee was stationed in Zagreb at UNPROFOR headquarters. Under the responsibility of this brigade, small posts of the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee operated on the location of Dutch units in the former Yugoslavia.[1211] At the compound in Potocari, a post of two non-commissioned officers acted in this capacity, drawing up official reports of, for instance, traffic accidents, theft and persons missing and undertaking investigations on their own initiative or in response to a report by a commander. This post reported daily to the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee brigade in Zagreb and contacted the Public Prosecutor in Arnhem, when necessary, to request advice for methods of dealing with these matters. Any possible 'misconduct' had to be dealt with within this context of the tasks and responsibilities of commanders and of the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee.

*The accusations*

The assumption of misconduct became the center of public interest as of Friday, 5 May 1995, when the ANP (Dutch Press Agency) questioned the Department of Information for the Ministry of Defence 'whether or not it was true that the MID (Military Intelligence Service) had instituted an investigation into war crimes committed by Dutch Blue Helmets.' In discussions with General Couzy, the answer was provided that the Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army, in response to rumours about possible misconduct of Dutch soldiers, had commissioned a routine investigation. The Dutch commanders in Bosnia would carry out this internal and exploratory investigation. The moment a clearer picture of the facts and any possible 'violations of military criminal law' was obtained, the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee would be called in.

The ANP report found the Information Officer for the Army to be extremely reserved in his statement; Lieutenant Colonel W.P.P. Hartman did not wish to specify 'which direction the suspicion of misconduct took, because 'even the direction could be false'. He was to say just as little about the units and about the time period the investigation was meant to target; it had to do with more than one incident and it involved more than one soldier. The misconduct was thought to have been directed at the local population.[1212]

The *Rotterdams Dagblad* of 5 May 1995, under the caption 'Allegations of misconduct undermine Dutch Blue Helmets' functioning – "They willfully enticed children into minefields with candies"' revealed more details. It was said that the investigation into misconduct had been started because supervisors and commanders had raised the alarm in response to shocking stories of misbehaviour told, during their follow-up training, by soldiers who had returned from Bosnia.

> 'The soldiers were said to have been guilty of rape and the misuse of alcohol and weapons. They were even said to have willfully enticed children into

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[1210] UNPROFOR, Force Commander's End of Mission Report,' pp. 100-101.

[1211] P. van Keulen, 'Royal Netherlands Marechaussee, Captain Colenbrander 'De eerste maand gaat nog wel' (You can get through the first month) in: Achterbanier 17(1995)4, pp. 6-8; Public Prosecutions Department Arnhem: Royal Netherlands Marechaussee, no. P.004/2000, 06/01/2000.

[1212] 'Defensie onderzoekt geruchten Nederlands wangedrag in Bosnië' (Defence investigates rumours of Dutch misconduct in Bosnia), ANP Bericht, 05/05/95. CRST. W.P.P. Hartman, 08/05/95, 'Notitie voor Secties communicatie KL'(Note for Communication Sections Dutch Army).

> minefields by throwing candies into the fields. In this way, the soldiers could check whether or not the area was safe for them. Experts see the last-mentioned excesses as "very close to war crimes".'[1213]

Army spokesman Hartman had obviously been much less reserved in his statements to the Rotterdam newspaper than he had been with the ANP. He did point out that good contact existed between the Army top and the personnel as a means of intercepting rumour quickly. However, when asked, he did not deny that these rumours of misconduct had been going on for some time. The Army, he stated, did not tolerate misconduct in any event. Couzy wanted to get to the bottom of it. If things had taken place that did not pass muster, the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee would be brought in. The investigation, according to Hartman, would not be limited to the units in Bosnia, but would also be directed at personnel already returned home 'in order to eliminate the chance of failing to discover misbehaviour from an earlier date.' The same article stated that 'critical Army officers', about whom it was only known that they had the rank of Major, Lieutenant-Colonel or Colonel, doubted whether this determined approach of the Army top would be successful. They stated that commanders in Bosnia were not aware of everything that had happened there. Moreover, they wanted to keep their dirty wash off the public line. There was a 'culture of covering up for each other', especially in the Airmobile Brigade, according to these spokesmen.[1214]

The national newspapers of Saturday 6 May followed the ANP press release of 5 May by reporting that the Army had begun investigating rumours of misconduct, but they did not as yet mention details of the report in the *Rotterdams Dagblad*. Those papers ran reports with more content on Monday, 8 May, based on a second ANP report, the contours of which resembled the piece in the *Rotterdams Dagblad*:

> 'Soldiers who go too far and use their weapons unnecessarily. Rape. Children enticed into a possible minefield with a handful of candies. Are these wild rumours meant to discredit the reputedly extremely disciplined Dutch UN soldiers in Bosnia? Nevertheless, the Army finds the case serious enough to investigate.'[1215]

With this, a long-lasting discussion began about misconduct of Dutch soldiers in Bosnia. According to the second ANP report, twenty cases were involved, for deeds perpetrated in Busovaca, Lukavac and Srebrenica. This report mentioned soldiers had, not only taken their commanders in the follow-up training but also their supervisors, into their confidence. The Army's Section of Intelligence and Security and the Department for Individual Aid seemed to be aware of stories of misconduct. Both General Couzy and his Netherlands Army Crisis Staff Commander, General Pollé, were said to have been aware of 'possible abuses' for some time. These reports said that Couzy had already decided at the end of April to instigate an investigation, at the initiative of a group of 'alarmed officers'.

Couzy, and in his wake the spokesman for the Army, tried to turn the tide of the general conviction that 'there's no smoke without fire' employing the adage, 'one can communicate about facts but not about rumours.'[1216] According to the ANP, it was presumed that company captains too had been aware of the incidents but had not taken any action. The same sources stated that primarily younger professional soldiers in part-time service had been involved in the 'alleged incidents'.[1217] This

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[1213] T. Haerkens 'Beschuldigingen van wangedrag'(Accusations of misconduct), Rotterdams Dagblad, 05/05/95.
[1214] T. Haerkens, 'Beschuldigingen van wangedrag', Rotterdams Dagblad, 05/05/95. CRST. W.P.P. Hartman, 08/05/95, 'Notitie voor Secties communicatie KL'.
[1215] G. van Gils, 'Landmacht onderzoekt geruchten over wangedrag in Bosnië'(Army investigates rumours of misconduct in Bosnia), ANP Bericht, 06/05/95.
[1216] CRST. W.P.P. Hartman, 'Notitie voor Secties communicatie KL', 08/05/95.
[1217] G. van Gils, 'Landmacht onderzoekt geruchten over wangedrag in Bosnië', ANP Bericht 138, 06/05/95.

information from the ANP – apparently originating from the alarmed officers – together with the reference in the *Rotterdams Dagblad* about the closed culture in the Mobile Airbrigade, pointed strongly in the direction of Dutchbat, the only unit with many young BBTers (professional soldiers with contracts for a limited time).

The media gave a lot of space to news of the already initiated internal Army investigation. The misconduct had still been very little documented, but a number of examples appeared in public again and again, to the embarrassment of Defence. In addition to throwing candies into possible minefields, prohibited use of weapons and alcohol misuse, the examples of misbehaviour in the reports of 8 May were expanded to include prohibited visits to prostitutes outside the compound, drug use, the sale of military goods, and rude behaviour towards the local population. Reactions from military trade unions and from political parties to this news ran almost parallel; there was astonishment at the reported facts, emphatic support for the internal investigation and a criminal investigation if necessary. The trade unions, *Vereniging Belangenbehartiging Militairen* (Representation Association for Military Personnel) (VBM), the ACOM, *the Algemene Vereniging van Militairen* (AVVM) (General Association for the Military), right up to the *Vereniging van Dienstplichtige Militairen* (VVDM) (Association for Conscripted Soldiers) were surprised by the rumours though, because nothing of this sort had ever reached their ears.[1218]

*Investigation of the allegations*

Couzy had reported verbally to Minister Voorhoeve on 28 April that he had obtained information from Chaplain Service and Military Psychological Services concerning 'possible misbehaviour' on the part of dispatched Dutch military personnel. Voorhoeve requested a written report.[1219] Head Army Chaplain J.G.C. Broeders sent confidential information from two chaplains in Bosnia about 'excessive behaviour of Dutch UN military personnel' on 1 May to Voorhoeve and Couzy, providing reason for an investigation.

Broeders said that his intention had not been to instigate a legal inquiry. He wanted to use the examples particularly to point out the huge importance of operational ethical education for Dutch UN military personnel before deployment. Broeders specified five examples of said excessive behaviour in his report to Couzy and Voorhoeve. In addition to the earlier mentioned incident of throwing the candies (or Esbit firelighters that, normally speaking, were used to warm up tinned food, wrapped up in a candy paper) into the possible minefield, he was concerned with soldiers accompanying food transports, who, fully aware of the danger, allowed Muslim children to run up against their moving trucks and with soldiers who offered shoe polish sandwiches or Esbit firelighters as food to Muslim children. He was also concerned with soldiers responding to parents' proposals of sexual relations with their young daughters in exchange for a package of cigarettes and, finally, with soldiers sprinkling leftover food with fuel on the way to the refuse dump and, as soon as the Muslims came closer, setting it alight, with all the consequent bodily harm.[1220]

Broeders' report was enough to make Couzy instigate an investigation. On 2 May 1995, he reported to the Deputy Secretary-General of Defence that he had assigned the commander of the Dutch Forces in Bosnia, Colonel W.M. Verschaegen, to investigate the units in Bosnia. That investigation was not undertaken with speed though. It is not even clear at which point in time the

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[1218] 'Beschuldiging wangedrag' (Accusations of misconduct), Algemeen Dagblad, 06/05/95; 'Onderzoek naar 'wangedrag' (Investigation into 'misconduct'), NRC Handelsblad, 06/05/95. 'Defensie onderzoekt geruchten' (Defence investigates rumours), De Telegraaf, 06/05/95; 'Onderzoek wangedrag Nederlandse militairen' (Investigation misconduct Dutch military personnel), Algemeen Dagblad, 08/05/95; 'Mogelijke vervolging Dutchbat' (Possible prosecution Dutchbat), Parool, 10/05/95; 'ACOM distantieert zich van berichtgeving omtrent vermeend wangedrag' (ACOM distances itself from reports of alleged misconduct), Persbericht ACOM, 10/05/95.

[1219] DJZ. Memorandum 'Onderzoeken naar vermeend wangedrag van Nederlandse VN militairen in voormalig Joegoslavië' (Investigations into alleged misconduct of Dutch UN military personnel in the former Yugoslavia), undated; DCBC. No. D 101/95/9200, Voorhoeve to Chairman Parliament, 09/05/95.

[1220] DJZ. No. 5178/CB, Broeders to Voorhoeve (copy to Couzy), 01/05/95.

assignment was issued to Colonel Verschaegen. On 5 May, the media assault began; it was through the media that Karremans first learned of the existence of the investigation. Even after these publications, the Dutch Army did not speed up the investigation, but then the Central Organization of the Ministry of Defence (also known as *Het Plein*) intervened. In this way, on 8 May, Karremans received an assignment directly from The Hague, and not from Busovaca, to instigate an investigation into misconduct by Dutchbat III personnel.[1221] The difference in approach between the Dutch Army and *Het Plein* was apparent the next day, 9 May when Couzy told his Minister that he would need four weeks to carry out the investigation. At that point Voorhoeve stepped in with the words:

> 'That is much too long. Then the innocent will be cast in a bad light for an unnecessarily long period and the guilty will have an enormous amount of time to cover their tracks. I want to decide at the end of this week to involve the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee, if there are any grounds at all for the vile rumours.'[1222]

And indeed, haste was made: by 11 May, Karremans and the commander of the Ordnance Battalion in Busovaca had reported directly to Couzy. Their reports made clear that they had not received identical assignments.

In Busovaca, a committee of six, headed by the acting battalion commander, investigated the allegations.[1223] This committee had asked discrete questions of the predecessors, colleagues and lower commanders subsequent to their having inventoried data from the archives (of the battalion, the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee, Social Work and Mental Health Care). The committee came to the conclusion that there were no proofs, indicators, facts or rumours that made it plausible that personnel of the Ordnance Battalion had done 'that allegated'. An investigation by the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee into an incident of having offered Esbit blocks as candies had not led to a confession by the most important suspect. Therefore it was ascertained that there were too few concrete points of departure for further investigation.[1224]

On his account, Karremans had put the investigation into Dutchbat III in the hands of a committee, consisting of the acting battalion commander, Major R. Franken, the Head of Personnel, Captain R. Voerman, and the official for military security, Sergeant Major E.A. Rave. In actual fact, Voerman and Rave carried out the investigation separately; Voerman was in the A-Company and could not get into the enclave whereas Rave was inside the enclave and could not get out. Both of these men reported to Franken.[1225] Karremans made sure to direct the assignment at the media. He established that the investigation primarily concerned itself with Dutchbat II, but that an investigation of Dutchbat III was also necessary. The battalion commander was of the impression that especially D*e Volkskrant* (Dutch daily newspaper) had portrayed Dutchbat in a bad light and he wanted to put the allegations right by means of the investigation. Karremans ordered an investigation of the occurrence in Dutchbat III of eight specific forms of misconduct:

1. causing children to walk through trenches to check for the presence of mines in exchange for candies;
2. sending children into suspected minefields by throwing handfuls of candies;
3. offering Esbit blocks to children as candies;

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[1221] DJZ. Handwritten memorandum from the Deputy Secretary-general to Minister and Secretary of State (copies to CDS and DJZ), 02/05/95; Karremans, Srebrenica, p. 90.
[1222] DJZ. Handwritten memorandum Voorhoeve, no. 723, 09/05/95.
[1223] Other members were: head and extra officer of the section Information and Security (S2), the commander of the post of the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee, the company's social worker and the chaplain.
[1224] DJZ. Fax Wnd C-1 (NL/BE) UN LOG/TBAT to C-Crisis Staff, 'Verslag van gehouden onderzoek'(Report of investigation carried out), 11/05/95.
[1225] PPD Arnhem, Royal Netherlands Marechaussee. Ne.P.527/A/1999, 20/12/99, pp. 5-6.

4. bringing the safety and the tasks of the battalion into danger unnecessarily by giving medical aid to the citizen population, without the knowledge of the commander[1226];
5. lighting refuse, over which fuel had been poured, on the refuse dump, whereby a number of 'locals' were wounded;
6. speeding while driving the vehicles, knowing children pursued them and taking bets on the number of children hit;
7. using weapons unnecessarily against the Muslim inhabitants;
8. behaving roughly and aggressively toward and making offensive comments about the Muslims.

For each point, Karremans asked that it be explicitly indicated whether the allegations of misconduct were based on truth, or whether there was question of suspicions and rumours. Finally, he asked whether it had been entirely excluded that the subjects of the allegations were not a series of misunderstandings.[1227]

Voerman and Rave spoke with a number of military personnel and well-informed local inhabitants in Simin Han, where the A-Company of Dutchbat was quartered, and in Srebrenica, respectively. The former group included commanders and their successors from the infantry platoons, the officers and NCOs and soldiers from the Ordnance platoons 'as known repositories of gossip and rumour', the battalion doctor and personnel from the medical post and, in Simin Han, the chaplain. In Srebrenica, the latter group included the local interpreters of UNPROFOR, UNHCR and *Médicins Sans Frontières* and the leaders of *Médicins Sans Frontières* and the head of the waterworks and municipal cleansing department, Junotze.

The Simin Han investigation resulted in denials for the first six questions. That was true of Srebrenica as well. In answering the third question, it was reported that, when Dutchbat III replaced Dutchbat II, stories had come out about Esbit blocks. Junotze was said to have known nothing of the incident on the refuse dump and to have further affirmed that something of that nature could not have happened without him knowing about it. Junotze mentioned another incident, involving solely Muslims and no Dutchbat soldiers.

Finally, in the matter of driving too quickly, reports stated that a Dutchbat III corporal had been prosecuted under disciplinary law 'for disrespectful behaviour in driving through puddles on purpose in order to splash the people walking there'.

The report did not address the two last questions; the reasons for this have not become clear.[1228]

The investigations in Busovaca and Srebrenica did not indicate that the types of misconduct by Dutch military personnel in Bosnia named in the media reports had really occurred. The investigation in Busovaca had been restricted to the points named in the media; the report of Dutchbat III was silent on the last two points: use of weapons against the local population and rough and aggressive behaviour. The reports led readers to understand implicitly that battalion leaders in Srebrenica had been on the alert for appearances of misbehaviour and had punished it when it had occurred.[1229] Reports from the battalion commanders, in particular the data from Karremans, exonerated Dutchbat III. Should anything have happened, the culprit was Dutchbat II.

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[1226] This specific point is being brought forward here for the first time in the context of an investigation into misconduct. It is most likely connected with the internal conflict in the battalion surrounding the medical care of the population, partly in the light of the crisis between the Local Municipal Administration and Médicins Sans Frontières. Karremans, either consciously or unconsciously, allowed this question to arise within his investigation assignment - see further the Appendix 'Dutchbat III and the population: medical issues.'

[1227] Karremans, Srebrenica, pp. 185-186 (Appendix 9).

[1228] BStas. Dutchbat Srebrenica to Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army, 11/05/95, Appendix: No. TK 9567, 'Verondersteld wangedrag NL-miln'(Alleged misconduct Dutch military personnel).

[1229] Daily reports of the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee in Srebrenica confirm the accuracy of the reported events. Driving through the puddles took place on 22 January 1995, the incident on the refuse dump on 23 February 1995. Royal Netherlands Marechaussee Brigade UNPROFOR Department Lukavac, post Srebrenica: transaction reports 22/01/95 and 23/02/95).

This reference to Dutchbat II was connected with the scheduled hearing by the Public Prosecutor's Department that had been announced in the interim, to examine misconduct by Dutchbat II. However, before this can be looked into, it is of importance to remark how the Army leaders and the Minister reacted to the reports from the units on location.

*Reactions in The Hague to reports from Bosnia about misconduct*

Acting Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army Van Baal reported on the morning of 12 May to the Minister concerning the results of the investigation, in compliance with an agreement between him and the Chief of Defence Staff. Van Baal established that the investigation had been carried out with 'the greatest possible care' and that it had not produced any further points of departure concerning possible misbehaviour by both units in Bosnia. Van Baal wrote to the Minister to the effect that, since the Chief Public Prosecutor in Arnhem had decided in the interim to carry out a criminal preliminary investigation into misconduct by Dutchbat II, Van Baal had decided against further investigation into misconduct by Dutchbat II.[1230] In a letter to the Parliament, Voorhoeve adopted the conclusions of the 'thorough investigation' from the acting Commander in Chief. He established that there was no question of 'structural misconduct' by Dutch military personnel in the former Yugoslavia. Conspicuously enough, Voorhoeve also revealed that the Public Prosecutor in Arnhem shared his opinion.[1231]

Within one week of the first reports of misconduct, Voorhoeve seemed to have succeeded in clarifying the matter to Parliament and to the media, using the results of the investigation. He had also put himself out to quell the rancor and repressed anger of the soldiers in Bosnia surrounding the case. Firstly, he wrote to them on 10 May to say that only a thorough investigation could remove this slur on their reputation, that their work was enormously appreciated in the Netherlands and that these allegations probably only revolved around a few incidents.[1232] Secondly, he wrote again, two days later, saying that 'structural misconduct was not indicated in any way' and that further investigation was unnecessary. His words were, 'this will be a great load off your minds. I am relieved and pleased that on the short term it has been established that no slur rests on the blazon of Dutch military personnel in the former Yugoslavia.'[1233]

The Minister had shown himself to be more energetic than the Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army, Couzy, who did not view a rapid investigation as the pre-eminent means to reduce the damage for the Army and the troops in Bosnia to a minimum. Couzy apparently felt it better to rely on an investigation that would take a long time and thus also allow the problem to subside with time. The 'first round' seemed to have been won, thanks to Voorhoeve, but in fact doubts had not been assuaged in the slightest. On the morning that Voorhoeve made the results known, *De Volkskrant* was ready with its rebuttal, stating that the file could not be closed thanks to positive results because it represented solely the findings of military commanders at battalion level and higher, who themselves would see very little advantage in 'admitting that they had not been able to control their personnel, let alone that they had been aware of criminal behaviour and did not report it.'

In the light of earlier reports about the closed culture of the Airborne Battalion, this remark was understandable. *De Volkskrant* cast doubt on the sense of duty and the reliability of the whole line of command of the battalions in Bosnia, up to and including the acting Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army. An editor in The Hague, Hella Rottenberg, was obviously on to the difference in opinion between Voorhoeve and Couzy as to the required speed of the investigation. Couzy and the

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[1230] DJZ. Handwritten memorandum from CDS (Chief Defence Staff) to Minister, 09/05/95. Ibidem: A. van Baal to Voorhoeve, 11/05/95.
[1231] D 101/95/9413, Voorhoeve to Chairman TK (Parliament), 12/05/95.
[1232] Letter No. V950096, cited in Karremans, Srebrenica, p. 90.
[1233] Letter No. V95009543, Voorhoeve to contingent commander Yugoslavia and commander Airmobile Brigade, 12/05/95.

Army, according to *De Volkskrant*, wanted to keep the actual state of affairs out of the public eye. In order to prevent 'a trace of a hush-hush affair hanging on' and in order to put paid to the rumours and to punish those possibly guilty, this newspaper considered a 'fast and thorough' investigation by the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee necessary, because it could investigate the misconduct in a more independent way.[1234]

The Royal Netherlands Marechaussee did indeed institute a preliminary inquiry on 12 May into the 12th Airborne Battalion (Dutchbat II), the source of the reports of misconduct. Van Gend, the Chief Public Prosecutor in Arnhem, gave his order for this preliminary inquiry on 9 May. That inquiry did not ensue formally from the turmoil of publicity but from an official report of misconduct from the post of the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee in Zagreb, made on 16 January 1995, at the request of a first lieutenant of Dutchbat II. The preliminary inquiry started a new storm of publicity: Voorhoeve was namely not aware of its existence. He was confronted with the information on the same day that he announced the internal investigation of the Army, during his press conference. When questioned during a press conference on 9 May why he had no knowledge of the official report of 16 January 1995, Voorhoeve was unable to answer. According to the rules, this official report should have been submitted to the Minister; it concerned a case with possible political and media consequences. Since January 1992, commanders of Army units had been obliged to inform the Director of the Legal Affairs Department – *Het Plein*

> '...in the event of facts or circumstances coming to light, the nature of which is such that the commanders think the Minister should be alerted; these must include, in any event, facts or circumstances, the nature of which is such as to anticipate political and/or media consequences.'[1235]

This raises the question of why it had taken almost four months for the Public Prosecutor's Department to decide to institute an inquiry into the official report of the Royal Netherlands Military Constabulary of 16 January 1995. The facts of the matter can be reconstructed as follows.

*The criminal investigation into misconduct by Dutchbat II*

The post of the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee in Zagreb had instigated an investigation, at the request of a platoon commander of the staff company of Dutchbat II, into reports of 'abuses' by one soldier in his platoon. It concerned the purchasing of or trading in weapons and bayonets belonging to local Muslims, associating with local prostitutes, firing warning shots at Muslims and giving children poisonous (the assumption at least was thus worded) jam-covered Esbit blocks. During the hearing, it turned out that the soldier had not himself been witness to these happenings; he said that he would perhaps be able to provide names of his informants after he had been repatriated to the Netherlands. He did, however, give the names of three non-commissioned officers who were said to be aware of the infringements.

The investigation was to be continued in the Netherlands. In response to this information, the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee carried out a thorough inspection of weapons in the baggage of Dutchbat II as they left Zagreb, to check for the presence of ABiH weapons, but no evidence of this sort was forthcoming.

After receiving the official report, the Secretary of the Public Prosecutor's Office for Military Affairs of the court in Arnhem gave the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee the assignment to further the investigation. According to the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee, the Public Prosecutor requested

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[1234] H. Rottenberg, 'Onderzoek wangedrag heeft vervolg nodig'(Misconduct investigation requires sequel), De Volkskrant, 12/05/95.

[1235] DJZ. No. CS92/0117 92001833. Secretary General Patijn to commanding officers and commander Royal Netherlands Marechaussee, 27/01/92.

thereby that the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee deal with the information 'with the necessary caution' on account of its vagueness and its sensitive nature. The Public Prosecutions Secretary and the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee agreed that, the moment that was any concrete information, the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee would contact the Public Prosecutor. However, due to the heavy workload of the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee in Arnhem and the previous failure of early investigations into similar rumours, this further investigation was not given high priority.

During the slow continuing investigation in the Netherlands, during a hearing by telephone, one of the three non-commissioned officers named by the soldier stated that he could not support the soldier's assertions. The other two were apparently not interrogated. After transfer of the file, another officer of the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee interrogated the soldier again on 3 May and wrote up an official report, which did not contain any new facts.

On 9 May, the Public Prosecutor of the military section in Arnhem, Besier, had a detailed conversation with the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee commander, Major General D.G.J. Fabius. Perhaps as a result of this conversation – as it happened on the same day – Chief Public Prosecutor Van Gend was given the official report of 16 January from Zagreb to look into. That same day, 9 May, he gave the order for a criminal investigation after contacting the staff of the Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army. The examining magistrates commenced the preliminary inquiry into Dutchbat II on 10 May.[1236]

During the press conference of 9 May, Voorhoeve seemed to be caught unaware by the decision of the Public Prosecutor in Arnhem. He asked the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee to elucidate and, at the end of the afternoon, he received a memorandum from Fabius about how the official report from Zagreb was being attended to. Fabius provided him with the summary of the course of events since the official report had been written up in Zagreb and of other contacts between the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee and the Public Prosecutor's Office. He did not say anything about why the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee investigation had suddenly been given priority at the beginning of May.

The already mentioned instruction of January 1992 should have ensured that General Fabius had informed the Minister in February 1995 about the current investigation and that had not happened. On the advice of the Director of Information Services, Voorhoeve refrained from a supplementary press release, because it was first necessary to talk to Besier and Van Gend to check on the course of events as presented by Fabius. In the subsequent discussion with Voorhoeve, Van Gend said that a too hasty response by the Public Prosecutor's Office to rumours in January could have had negative consequences for the Forces and it was precisely that, that he had tried to prevent.

It is clear that communication here was exceedingly poor. The Public Prosecutor was not told of the internal Army investigation at the beginning of May. The Minister was not told of the official report from Zagreb. The Public Prosecutor did not know that the January investigation by the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee had been resumed on 3 May. And the Minister did not know that the Public Prosecutor was initiating a criminal investigation. This lack of communication, however, is insufficient to account for the fact that the internal Army investigation and the resumption of the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee investigation at the beginning of May coincided. The immediate causes for each of these investigations differed. Couzy was operating on information derived from Mental Health sources most probably related to recent events, while the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee was resuming an investigation put on the back burner in February of 1995.

The Chief Public Prosecutor had decided on a criminal investigation after he had been presented, on 9 May, with the official report from Zagreb. This report, dating from 11 January, was doubtlessly presented after the staff of the Commander in Chief had asked the Public Prosecutor in

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[1236] DJZ. No. CV 95/0501, Commander Royal Netherlands Marechaussee Fabius to Minister of Defence, 09/05/95. Ibidem: no. Ah 3220/533/95/pvds, Van Gend to Justice Minister, 11/05/95. Ibidem: memorandum department head Administrative, Criminal and Disciplinary law to Director Legal Affairs, 'Conversation Commander Royal Netherlands Marechaussee, 17/07/95.

Arnhem for it earlier that day, subsequent to the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee Brigade from Zagreb having made the staff aware of the document's existence; it is possible that the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee was alerted by Fabius after he had spoken to Besier. The only link connecting both investigations was therefore the fact that the official report of 16 January was presented to the Public Prosecutor, subsequent to the staff of the Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army having asked for it. Probably the attention given to misconduct in the media on 5 and 6 May also played a role in the decision of the Chief Public Prosecutor. After all, nothing indicates that new data were available.[1237]

This sums up the first internal Army investigation and the history prior to the decision of the Public Prosecutor on 10 May to carry out a preliminary inquiry into Dutchbat II.

The preliminary investigation itself would turn out to the extensive. Eight staff members of the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee interrogated 43 Dutchbat II personnel. At the end of June, the Public Prosecutions Department decided that the findings of the preliminary inquiry did not occasion the institution of criminal proceedings. Minister Voorhoeve was very pleased with the result.[1238] He went to Schaarsbergen in person on 26 June 1995 to break the news to Dutchbat II. He was visibly relieved because the preliminary inquiry had not confirmed tales of misconduct directed at the Muslim citizens, such as the Esbit blocks in minefields and the rapes. The preliminary inquiry had turned up 'absolutely nothing', according to this government member:

> 'Nothing for which you or your colleagues in other battalions should be ashamed. The escutcheon of the Airmobile Brigade is unblemished. No facts have come to light and no witnesses have been found who could corroborate the rumours. (...) I hope, with all my heart, that the dailies, the radio and the television will pay a lot of attention to the positive results of the investigation. You have the right to this, given the generous attention paid earlier to the extremely damaging rumours that thus appear unfounded'.[1239]

## 8. Back to square one: misconduct after all?

Anyone who had joined Minister Voorhoeve in thinking that the file 'Misconduct in Bosnia' could now be closed was mistaken. The very same evening, in the current affairs television program, 'Here and Now', a number of ex-Dutchbat III and Transport Battalion personnel appeared, accusing their predecessors anew of handing out Esbit firelighter blocks, of using drugs and causing traffic accidents by their reckless driving. Conscript M. Schouten said that, with his own eyes, he had seen Transport Battalion soldiers giving Esbit blocks to Muslim children 'as a joke'. He stated as well that Dutchbat chauffeurs had a bad reputation for dangerous driving. Schouten had first reported this on a debriefing form after being repatriated; later he had spoken to the MID (Military Intelligence Service) about it.

Corporal C. van Kammen said that, when he had been stationed with the Dutchbat III A-Company in Simin Han, he had seen sentries hitting children, who were playing near the gates, with rifle butts. He said that Couzy, during his visit to Busovaca, had shown no interest in his story. The Deputy Battalion Commander of Dutchbat III in Simin Han, Major P. van Geldere, however, repeated that nothing had been going on at all. His opinion, publicized in the *Algemeen Dagblad* (daily paper), was

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[1237] DJZ. No. 95000416, memorandum from the head of international and legal policy affairs, Van Hegelsom, to Minister, 10/05/95. Ibidem: no. Ah 3220/533/95/pvds, Van Gend to Minister of Justice, 11/05/95. Ibidem: memorandum from department head Administrative, Criminal and Disciplinary law to Director Legal Affairs, 17/07/95 ' Conversation Commander Royal Netherlands Marechaussee'.

[1238] DJZ. No. V 95012380, Voorhoeve to Chairman Parliament, 26/06/95.

[1239] DJZ. Text for an announcement of the Minister of Defence to military personnel of the 12th Airmobile Battalion, 26/06/95.

that Van Kammen's statements had to do with his disturbed relationship with other members of his group: Van Kammen had just been trying to 'get back at his pals'.[1240]

Nevertheless, there were indicators that there was apparently more going on than the Minister of Defence, the Public Prosecutor and the Dutch Army could discover or wanted to admit. More questions forced themselves to the fore with these reconstructions: were these the only signs of 'misconduct' of Dutch personnel in the former Yugoslavia at that moment? Was such behaviour general for UN soldiers in Bosnia or was it concentrated in certain units? If it was concentrated, then to which extent did it occur in Dutchbat? And, finally – the crucial question – did the commanders trouble to observe this behaviour and to take action against it? These questions will be dealt with in the argument to follow.

The answer to the first question of the availability of information about misconduct is clear. The Royal Netherlands Marechaussee had access to more information than that which could be established as hard fact: they had already investigated comparable rumours, without result. The Royal Netherlands Marechaussee had information about specific incidents too. Royal Netherlands Marechaussee reports from the enclave mention incidents of Kalashnikov bayonets being purchased in the first half 1995 by Dutchbat soldiers from Muslims and of rude behaviour to the local workers and to the citizens. In those cases, action was taken, based either on a commander's report or on a Royal Netherlands Marechaussee initiative.[1241]

The Royal Netherlands Marechaussee was also aware of incidents in other places. In March 1995, a Support Command soldier from Lukavac was sent back to the Netherlands on the basis of an official report about a number of forms of misconduct against citizens, whereby three other suspects were also named. These reports and those of the other Royal Netherlands Marechaussee posts in the former Yugoslavia were sent to its Brigade in Zagreb. The Intelligence and Security Section of the Netherlands Army Military Intelligence Service was aware of this from their debriefings of returned personnel. The conscript who had reported the incident in Lukavac had spoken with an employee of Military Security, who, according to the soldier, seemed to be well up on the many sorts of misconduct against the population. This employee even concluded that within the Support Command, the matter of misconduct should be taken resolutely in hand, to prevent a proliferation of incidents. Should that not happen, then those opposing misconduct would lose their faith in the commander.[1242]

Netherlands Army Crisis Staff was aware of the cases of misbehaviour but consciously kept these out of the weekly briefings of the Defence Crisis Management Centre because they viewed these as a matter for personnel.[1243] That types of misconduct occurred is certain, but the extent of their occurrence in different units is much more difficult to establish due to the lack of systematic investigation by the authorities concerned. To the extent that investigation did take place, it was limited in nature and scope. The Royal Netherlands Marechaussee carried out a Dutchbat II investigation in May-June 1995 and misconduct was a theme as well when Dutchbat III was debriefed. The investigation just mentioned was formally only concerned with the period around the fall of the enclave. The fact that information sometimes extended further back in time, however, becomes apparent from the *Feitenrelaas* (Factual Account). This shows a number of cases of weapon misuse, such as firing a warning shot at a fleeing person in contradiction of the Standing Orders and pointing an unloaded pistol at persons younger than 14. A brawl between an officer and a Muslim in the

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1240 'Militairen opnieuw in opspraak' (Military personnel once again discredited), Twentsche Courant, 27/06/95. 'Militairen spreken Voorhoeve tegen inzake wangedrag' (Military personnel contradict Voorhoeve about misconduct), Algemeen Dagblad, 27/06/95.

1241 Royal Netherlands Marechaussee. Royal Netherlands Marechaussee Brigade UNPROFOR post Srebrenica: transaction reports January-July 1995, passim.

1242 D. Verbaan, 'Als je niet meedoet, schiet ik een kogel door je kop' (If you don't cooperate, I'll put a bullet through your head), Haagsche Courant, 12/08/95. DJZ no. 95000856, memorandum from acting DJZ de Keizer to Minister, 29/08/95; Ibidem: no. 950012019, acting DJZ to Minister, 2 3/11/95 Appendix: report of interview with N. Samara, 31/08/95.

1243 Interview C.P.M. Klep, 18/02/99.

woodworks near OP-E is also mentioned; a weapon was used to keep other Muslims out of the woodworks. Provocative and macho behaviour is cited a number of times for B-Company in Srebrenica, behaviour that the Factual Account stated was 'emphatically corrected later on'.

There were also stories of sexual contact with Muslim women. It is striking that those who were interrogated about this had never taken advantage of the proffered services and that they spoke of 'hearsay'. To agree to offered prostitution was punishable because it was a violation of the prohibition of contact with the local population. Contact with the population in itself was viewed as punishable but did not qualify as 'misconduct'.

The same goes for the violation of rules for alcohol use. They stated that in working hours no alcohol could be consumed and in free time a maximum of two glasses of beer per evening. The Factual Account mentions by larger number of violations of this rule. To control this sort of violation was, however, difficult because the number of bars within the compound Potocari made the rule hard to enforce. Professional contacts with the citizens at the observation posts moreover, led to visits to the local population, whereby so much hard liquor was taken that operational deployment of the personnel became impossible. Military personnel were able to get alcohol by bartering with the citizens or by purchasing it outside the enclave on furlough. A number of cases of punishment is reported on these points.[1244]

Dutchbat vehicles in the former Yugoslavia were also involved in traffic accidents with the accompanying property damage and occasions of personal injury. In one case a child, who had been playing behind a Dutchbat parked car, died when the car was driven away without the driver having noticed. Different reasons were given as causes for accidents: training was too short resulting in insufficiently experienced chauffeurs, driving had to be done under difficult circumstances on narrow, bad roads in hilly and mountainous areas and, finally, some personnel drove recklessly.[1245] This could not be called misconduct but perhaps lack of discipline.

As to the candy or snack question, it has only been established that at Support Command in Lukavac, bags of chips were consciously stepped on to flatten them or that candies were eaten at the gates to tease the Muslim children. The commander turned out to have remained unaware of this for a long time.[1246] This is revolting and extremely improper behaviour, but cannot be characterized as misconduct bordering on 'war crimes', as was assumed after the first revelations in May of 1995.

*Further investigation by the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee*

None of this is meant to obscure the fact that the Factual Account also made note of misconduct of a more serious nature. Between 1998 and 2000, the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee investigated a number of cases of weapon misuse, excess alcohol consumption and one case of abuse of a Muslim. Their investigations cast more light on a number of incidents and, particularly for the OPs, were able to be used afterwards to condense many reported cases in the Factual Account to a number of concrete items, leading to hearings for those involved.

The investigations show that at the end of February 1995 at OP-F, a group commander had threatened some Muslim children with an unloaded weapon belonging to a person caring for the wounded.[1247] At OP-H and OP-K, warning shots were fired over the heads of young Muslims during an attempted robbery with an FAL gun. Some Dutchbat soldiers on site said that the single shot fired in both cases was meant simply to frighten the perpetrator. A signal pistol and tracer bullets were also

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1244 SMG/Debriefing. Factual Account, pp. 47-51.
1245 P. van Keulen, 'Royal Netherlands Marechaussee, Captain Colenbrander, 'De eerste maand gaat nog wel (You can get through the first month)" in: Achterbanier 17(1995)4, pp. 6-8. DJZ. No. CRST/2601, wnd CS Army Crisis Staff to wnd SS-O and DS/SCOCIS, 27/06/95.
1246 DJZ, no. 95001219, acting DJZ to Minister, 23/11/95 Appendix: report of interview with N. Samara, 31/08/95.
1247 PPD Arnhem, Royal Netherlands Marechaussee Sebra team. No. P. 526/1999, 19/11/99.

fired from OP-E in the direction of the woodworks when Muslims had entered it to steal wood.[1248] It had also become common usage to frighten Muslims by going through the motions of loading an FAL weapon, without a magazine, pointing it up in the air.

Dutchbat soldiers involved attempted afterwards to justify their actions with the argument that the Muslims were quite aware that they would not shoot at them: 'We were there for their protection, not to shoot at them.'[1249] At the end of April 1995, a sergeant/group commander had beaten a Muslim in the woodworks near OP-E. The woodworks lay, according to Dutchbat, outside the enclave and thus in an area prohibited for Muslims. The sergeant had had to send the same Muslim out of the woodworks several times before and stated that when the Muslim had reacted aggressively, he had beaten him. The sergeant wounded his hand doing this and was sent home to the Netherlands at the beginning of May on medical grounds.[1250]

Finally, it has to be asked whether incidents were reported according to instructions. This is very likely the case for the warning shots and the use of the signal pistol. A short standard report via the radio to the company's operations room and subsequently to the battalion sufficed. The Royal Dutch Military Constabulary investigated the incident at OP-H because of the attempted robbery.[1251] The Bravo Company Commander, Captain J. Groen, closed the subject of the abuse of the Muslim man in the woodworks himself, after speaking to the sergeant and those concerned in his group. He judged the use of force to have been 'in proportion and thus acceptable' within the Rules of Engagement. He stated later that the thought of this being a criminal offence had not occurred to him.[1252] The threatening of Muslim children at OP-F was also reported within Bravo Company and the subject closed internally. In this case as well, both the company commander and the company's sergeant major judged that this did not fall under the terms of a possible criminal offence.[1253]

The other cases mentioned were not reported but that does not mean that the staff was unaware of them. Battalion staff, in any case, and the medical platoon knew of the case of the sergeant abusing a Muslim in the woodworks.

After this sergeant had been quartered in Potocari for treatment, a number of Muslims at the gates were heard saying that 'a sniper had been ordered for him'.[1254] The personnel officer stated that deliberations had taken place to determine whether the sergeant should be placed with another company or repatriated because of his part in the incident. His wounds offered him a less loaded way in which to take his leave of the enclave.[1255]

Firing warning shots and using tracer ammunition can be viewed as operational action, but the question remains whether the Rules of Engagement permitted such action. In general, it cannot be established without exception whether battalion staff was aware of the incidents recognized as 'misconduct' or not.[1256]

## 9. Conclusions concerning misconduct

An analysis of data available in Royal Netherlands Marechaussee daily reports in Srebrenica, combined with data from investigations initiated after the fall of the enclave, does not portray Dutchbat III as guilty of structural or frequent 'misconduct' in the sense of having acted in conflict with the Rules of

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[1248] PPD Arnhem, Royal Netherlands Marechaussee Sebra team. No. P. 004/2000, 06/01/00, pp. 5-7 and 11-13.
[1249] PPD Arnhem, Royal Netherlands Marechaussee Sebra team. No. P. 004/2000, 06/01/00, p.15.
[1250] PPD Arnhem, Royal Netherlands Marechaussee Sebra team. No. P. 527/1999, 19/11/99.
[1251] Royal Dutch Military Constabulary. Royal Netherlands Marechaussee brigade UNPROFOR post Srebrenica: transaction reports January-July 1995, 22/03/95 and 26/03/95.
[1252] PPD Arnhem, Royal Netherlands Marechaussee, No. P. 527/A/1999, 20/12/99, p. 2.
[1253] PPD Arnhem, Royal Netherlands Marechaussee, No. P. 526/1999, pp. 22-23.
[1254] NIOD, Coll. Karremans, Dutchbat III and the fall of Srebrenica.
[1255] PPD Arnhem, Royal Netherlands Marechaussee, No. P. 527A/1999, p. 5.
[1256] The company archive was destroyed during the conquest of the enclave by the VRS, which has made it impossible to review the settlement by disciplinary law of actions that took place within the company.

Engagement toward local citizens or having committed criminal acts. Incidents did occur and one of these was serious, the fight in the woodworks. Incidents were reported internally to the company's staff – outside the order hierarchy – and action was repeatedly taken.

The B-Company commander did not, however, qualify a number of incidents as possible criminal acts, and did not therefore call in the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee to make a formal report. This is clearly a faulty and exaggerated interpretation of his own authority. To act in this way fits his style of dealing with matters internally within his own unit, by speaking personally with the soldier concerned, while keeping the issues from the battalion leadership. It remains nevertheless a transgression of his own authority.

Additionally, available information makes it apparent that the company's chaplain, social worker and psychologist were aware of what had happened and spoke to both those involved and to the commander about it. That does not denote an atmosphere in which events were covered up or in which persons making a report were stigmatized as snitches. It is clear that such issues did not go outside the company circle in the first instance.

The abuse of the Muslim man in the woodworks stands out as a serious affair, for which the leader of the battalion should have ensured that a Royal Netherlands Marechaussee investigation took place, certainly after the soldier concerned was seriously threatened from within the enclave. This incident is, however, not even mentioned in the reports of alleged misconduct of 11 May 1995. The actions of the company commander and the battalion leaders in this case point to the existence of a 'closed culture', implying a strong tendency to handle issues internally and then consider them as having been dealt with.

This does not change the fact that insufficient reliable data are available to legitimately accuse Dutchbat III of structural and frequent 'misconduct'. That could be the consequence of sub-reporting by Dutchbat III itself, but that is unlikely. The Factual Account brought a number of cases of possible 'misconduct' to light, for which further Royal Netherlands Marechaussee investigation in 1998-2000 showed that they had, indeed, been dealt with internally, even if the manner of doing so did not always comply with existing rules. In Bravo Company, these rules were decidedly not adhered to. It is significant that, despite emphatic further questioning by the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee in the hearings, no new incidents were brought to light.

The fact that reports of misconduct continued to come in was the result of the first reports about 'misconduct' having been exclusively coupled by the media with Dutchbat III, on location at that moment. The negative results of the internal investigation and the judicial preliminary inquiry, added to by the television show, 'Here and Now', at the end of June about 'misconduct' by the Dutchbat Company in Simin Han, all provided fresh grist for the mill of rumour. The Dutch Army was not able to provide sufficient information or openness to rebut such rumours. Dutchbat III and the Dutch Army were disadvantaged by not having reliable information at hand.

A clear definition of misconduct plays a role here, in addition to the lack of reliable information. Royal Dutch Military Constabulary investigation had to be occasioned by violations of either criminal or disciplinary law, in which the concept 'misconduct' does not appear as such. The media used 'misconduct' as a collective noun for punishable acts and undisciplined behaviour of military personnel in the former Yugoslavia. Some breaches of the rules, such as traffic accidents, excessive alcohol consumption and prostitution had nothing to do with misbehaviour toward the Muslim population. In many cases of this nature, it was feasible for the commander to satisfy the rules by taking disciplinary measures against the perpetrators. Military criminal and disciplinary law offer satisfaction for punishable acts through disciplinary measures. In the event of cases of this nature, the commander reported the case to the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee and it consulted the Public Prosecutor. That happened for instance at the beginning of February in the case of two Dutchbat soldiers who had received a Kalashnikov bayonet from inhabitants of the enclave in exchange for cigarettes. Formally, this could

have merited criminal proceedings, but consultations with the Public Prosecutor led to the decision that the commander would employ disciplinary measures in both cases.[1257]

In a few of the earlier mentioned cases of weapon misuse against the local population, the punishable act was dealt with by the commander, as outlined above, without consulting the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee or the Public Prosecutor. This did not conflict with existing rules. Not all 'misconduct' was destined for criminal prosecution. A serious warning was issued in Srebrenica at the beginning of January 1995 against driving too fast and 'intentionally or unintentionally' driving through puddles and splashing local inhabitants; disciplinary action was threatened for any new offences.[1258] In such a case of 'misconduct' it was sufficient that the company commander had been instructed to take action and that disciplinary punishment had been announced as effected. These examples show just how broad the concept of 'misconduct' can be. After May of 1995, 'misconduct' became an umbrella term for a whole gamut of subjects covering not only blameworthy or punishable behaviour toward the population, but also behaviour expressing a lack of internal discipline and behaviour involved in 'normal' transgressions such as theft, excessive alcohol consumption or drug use. That served to confuse the discussion itself but it also contributed to creating an image of an undisciplined and badly managed Dutchbat in Srebrenica.

The preceding is a retrospective reconstruction based on facts available in 2002. The next question is whether a clearer image could have been produced by using the same facts in May and June of 1995. In other words, which information was then available?

It has been established that at the beginning of May 1995, much more information was available about the various incidents and instances of misbehaviour than was apparent from outside sources. That information was in the possession of the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee and units of the Dutch Army. The problem was that none of the authorities concerned made an effort to collect this information and analyze it. The Royal Netherlands Marechaussee had information about misbehaviour, even though its investigation had bogged down or had been ended for diverse reasons. Not one single report of misconduct was, after all, based on a personal observation or direct witnessing; those reporting were often unwilling to name their informers and, if they did, the informers themselves denied the incidents. These factors made the available evidence insufficient for criminal prosecution.

Should the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee Brigade in Zagreb have followed a more active policy in investigating the transactional data of the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee post in Srebrenica and in other locations, this would have produced more data, which is only now coming to light years later. Within the Dutch Army as well, more information was on hand than that contained in the limited reports from Srebrenica and Busovaca. Remember that information about misconduct was already available in April and May of 1995 from the Military Security Department of the Intelligence and Security Section of the Dutch Military Intelligence Service.

That Netherlands Army Crisis Staff was meanwhile of the opinion – extrapolating from the number of personnel repatriated to the Netherlands ahead of time during their term of service – that there was no question of an alarming situation within Dutchbat. From the point of commencement of Dutch participation in UNPROFOR in 1992, 29 military personnel had been repatriated due to alcohol or drug excesses but none of these was a Dutchbat soldier. Up to the end of May 1995, 46 Dutchbat soldiers had had to be repatriated for other reasons: 3 for an alleged punishable act, the fourth for reasons of dysfunction, and the other 42 for medical or psycho-social reasons or due to the home situation.[1259] This last group includes the sergeant from the brawl in the woodworks.

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[1257] Royal Netherlands Marechaussee. Brigade UNPROFOR post Srebrenica: transaction reports January-July 1995, 09/02/95, 10/02/95 and 16/02/95.

[1258] Royal Netherlands Marechaussee. Brigade UNPROFOR post Srebrenica: transaction reports January-July 1995, 04/01/95.

[1259] DJZ. Zuidema to Buirma, 24/05/95, 'Overzicht voortijdig teruggekeerde miln uit het vm Joegoslavië' (Summary of prematurely repatriated military personnel from the former Yugoslavia). Ibidem: Wertheim to Poppes, undated.

It would seem that insufficient steering and coordination in both the Army and the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee contributed to the extremely inadequate insight into the phenomenon 'misconduct' in May and June of 1995. There was no centralized mutual coordination of investigations and information sources. Army leaders omitted issuing a broad investigation assignment to the units in Bosnia. The Army top also omitted involving its own Army Crisis Staff and its own Military Intelligence Service in the investigation. They should have been a natural consequence of the task of debriefing returning personnel. The Army sufficed by offering Minister Voorhoeve reports of the Ordnance Battalion and Dutchbat III and thought it had acquitted itself of its obligations in that respect. Apparently too little need was felt to take the Mental Health workers' signs of alarm seriously. Possibly one of the reasons this happened was that two internal investigations had proved hardly any misbehaviour and because the Public Prosecutor had taken over the Dutchbat II investigation.

As one takes the latter into consideration, it must nevertheless be pointed out that the deficiencies mentioned created a situation that could only work against the Army and the Minister as time went on. Because 'misconduct' came to be investigated several times and in an uncoordinated way, the Minister and the Army left themselves open to surprise attacks as the next Urban Legend or the next report of an isolated incident came along. Because they had to keep changing their explanation, they were simply inviting the stigma of being seen as disguising the real facts. They were not equipped to react with the required factual knowledge to press publications either. These press publications assumed increasingly that misconduct must have taken place on a broad scale. Perhaps negative reporting in the media could not have been held back, but the Army could have employed a substantially more energetic policy toward the investigation that was fully warranted by the seriousness of the accusations. They could then have conducted the ensuing discussion based on hard facts – primarily connected to Dutchbat II and Support Command issues – instead of rumour and reports, hastily put together and based on uncoordinated and insufficient investigation.

## 10. The B-Company attitude

The Bravo or B-Company, part of Dutchbat III and stationed in the city of Srebrenica, got a certain reputation for its negative attitude to 'outsiders' both within and outside the battalion. That already had been apparent earlier from how misconduct was dealt with in this company. The Bravo attitude would even result in accusations of misbehaviour directed at the citizens, partially prompted by alleged right-wing extremist convictions of certain soldiers. This sub-paragraph will examine the breadth of these phenomena and to what extent they influenced the functioning of B-Company, also as it impacted the citizens of the enclave.

Dominant members of B-Company, the 'insiders', were physically strong, blond, masculine, Dutch and infantrymen. 'Outsiders' were cooks, mechanics or doctors, but also anyone who was not white, who was a woman or who deviated in some way from the standard B-Company airmobile soldier. Captain Groen, the Commander, with his strict approach to uniform and discipline, helped create a strong feeling of solidarity among the 'insiders'.[1260] As diverse personnel – called 'extra noses' – were added to B-Company, the original Airmobile Battalion group culture was disturbed.

B-Company was separated from the rest of Dutchbat III in the compound in Srebrenica. This gave battalion leaders little chance to keep their daily routine fully in sight. Fuel shortages made it increasingly difficult to reach the company in person to check on it. Visitors from staff quarters were not made to feel welcome either; an atmosphere prevailed at the B-Company compound in Srebrenica that was quite different from that in Potocari and Bravo soldiers were very much involved with each other and quite self-absorbed. Their approach to the local population was stricter. Blue Helmets were not permitted to speak to the citizens; they were not permitted to name names or wear nametags in

[1260] Interview A. Ceelen, 02/07/99.

their unit.[1261] The Company Commander proceeded from the assumption that the citizens only had respect for a military show of power.

During the B-Company work-up period in the Netherlands (the period of extra schooling) hardly any attention was paid to factors arising from the surroundings, whereas Dutchbat III was already aware that this company would be isolated from the rest, in the center of the city. Karremans said afterwards that one of the largest problems battalion leaders faced was to convince the members of B-Company that it had to be able to get along with the local citizens. His concern was not only a respectful attitude in their dealings with the citizens, but also the prevention of security problems as a consequence of their rigid and hard-handed operating method. This mode of operation quickly led to confrontation with the local citizens. Battalion leaders saw enforcing the demand for demilitarization to the letter as extremely risky and frequently tried to correct Groen and to ask him to act with more restraint.

Karremans thought that weapons and Dutch kit in the hands of the citizens should, indeed, be confiscated. Yet, he was careful to impress upon the responsible officers to assess the highest priority from case to case and thus determine the most sensible mode of action.[1262] Karremans interpreted 'sensible' to mean, for instance, that Dutchbat soldiers should not force a Muslim in a crowded marketplace to take off his shoes, even if it was suspected that they had once been stolen from Dutchbat. In such cases, it often turned out that the goods had been bought from or traded with soldiers of another UN battalion.

The question of whether UN blue caps should be seen as Dutch kit was indeed a moot one. The B-Company thought they should and went out on blue-cap hunts. Muslims, though, had had these given to them by the preceding battalion, Dutchbat II, after a soccer game. At this point, Karremans and the Military Security officer went into action, giving clear indications that the tone had to be changed.

On 13 February 1995, a hand grenade was thrown over a fence of the B-Company compound in Potocari. It exploded in an open space, about 20 meters from the main gate, without causing any damage. The Military Security officer interpreted this incident as a warning in response to the company's attitude. The ABiH leaders confirmed this in so many words; they stated that a bit of restraint on the part of B-Company would make this sort of reprisal unnecessary. Someone caring for the wounded attributed the incident, however, to a 'few right-wing comments', which had been made by some patrol commanders over their walkie-talkies. It has said that they had called out in German that they had just returned from a Sonderkommando.[1263] Company Sergeant Major, S.W. Bravenboer, was seething and went to see Groen, who then called the men concerned to account. This behaviour then stopped acutely.

No matter what, the citizens saw the change away from the friendly contact that had existed between them and the earlier battalions as inimical. The Dutchbat II Company in Srebrenica had kept up good contact with the citizens. After Dutchbat II's departure, no more Muslims were allowed in the compound and contact with local citizens was forbidden. Groen's policy of distancing – no more candies, no chit-chat with the population – led to lots of raised middle fingers and verbal abuse back and forth. The soldiers at the Field Dressing Station in Potocari were troubled by the dominant behaviour of B-Company. One of some noted in his diary:

> 'I've heard that the Bravo Company is trying to take all that military stuff away from the citizens. While the 12th (Dutchbat II) went around handing it out! Bravo's no longer allowed to speak to the citizens. And they go on making the Serb victory sign. How crazy can you get? One of us will be shot down today or tomorrow just as we're setting off to help in the hospital. They're really Mobile

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[1261] Interview P. Sanders, 12/12 and 13/12/00.
[1262] Interview Th.J.P. Karremans, 01/12/00.
[1263] Interview A.E. Broeder, 03/05/00.

> Airheads. You get scared to death hearing even a few words of what the Bravo doctor has to say.'[1264]

The distancing, the rudeness and the insensitivity expressed in the actions of B-Company personnel was not only directed at the population but also at non-military personnel and their own colleagues. What these military men thought was humour was seen by 'outsiders' as insulting and even as threatening. When the company got a new cleaning woman, remarks and jokes became the order of the day because some of the soldiers thought she stunk. Groen tended to wait a while in this sort of situation. He saw the fact that soldiers talked among themselves in this way as being a release valve for frustration and tension, as an innocent 'bit of humor'.[1265] If, during telephone calls, a colleague with dark skin was on the other end of the line, sometimes the soldiers would make jungle sounds. The commander assumed that 'everybody found it funny' and did not feel it necessary to attempt to interfere with this sort of behaviour. The female military personnel of the Bravo Company were regularly put to the test in this way. The men called incidents that the women found extremely painful 'a joke'. The men were known to have said that 'we teased the girls in the kitchen now and then. And they went ballistic.'[1266]

An example is the tale of the cat belonging to the female battalion members, who worked in the kitchen. Groen said:

> 'That cat tale, now that's really something. The company's Sergeant Major gave in to them getting a cat. I think they gave that cat worm tablets or something and it got to be the house pet for the whole compound as time went on. By chance, we were busy at that same time building a whole bunch of bunkers and doing construction work on the compound. One of the guys – I was standing there watching when it happened – came up with a wheelbarrow full of sandbags, but he lost control of the thing. The barrow tipped over and all the sandbags fell on the cat by accident. The string the cat was tied to ended up under the stack of sandbags. The guy just stood there, his whole face screwed up with the question, 'what's going on'? It was such a comical sight that I couldn't help laughing and then he started too. The girls all came outside to see what was happening. And then the howling and endless tears began. 'They've killed the cat!' Complete nonsense, gimme a break! I was standing there watching and it was a complete accident. But it was such a funny sight – a cat as flat as a pancake. Yeah, with the girls reacting like that, you'd expect the guys to be meowing for a couple weeks in the dining room, wouldn't you, when the girls came in? If the guys know that someone's sensitive, that's where they aim their jokes of course.'[1267]

## 11. Right-wing extremist behaviour in B-Company

The Bravo Company of Dutchbat III was named a number of times afterwards in connection with right-wing extremist behaviour of some of its soldiers. The Military Intelligence Service (Netherlands Army Department) and the office of the Public Prosecutor instigated an investigation into these allegations; this problem was also addressed at the time of the comprehensive debriefing in Assen. According to the Van Kemenade report, as recently as 2001, Minister De Grave is known to have said

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[1264] NIOD, Coll. Schouten. Diary Schouten.
[1265] Interview J.R. Groen, 14/01/00.
[1266] Interview A.E. Broeder, 03/05/00.
[1267] Different versions of the cat incident exist, particularly the question of whether the sandbags ended up on top of the cat by accident or on purpose.

in an interview with *Vrij Nederland* (weekly), that right-wing extremist behaviour directed at the local population was an issue.[1268]

For the sake of clarity, a distinction must be made between the question of what right-wing extremist behaviour exactly took place and what its repercussions were for the battalion's execution of its tasks and for its relationship to the local population. Caution must be exercised in coupling right-wing extremist behaviour and the actual behaviour toward the population. Misbehaviour directed at the citizens seems to have arisen from daily irritation, frustration and boredom rather than right-wing extremist convictions.

To examine right-wing extremism in B-Company, one must first be aware that the same applies to right-wing extremist behaviour as to misconduct, i.e. that if and when it took place in B-Company, incidents were dealt with at company level and not reported at battalion level. Thus details cannot be supported from available sources.

Moreover, it is important that the majority of misconduct reported and publicized concerned other units than B-Company under Dutchbat III, namely, as above, the Transport Battalion, the Signals Battalion and Support Command. And these incidents took place in the Dutchbat II term of service.

Finally, how should right-wing extremist behaviour be defined? The Military Intelligence Service asked in its investigation how the term was to be defined and circumscribed. This service makes a distinction between 'politically inspired' right-wing extremism and apparently politically neutral 'macho behaviour',[1269] which does not imply that this behaviour is not necessarily less awful.

This having been said, the Military Intelligence Service investigation reveals that, indeed, diverse incidents that had a right-wing extremist character occurred within B-Company of Dutchbat III. Officers or NCOs were involved, who openly used the Nazi salute, and two soldiers had a postcard, showing a swastika, hanging above their beds. Investigation sources called the manner used by those concerned in contacts with colleagues with a different skin color disturbing. Soldiers also made very negative comments about Muslims.[1270]

Primarily colleagues experienced the usually verbally expressed right-wing extremist sympathies as confrontational and, with this in view, the behaviour becomes an internal problem. As far as is known, the citizenry – if it noticed this – reacted hardly or not at all. One example of this is the following: a cleaning woman for B-Company saw the soldiers greet each other with the Nazi salute every day, but stated that she took no offence because the boys always acted correctly to her.[1271] That should, however, be kept in perspective: Muslim boys, not impressed by UNPROFOR, reacted to the passing of a patrol of Blue Helmets with yells of 'Heil Hitler' and the Nazi salute.[1272]

Another example: during a working visit to B-Company, a member of the Social Coordination Committee read under a beam of the watchtower, close to its entrance, poems of right-wing extremist sentiment. Following complaints, these were removed.

Company Commander Groen told the NIOD that things always happen that need corrective action from a commander. His way of dealing with this was to ask himself each time whether or not an intention to offend lay behind the action.

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[1268] Interview F. de Grave by C. Verbraak in Vrij Nederland, 19/05/01 2001, p. 44. Apart from the fact that the allegation is incorrect, is also puzzling that De Grave sites the Van Kemenade report to this end. Van Kemenade did not pay any attention to right-wing extremism. There is one paragraph about this in the Factual Account of the debriefing report. Probably De Grave confused the two reports.

[1269] This distinction comes from the Military Intelligence Service concept for the Confidential Annual Report 1996, To: members of the working group annual report. From: HV&D, No. DIS 97 000 412, Confi., p. 17, 28/01/97.

[1270] MID/CO. Memorandum from Commodore H.J. Vandeweijer to Minister of Defence and SG, 05/07/95, no. DIS 99003213, subject: right-wing extremist behaviour Srebrenica archive: Government Minister, arrived 05/07/99 no. 1444, Confi.

[1271] Interview Almir Ramir and Zahira, 12/12 and 13/12/00.

[1272] 101 MIDCIE. Debriefing report military, DB II, 09/02/95.

> 'One sergeant, for instance, took to yelling over the radio: 'Here comes the *Arbeitseinsatz* again!' That was when we were building OP-H. We worked in shifts and the soldiers relieved each other in order to help out. When a shift came home in the evening, the guys got used to saying, 'the *Arbeitseinsatz* has returned'. There was no intention to affront anyone. I heard about the radio stunt from the company's Sergeant Major and I called the Sergeant to account. I told them he would have to stop doing that because it was open to the wrong interpretation and could hurt certain people.'[1273]

Groen only remembers the Nazi salute being used as a joke:

> 'That's like in the series 'Allo, allo'. That's the way it was with Herr Flick. It's a joke for the guys. We weren't a bunch of neo-Nazis constantly giving one another the Nazi salute. If that's the idea, then there's something seriously wrong. But this was totally innocent, just a joke. If it had been seen as serious, we would've done something about it. We were a sort of club there - there weren't all that many people around from outside. We laughed at this stuff and then we just carried on with our work.'[1274]

The head of the Military Intelligence Service at that time, Commodore I. Vandeweijer, told the NIOD that he deemed this to be macho behaviour gone a bit far but not right-wing extremist behaviour in the political sense. He thought that the commanders at that time 'had forgotten to get out the screwdrivers and fasten the loose screws in those guys, who were doing such crazy things.' His idea was that the commanders did not act in an unequivocal way and this allowed the behaviour to continue and to spread. Vandeweijer also assumed that Groen preferred that sort of blinkered vision under his command.[1275]

Karremans and the Social Coordination Committee said that a number of the battalion leaders and social workers knew in advance of deploying the soldiers that a small group known as the 'motor club' was headed out as well. These men tended to demonstrate their superiority by showing up minorities and by behaving in right-wing extremist ways. Because there was respect on all sides for how Groen led his company, this behaviour was probably put up with as 'the lesser of two evils'. As far as it can be verified, a small group demonstrated the challenged behaviour and most of the stories concern members of a specific platoon.

The questions are: to what extent did a right-wing extremist attitude within the company set and dominate the tone? Or, can the challenged behaviour be better attributed to misconduct, not based on political ideologies?

The assumption is being made that, for a few officers and NCOs, this behaviour went further than 'yelling'. One Dutchbat III soldier remembers, for instance, 'a sergeant who more or less openly admitted that he was a bit right wing. He was a good guy outside of that, but I didn't share his ideas. I think that this was true of four or five persons, officers as well.'[1276] These officers left their mark on the unit and encouraged hangers on, who then began to behave in the same way.

Otherwise, this right-wing extremism appeared to be separate from factors determined by the surroundings; this sort of humor continued after repatriation. The group of NCOs, back in the Netherlands, was placed in the School Battalion of the Airmobile Brigade, where insulting everyone with a different skin color was the order of the day. The 'humour' was evidenced, for example, in the

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[1273] Interview J.R. Groen, 14/01/00.
[1274] Interview J.R. Groen, 14/01/00.
[1275] Interview J. Vandeweijer, 29/01/00.
[1276] Interview A.E. Broeder, 03/05/00.

use of coloured soldiers as occasional tables. Only after two officers, who had not been supported by their superiors when they complained, had left the unit, was anything done.

It can be assumed that a small number of members of the company in Srebrenica felt that there was room for behaviour of this sort, more so because the men of the company were packed in quite closely and the commander did not oppose the behaviour. The commander could have indicated, for instance, during roll call, that this behaviour would not be tolerated; in failing to do this, he gave the impression indirectly that such behaviour did not trouble him. The available data present an image of a company commander who, first and foremost, was concerned with his unit's military functioning. Groen made a strong stand in doing this in his own way and apparently did not take enough distance to ask himself how his unit's behaviour tallied with the standards in force at that location. In this way, it was quite possible that what he found innocent, based on his experience of those involved, did not pass muster in the eyes of colleagues or the outside world.

There are, however, no indications that the right-wing extremist behaviour within Dutchbat and, particularly, within B-Company led to muddied relationships with the citizens in the enclave or to systematic anti-Muslim conduct. The suggestion regularly made in the media of a connection between right-wing extremist behaviour and the actions of Dutchbat around the fall of Srebrenica cannot then be proved on the grounds of the facts discussed here either.[1277] The personnel of B-Company did often act in rude and degrading ways with regard to the citizens, but the group's culture within the company was, as far as it can be traced, not determined by right-wing extremist tendencies. B-Company actions toward the local population before the VRS attack seem instead to have been determined by exaggerated linear military behaviour, lack of empathy and faulty information.[1278]

This was again partially the consequence of insufficient preparation for contact with the citizens of the enclave and the circumstance that B-Company could or was forced to define its own attitude in the relative isolation of the compound in Srebrenica city. The Company Commander saw the soldiers' expressions and actions as hardly or not at all problematic and therefore did not take corrective action or only very sporadically. This is not meant to deny the fact that, just as in other ways and in other places, incidents did take place that could be qualified as misconduct.

One must keep in mind that so-called jokes can be bitterly serious if the recipient does not see them as humorous but as harmful or threatening. Space existed internally for expressions evidencing rudeness, sexism, racism, lack of empathy and also right-wing extremism. In the first place, this was an internal problem that did not meet an adequate response.

The Bravo Company Commander operated as 'a green commander with a blue cap'. The flip side of the space he granted his company for these expressions was that, when the situation became really awkward, in taking up blocking positions to try to stop the Bosnian-Serb advance, Groen was resolute in action, self-confident and won everyone's respect. What had been characterized as macho behaviour before the attack on the enclave had as its flip side that the soldiers showed little fear and, in a number of cases, seemed prepared to stand by the population despite dangerous circumstances.

That their contacts with the citizens were not very close does not mean that members of B-Company were not devastated by what took place during the days of July 1995. One of the soldiers was in contact with a little boy, Noerian, whose family always offered coffee to the soldiers on patrol from OP-K, and to whom he had promised his running shoes when he left Srebrenica. This family was one of the very last to get into the buses in Potocari: Noerian's grandfather, mother, brothers and three sisters.

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[1277] In this connection, it must be remarked that sources show that the tight group forming the club that indulged in right-wing extremist behaviour was not present at the fall. In: MID/CO. Memorandum from Commodore H.J. Vandewiejer to Minister of Defence and SG, 5/07/99, no. DIS 99003213 subject: right-wing extremist behaviour Srebrenica archive: Government Minister, arrived: 05/07/99, no. 1444 Secret. Appendix B Confi.

[1278] This seems also to be a possible explanation for the incident with the hand grenade.

> 'We gave them some things to take with them. Some emergency rations, some dressings, some pills – things they might need. The mother often had headaches, so I got some pills for her from the kitchen and some gauze and that sort of thing. We put it all in a small bag. And they took it with them. They were the last ones to get into the bus. Then I let myself weep. A really long time. To get rid of some of the tension.'[1279]

## 12. Summary concerning the internal functioning of Dutchbat I, II and III

Should the proposed rotation or relief of Dutchbat III eventually have taken place at the end of June or beginning of July, this would have been the spot to draw up the balance of the battalion's mission. But, from sheer necessity, the battalion stayed on in the enclave until after the capture of the Safe Area by the Bosnian Serb army, and it was not successful in bringing any significant influence to bear on the dramatic course of events. Therefore, what follows is an intermediate balance concerning the operation of Dutchbat in the enclave. This will compare the operation of Dutchbat III with its predecessors from the spring of 1994 up to and including May-June 1995, in the light of the role of UNPROFOR in Bosnia and the composition of the warring factions in and around the enclave.

Dutchbat I was in the most favourable position to do its work in the enclave. Firstly, Dutchbat I was in the enclave for the shortest period. The units left in January-February 1994, but were forced to stay for a period in Split because the Bosnian Serbs did not grant them permission to enter the enclave. They finally arrived there in March/April 1994. The local population thought that the Dutchbat I personnel all looked so good and that is understandable in the light of the extremely difficult winter the people in the enclave had just gone through. During that winter, the fresh Blue Helmets had enjoyed lots of sunshine in Split and had had time to stay fit. Dutchbat I was also the best put-together battalion because it had been possible to deliberate about the selection of personnel.

Dutchbat I kept up reasonably good relations with the local units of the ABiH and also with the VRS troops, quartered around the enclave. At the OPs, shooting incidents did take place, but without serious consequences. Dutchbat I leaders hoped to engage in local negotiations involving the warring factions thereby attempting to find solutions to the existing points of conflict. That turned out finally to be unsuccessful; the warring factions did engage in dialogue but the differences of opinion could not be bridged.

The fact that Dutchbat I did not experience any serious incidents was partially also a question of luck. That was apparent on 14 March 1999, when a Dutchbat Mercedes carrying medical personnel on its way to OP-E near Jasenova accidentally drove over the border of the enclave and ended up driving over two land mines.[1280] The fact that that had happened only became apparent to those in the vehicle afterwards.

Nevertheless, the Dutch forces experienced the local political situation as 'extremely enervating'.[1281] Dutchbat I patrols were allowed to establish their own contacts with the citizens and where thus able to gather information about the local situation. Individual military personnel also established relationships with residents of the enclave; members of the first battalion were able to visit with ABiH Commander, Zulfo Tursunovic, at home, where they shared food and talked.

When Dutchbat II took over the task in the enclave, the Commander, Lieutenant-Colonel Everts, thought that Dutchbat, as a part of UNPROFOR, had to be more pronounced in its neutrality and immediately prohibited all non-functional contact with the local citizens. To visit people at home was no longer possible. Later on in his term of command, Everts amended this slightly and tolerated a somewhat less strict compliance with his order.[1282]

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[1279] Interview A.E. Broeder, 03/05/00.
[1280] SMG, 1002. Sitrep, UNHCR Srebrenica to UNHCR Belgrade, 15/03/94.
[1281] Situational report 115 Construction Company in: Genie, 07/94 p. 17.
[1282] Interview P. Lindgreen, 22/02/01.

A Dutchbat II soldier wrote in his debriefing report after repatriation that when the first battalion arrived, all the parties still had to get used to each other. When the second battalion arrived, the ABiH and the VRS felt able to try things out and began to attempt to find out what they could get away with. He predicted that the warring factions would simply walk over the next battalion when it arrived.[1283]

Dutchbat II was destined to have a much more difficult time in Srebrenica that its predecessor. The motivation had been lost in the course of the mission. Relationships with the warring factions had worsened by degrees; local conflicts had turned out to be incapable of solution in that place because they were part of a military-strategic and political sparring match at a higher level. Concretely, the unit had to contend with the blocking of its supply convoys, something that influenced the lives and the functioning of the Blue Helmets in the enclave in every possible way. Practically no fuel or fresh food entered the enclave for a very long time. Patrols had to be carried out on foot. And it was disheartening that a number of soldiers had been wounded. The fact that the Bosnian Serbs detained a convoy of soldiers on leave did not improve matters.

Rutten, who coordinated patrols for Dutchbat III, had access to reports of his predecessors and was able to compare them to get a picture of the differences per battalion. He ascertained that both preceding battalions had had more contact with the citizens than his did:

> 'The 11th battalion (Dutchbat I) even went out visiting in the evening. The 12th battalion (Dutchbat II) was already doing that less, but still had more contact with the local population than we did. This makes you ask yourself if it wouldn't have been clever on our part to have more contact with Dutchbat I and II. I'm trying to say that our relationship to them was actually cool and distant. We didn't want the same role as the 11th battalion. Everything was regulated. Everything we did had to have a goal.'[1284]

He is of the opinion that Dutchbat 1 began its mission with an open mind. Those who followed, by contrast, had already been inundated by their predecessors with facts and information, opinions and interpretations about life in the enclave and had made their plans on this basis.

The level of working and living conditions would fluctuate for Dutchbat I, II and III, but it showed a clear downward line. As far as the relationship with the citizens and the political and military leaders of the enclave is concerned, the picture was even more complicated. The point of departure in making any judgment must be that the practical effect of peace missions is almost always a certain amount of friction between local citizens and the peacekeeping unit. Company Commander Groen saw it thus:

> 'When Dutchbat I arrived there, the enclave had been in existence for a relatively short time. I think that the attitude of the Muslim population was completely different at that point. But the longer a situation like that lasts, the less chance those involved see for improvement. The population ended up wondering, 'is anything going to happen or not? New units keep coming, but will any of them ever make a difference?' It's only logical in that sort of situation that new units that are dispatched are confronted with increasingly difficult circumstances.'[1285]

Dutchbat I could do more than its followers for the inhabitants of the enclave because it had access to enough supplies and there was regular replenishment. Medical supplies and maintenance equipment

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[1283] 101 MIDCie. Debriefing report soldier, DB II, 9/02/95.
[1284] Interview J.H.A. Rutten, 26/09/01.
[1285] Interview J.R. Groen, 05/07/99.

were amply available. Moreover, the inhabitants had become optimistic by virtue of their arrival. In the Dutchbat II period, however, the anxiety and despondency of the inhabitants began to increase, because the VRS had begun to build up its army and because less and less convoys were allowed into the enclave. In the Dutchbat III period, the situation was even less favourable. There were very few supplies and resupply was halted, and thus there was very little to give to the inhabitants, a fact that did not help the relationship. On top of this, problems existed that had directly confronted all three battalions as a result of the doings of ABiH units in the enclave. There was no real demilitarization, the ABiH attempted to draw fire, conducted raids outside the enclave or fired in the direction of the battalion.

The relationships of the Muslims to one another in the enclave became more and more problematic and corruption and black-market practices abounded. That aroused a great deal of Dutchbat resistance and finally little understanding remained for the local authorities identified with these practices. Leading figures in Bosnian Muslim circles also started a number of conflicts with the humanitarian organizations and with Dutchbat. In the eyes of the battalion leaders, they were behaving irresponsibly and allowing themselves to be led by their own interests, thus forcing the interests of the suffering population to the background.

In addition to general problems, Dutchbat III was confronted with a number of circumstances that weighed heavily both on their operational dedication and on their relationships with the population. These can, to a certain extent, be attributed to the training and preparation of the battalion. The problem of quality has been mentioned a number of times. Dutchbat III was comprised of many young, inexperienced soldiers and a relatively old group of officers. It turned out that there was too little cohesion in the group and this sometimes led to a too limited ability to self-correct. The actual formation of the unit was hampered by the problems surrounding its selection of personnel; a third of the personnel was only acquired four months before deployment. Dutchbat I did not have this problem; Dutchbat II to a much lesser extent.

The huge problems caused by the VRS through their permission policies for supply convoys led to a permanent lack of fresh food, fuel, reserve parts, ammunition and the like for Dutchbat III. This undermined the mood of the military as well because mail communications were cut off and it became less and less realistic to anticipate going on leave. From April on, no transports got through for Dutchbat and therefore the contact with the home front and the hope of leave and the consequent hope of relief were reduced to a minimum. Living conditions became more primitive as a result of lack of fuel. One serious consequence of dwindling supplies and the fuel deficit was that Dutchbat could offer less and less humanitarian aid. No supplementary food aid was possible any longer and, added to this, the doctors had stopped their consultations in the village as a consequence of the conflict between *Médicins Sans Frontières* and the Opstina (Local Municipal Council). The world in which Dutchbat lived continued to shrink due to all these factors. For some of the groups there was hardly a single meaningful task remaining; Dutchbat soldiers barely left the gates to the compound any longer because of fuel shortages and they were condemned to each other's company under rather primitive conditions.

The growing problem of motivation or, to put it differently, the diminishing feeling that one's actions had meaning is connected with the above. Dutchbat III was the third battalion on the same location and did not have much to do; all it could do was to carry on, with increasingly sparse and more limited means, in the situation they had encountered there. Boredom lay in wait, patrolling and guard duties were seen as extremely boring.[1286] The assumed reason for their presence – to protect the Muslim population of the enclave – was less clear than had been understood ahead of time. It was early in their period in the enclave that the hostage taking in the Bandera triangle took place; this led many military personnel to ask themselves whom they had actually come to protect and why the ABiH was acting in such a confrontational way. Great numbers of incidents with the ABiH in the enclave contributed to this mood, as did the incident of the hand grenade that apparently had been thrown over

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[1286] Interview W. Dijkema, 21/09/98.

the compound gates as a consequence of displeasure about B-Company's actions in the town of Srebrenica. Doubts about whether their mandate was capable of execution thus arose, as did doubts about whether their personnel could protect the enclave and its citizens, given their limited numbers and the limited means.

Finally the focus of the battalion turned inward, according to the already mentioned remembrances and statements. There remained a number of officers and soldiers who did what they could, of course, but not everyone had a function within which they could be effective or showed the mental resilience to make the best of things in the face of extreme conditions. The conviction that it was impossible to exert a substantial influence on the course of events had already taken hold of Dutchbat II, with all its consequences for their motivation. Looking back, it is apparent that Dutchbat III went through a similar development, under conditions that certainly could be called worse. Daily living and working conditions and the escalation between both warring factions had worsened. These were conditions under which Dutchbat, and particularly the battalion leaders, had to anticipate.

## 13. The functioning of the Dutchbat III leaders

After the fall of Srebrenica and the return to the Netherlands of Dutchbat III, attention was focused on the actions of the Battalion Commander, Lieutenant-Colonel Karremans, and on the functioning of the battalion leaders. In Chapter 5 of Part IV, it has been argued that the Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army visited Zagreb on 16 July 1995 partially in reaction to worries about the actions of Karremans and his staff. Karreman's management was also a topic of interest during the debriefing in Assen in September 1995; this will be dealt with in more detail in Chapter 7 of Part IV. Continually recurring topics of discussion were Karremans' 'invisibility' and absence during the mission in Srebrenica, combined with the prominent role of the acting Deputy Battalion Commander, Major Franken. The debriefing report itself did not deal with issuing commands during the fall of the enclave as a separate subject.

Attention will be given here to the functioning of the Battalion Commander and his staff during the training and the first five months that the unit was dispatched in Srebrenica. The actions of the Battalion Commander must be seen in connection with the quality and cohesion of the battalion staff and its internal functioning. The co-operation with the Airmobile Brigade and the view that the brigade staff had of the battalion leaders are of importance here as well. Sources from the period itself containing usable data for investigation are only available in a limited way; most data have to do with the period of the fall of the enclave and its consequences, for obvious reasons. Observations or verbalizations by those concerned dating from the period after the fall have to be weighed with extra care due to the risk of retrospective wisdom.

Karremans parried criticism of his functioning afterwards by pointing out that his battalion staff was less strong qualitatively than that of the preceding battalions. In contrast to his predecessors, Vermeulen and Everts, he states that he was not given the opportunity to select the staff functionaries and the company commanders. His choice was limited to officers who became available when a number of armoured infantry battalions were discontinued in the north of the country. The role this played is discussed in Chapter 5 of this part. Preparation and selection for the mission were very seriously under pressure and the choice of officers was limited, also as a consequence of the staffing of the two earlier battalions. Nevertheless, Karremans' way of looking at things is somewhat overdone. Neither Vermeulen nor Everts was able to choose completely freely; they too had to make use of personnel made available by the discontinuation of armoured infantry battalions, in their case the Guard battalions in Schaarsbergen.[1287]

Karremans was able to choose his Logistics Officer, Major Franken. The Battalion Commander thought that Franken had carried out the logistic detail of winding up the 43rd armoured infantry

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[1287] Interview J. Lemmen, 17/10/01.

battalion excellently. Franken became and continued to be Karreman's confidant, to a much greater extent than the person formally fulfilling the role of Deputy Battalion Commander, Major Van Geldere. It was his role to provide leadership in the 'inaccessible' Simin Han. Franken was well up on what it meant to be an officer, he was a man of strong views and never lacked initiative. With his extremely dominant personality, he quickly built up an exceptional position beside the much less distinct Karremans. Franken was deeply respected by a group of officers within the battalion staff and there was apparently almost no one who dared to cross him.

Their way of working together, based on Karremans' huge trust in Franken, gave Franken a lot of room to take over battalion affairs and led to an unusual situation within the battalion staff. Apparently it was not the Battalion Commander who steered the process of decision-making and issuing commands but the logisticsofficer, who became the Deputy Battalion Commander in the enclave Srebrenica. That Company Commanders tended to go their own ways in this, did not contribute to forming a tight team at the battalion level. And sometimes there were affairs that should have been dealt with at battalion level but were insufficiently regulated there and passed on to execution level. Outsiders could also observe this phenomenon; things were seen as happening in different ways within Dutchbat III than they did in the other battalions, without there being anything wrong with what the companies did, for all that.[1288]

The self-image of the battalion is also of importance for a good understanding of relationships within Dutchbat III. The 13th Airmobile Battalion, that would eventually produce part of Dutchbat III, was part of the 11th Airmobile Brigade but saw itself as being different because it was quartered in Assen, far away from brigade staff and the two other infantry battalions in Schaarsbergen. This quartering at the Johan-Willem Friso barracks in Assen created a natural distance that seemed to be growing even larger due to the 13th battalion's conviction that brigade staff never made the trip to Assen and that they, the 13th, always had to go to Schaarsbergen if anything came up. 'Assen' often felt that it had been cheated and thought that the brigade staff paid too little attention to its problems.[1289] The officers and NCOs of the 13th mobile Battalion saw their battalion as one of Northerners, people with a 'slightly different mentality' and 'an other culture' that manifested itself in their being law-abiding, punctual and particularly levelheaded.[1290]

Airmobile Brigade Commander Brinkman was almost never seen in the barracks at Assen at the beginning of 1994. That changed when Colonel J. Lemmen became Deputy Brigade Commander in the summer of 1994; he replaced Brinkman when he was stationed in Sarajevo as Chief of Staff Bosnia Herzegovina Command. Lemmen made the trip to Assen every Monday from his own home in the neighbourhood of Zwolle. Even at that point, Lemmen could already spot the way in which relationships among the battalion staff deviated from the usual pattern due to Franken's extremely dominant role within the staff. He ascertained that Franken insisted on concerning himself with the affairs of other sections and disputed and amended decisions of the Battalion Commander. Not one of the battalion staff seemed equal to Franken or daring enough to confront him.

Colonel Lemmen stated to the NIOD that the relationship of the Battalion Commander to his Company Commanders was awkward and that battalion staff did not seem to work well. The staff gratefully left insufficiently regulated affairs to others to deal with but were quick to blame these others if something went wrong. However, nothing really important was proved as having gone wrong; the training was effectuated reasonably well, problems were solved within the parameters available and the resultant units and the work-up for dispatch abroad satisfied the demands in place.[1291] Nevertheless, frictions within the battalion staff did not escape even newcomers to the battalion.

In talks, Lemmen tried to rouse Karremans to act more resolutely and more independently, but he felt he had not succeeded. His concerns were, in any event, also known to the Chief of Staff of the

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[1288] Interview J. Lemmen, 17/10/01. Interview E.G.B. Wieffer, 07/05/01.
[1289] Interview E.G.B. Wieffer, 07/05/01.
[1290] Interviews J. Lemmen, 17/10/01 and J.R. Groen, 05/07/99.
[1291] Interview J. Lemmen, 17/10/01.

First Netherlands Army Corps and were eventually also heard by Army Commander Couzy. The possibility of replacing Karremans was not considered; the existing problems were not 'serious' enough to warrant this.[1292]

This replacement of Karremans as Battalion Commander was to be considered after the final exercise of Dutchbat III in Vogelsang, according to A. Jansen op de Harr, the Commander of A-Company of Dutchbat I. At the beginning of 1997, he made considerations about replacing Karremans public.[1293] Both Lemmen and Couzy denied this in talks with NIOD: according to them a replacement for Karremans was not considered at that time, even though a conflict existed between Karremans and the coordinator of the final exercise in Vogelsang. Karremans had refused to negotiate any longer with imitation Muslims in a negotiation exercise that constituted part of this final exercise (see Chapter 5).[1294]

The commander of a unit determines the operational action of his unit based on orders that he receives from a higher link in the chain of command. At lower levels, in carrying out assignments, commanders lead their unit in direct contact with its members. At the level of battalion commander and above, a very real change takes place in this. The battalion commander must delegate to his staff much work that is still done directly by the company commander himself. He determines the larger contours, maintains contact with the higher echelons and keeps his finger expressly on the pulse of his own unit by appearing in person among its members, keeping himself personally abreast of the course of events and, in a general social sense, keeping in touch with the sub-units and individual persons within his unit.

Karremans and Franken, however, made work agreements for their actions in Srebrenica that deviated from this pattern. They composed, within the battalion staff, a twin that in fact made the decisions. According to Karremans, he still bore and accepted the final responsibility. However, this was not clear for those on the outside. Franken was most often in the foreground in Srebrenica. He impressed many officers of the battalion staff because he made quick decisions and took resolute action. He played a prominent role in action taken during the Bandera crisis, while determined action taken by the commander of C-Company would have been more in line with normal expectations, because that was his area of operation. Franken also tended to take the lead quickly on other occasions.

A general complaint was that Karremans was invisible; he did not appear often enough in public, he entered the compound in Srebrenica very seldom and did not often visit the observation posts. In addition to his invisibility, his stiffness and awkwardness in contact gave occasion for complaint. This type of complaint can most likely be heard in other units too, under other circumstances about other commanders, but it is important here that lesser commanders had a very strong impression that Franken gave the orders and not Karremans.[1295]

It is risky to proceed from impressions and opinions of Karremans volunteered after the fact, because the events that took place around the fall undoubtedly will have influenced all subsequent thinking. For this reason, Chapter 7 of Part III will return to the functioning of the battalion leaders. The unusual division of labor between Karremans and Franken, in itself, seems to have been productive in practice, but it still had certain repercussions on the way battalion staff worked. This division of labor particularly gave those on the outside the impression that it was Franken and not Karremans who was actually in charge. Karremans did not hesitate to repeatedly take the responsibility for decisions that had been made, but communication was not his strong point and this skill cannot easily be missed in a commander.

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[1292] Interviews J. Lemmen, 17/10/01 and H. Couzy, 07/09, 14/09 and 17/09/98.
[1293] A. Jansen op de Haar, 'Het geheime dossier overste Karremans' (The secret file on General Karremans), Het Parool, 31/01/97.
[1294] Interview J. Lemmen, 17/10/01 and H. Couzy, 07/09, 14/09 and 17/09/98.
1295[1295] SMG/Debriefing. Factual Account, p. 56.

# Chapter 10
# Srebrenica from the national and international point of view

## 1. Introduction

In the previous chapters attention was focused on Srebrenica from various perspectives. The developments up to June 1995 were discussed in those chapters. In this chapter the clock is turned back, as it were, to the spring of 1994, in order to gain a general picture of the international developments providing the framework for the subject of Srebrenica as a Safe Area in Eastern Bosnia. This chapter therefore forms the window between the isolation so strongly felt in Srebrenica and the outside world.

The deployment of Dutchbat in Srebrenica had been given broad coverage in the Dutch media. In those reports the isolation in which Dutchbat was operating was immediately apparent: the Bosnian Serb authorities had not allowed any Dutch journalists or television crews into the new area of operations. Only a few *Defensiekrant* (weekly publication of Netherlands Ministry of Defence) correspondents had come into Srebrenica with Dutchbat. Those first impressions were the only reports that came out, because the Bosnian Serb authorities persisted in their refusal to allow in journalists. A sort of dichotomy had consequently arisen between the world of Dutchbat in the enclave and the outside world.

The experience of the peace mission in Srebrenica for military personnel, who – apart from a few weeks' leave – spent five or six months without a break in the enclave, was almost impossible to communicate to those at home or to visitors. The visitors – amongst whom were Ministers of Defence Relus Ter Beek and Joris Voorhoeve, Junior Minister Gmelich Meijling, Chief of Defence Staff Arie Van der Vlis and his successor Henk Van den Breemen, Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army Hans Couzy, Bosnia-Hercegovina Commander Michael Rose and his successor Rupert Smith, and Prince Willem-Alexander – by and large gained a less rosy picture of the situation in the enclave, certainly from the autumn of 1994 onwards: the circumstances worsened, which had its effect on Dutchbat's state of mind.

The isolation in which Dutchbat was operating in Srebrenica led to the new 'purple' Government beginning to pursue an active policy with regard to Srebrenica from August 1994 onwards. The Government set itself the task of internationalization of the UNPROFOR contingent in Srebrenica for the remaining term of the mission, in addition to ending of the mission on 1 July 1995 through replacement by a battalion from another country. Internationalization meant that other countries would have to become more involved in alleviating the problematical situation of the Dutch battalion. Achieving this depended entirely on international context and cooperation.

However, it proved difficult for the Dutch Government to pursue such an active policy with regard to Srebrenica. The enclave could not be placed on the agenda internationally; there had only been brief international attention for Srebrenica in March/April 1993, on the establishment of the Safe Area, and in January/February 1994, when Dutchbat was first deployed there, on account of the refusal of the VRS to allow Dutchbat into the area. After that, however, international attention for Srebrenica waned again. If the enclave received any international attention, it was as one of the three eastern enclaves. The fact that the enclave was the least desirable operational area of Bosnia-Hercegovina Command, as had become very clear in the meantime, was a further complicating factor for the fulfilment of the Dutch desire to pursue an active policy on Srebrenica. That fact was to emerge again in the search for a replacement for Dutchbat.

This chapter will discuss what the Dutch Government did to draw international attention to the precarious position of Dutchbat, and what concrete steps it took to solve the problems of Dutchbat. By wanting internationalization and by limiting the term of the mission in Srebrenica, the Dutch

Government seemed to want to run away from the commitments that it had entered into at the end of 1993. The question then is whether that also meant that, as a result of the problems of Dutchbat, the government lost its incentive to contribute to UNPROFOR or other peace missions. The answer to these questions cannot be given from within the Dutch context alone; insight into the international and regional developments is needed, because these developments partly determined the Dutch position.

Nationally and internationally, radical changes occurred between the beginning of 1994 and May 1995. The objectives of the peace mission and the policy of trying to contain the conflict remained the same, and the concrete problems – questions of humanitarian aid, negotiations on a peace plan, ending of the war by a ceasefire or a cessation of hostilities agreement, the task of UNPROFOR, deployment of air power to protect the Safe Areas, observance of the sanctions and lifting of the arms embargo – did not change either. There was, however, a change of mood in the international arena, due to the fact that confidence that a solution would be found to the conflict was dwindling, and there was no consensus on the question of how a solution ought to be achieved. A political solution to the conflict remained at the top of the international agenda, but compared with 1993, the year with three peace plans, the period 1994 – May 1995 was thin: only a partial solution was achieved by the formation of the Muslim-Croat Federation. Internationally, however, the greatest problem remained the differing views on the nature of the conflict.

Roughly speaking, at international level two scenarios were in circulation for solving the problems in connection with the conflict in Bosnia. In one scenario the Bosnian Serbs were the aggressors and the Bosnian Muslims were the victims of aggression. That meant that, on the basis of the Security Council Resolutions, tough action had to be taken against the Bosnian Serbs: the arms embargo had to be lifted, and air power had to be deployed ('lift and strike'). Aggression on the part of the Bosnian Serbs could not be rewarded, and a peace plan therefore had to be imposed upon the Bosnian Serbs. The US Government and Congress thought along the lines of this scenario.

In the second scenario the most important point was to achieve a peace plan through negotiations between the warring factions. UNPROFOR, as the peacekeeping force, fulfilled an important function in this respect: its neutrality and impartiality would enable UNPROFOR to prevent further escalation and bring about a dialogue between the warring factions. This did not rule out the deployment of air power, but the condition then was that its deployment would have to be in proportion to the violation committed by the Bosnian Serbs. The Western European countries, Canada (with troops on the ground) and the United Nations subscribed to this scenario.

The fact that both scenarios had important supporters from the start of the war in Bosnia meant that there were strong differences of opinion on the course that should be followed. However, owing to the fact that international decision-making was taking place on several stages, it was always possible to avoid open conflict between the UN (UNPROFOR) and NATO, or between Europe and Washington.

The most important change in 1994-1995 was without question the fact that in the peace process the International Conference on Former Yugoslavia presided over by the UN and the European Community lost its leading role in the peace negotiations to the Contact Group, which consisted of five superpowers.

In the autumn of 1994 a confrontation occurred concerning the means for bringing about a political solution to the conflict. Within NATO a crisis arose between Washington and the European countries on the use of air power, and relations between NATO and the UN/UNPROFOR also became very strained. Proposals from the United States, amongst other countries, on the lifting of the arms embargo had led earlier to discussion about the withdrawal of UNPROFOR, and the part that NATO ought to have in it. A modification of American policy in December 1994 prevented a debacle, but the discussion about the lifting of the arms embargo and withdrawal or reinforcement of UNPROFOR did not disappear from the international agenda in 1995 either. These remained prominent topics, because they were directly connected with the American role in the conflict.

A political solution to the conflict could be achieved in two ways; from 1992 onwards an attempt had been made to bring an end to the conflict through negotiations between the warring

factions by means of international mediation. Each of the parties would have to agree to the end result. That was the only course left, because there was insufficient international support for the enforcement of a plan after negotiations. This was because the US Government in particular opposed it. That situation remained unchanged in 1994-1995, so that the negotiations had to be continued.

The warring factions were trying not only to achieve their long-term objectives, but also to strengthen their positions by changing the balance in Bosnia itself. This happened particularly on the military plane, with the initiative generally from the Bosnian Muslims, who felt that they could make greater gains on the battlefield by increasing the terrain under their control than they considered achievable at the negotiating table. The ABiH was also increasingly capable of taking the initiative through an improvement of the organization and better weaponry. Furthermore, the formation of the Muslim-Croat Federation in March 1994 meant that the ABiH could put greater pressure on the VRS. The ABiH was not, however, able to make any radical change in the military balance. This emerged from various actions, most clearly in the Bihac region in October/November 1994, and from the spring offensive around Sarajevo in 1995: a successful offensive was followed in both cases by a VRS counteroffensive that reversed the ground gained again.

A complication in the developments on the battlefield was the fact that the Bosnian Government in Sarajevo had hoped in any case up to the end of 1994 that at some stage the US Government would intervene in the conflict. The VRS supported ending the conflict, in the hope that in the meantime they could claim the terrain that they had gained around the negotiating table. The Bosnian Serb army supported a ceasefire and a lasting cessation of hostilities agreement, because it was afraid that the geographical spread of its military resources and lack of sufficient and good infantry would mean that in the long run it would not be able to hold its own against its strengthening opponent. The VRS tried to maintain its superiority in two ways: by counter-campaigns with large-scale use of artillery, and by blocking of the humanitarian aid.

There were also changes in the political balance within Yugoslavia itself. The main change occurred on the Serbian side: in August-September 1994 Milosevic announced sanctions against Republika Srpska. He chose to do this in the interest of his own Rest-Yugoslavia and against the Bosnian Serb regime in Pale, which wanted to reject a new peace plan. Otherwise, this was not a complete split: the military cooperation did continue, and the political contacts also remained. The political situation within Republika Srpska was, however, unclear because of the differences of opinion between the factions. What is clear is that from the autumn of 1994 onwards Milosevic was urging VRS Commander Ratko Mladic to take over power from Radovan Karadzic. However, Mladic was not persuaded, despite his contempt for Karadzic and his entourage. The military and political effect of the isolation of Republika Srpska by Belgrade and the international community also remained uncertain.

In the midst of these parties UNPROFOR had to perform its mandate: facilitation of humanitarian aid by the UNHCR, and protection of the Safe Areas. UNPROFOR had to contend with totally different expectations and demands in this respect. The Bosnian Government applied its own criteria to the assessment of the role of UNPROFOR: it felt that UNPROFOR was responsible for the humanitarian aid and for protection from any form of Bosnian Serb aggression. In the opinion of the Bosnian Government, the peacekeeping force was seriously remiss in this respect, which meant that it had lost its impartiality. The Bosnian Government broadcast that point of view with fervour, both in the media and in confrontations with UNPROFOR. This had negative consequences for the reputation of the peacekeeping force and its actions. The VRS adopted the same attitude from the opposite angle: from that side too, UNPROFOR was accused of bias – in favour of the Muslims. As a countermeasure, the VRS took reprisals in the form of a ban on convoys, both for humanitarian aid and for regular supplies to UNPROFOR troops. The main objection for the Bosnian Serbs was, however, the cooperation between UNPROFOR and NATO for Close Air Support and air strikes. Constant violations of the regime for the Heavy Weapon Exclusion Zone around Sarajevo and the resumption of the conflict on other fronts meant that at the end of October 1994 UNPROFOR had fully lost control of the situation. All attempts to put an end to the fighting had foundered on the obstruction of the parties.

In this chapter the developments between March 1994 and May 1995 will be discussed, in particular from the point of view of international developments. The chapter starts by dealing with the actions of the Contact Group and its peace plan; the rejection of that peace plan provoked a discussion about the way to handle the peace process, with the lifting of the arms embargo against Bosnia, taking tougher action against the Bosnian Serbs and withdrawal of UNPROFOR as the main topics. The intensification of the discussion during the crisis in Bihac in November 1994 and the attempts to strengthen the position of UNPROFOR are topics then considered. Dutch policy in this discussion is a topic that is dealt with, but the emphasis when discussing Dutch actions lies on the initiatives to improve the situation of Dutchbat in Srebrenica.

## 2. The Contact Group

At the beginning of 1994 the tension in NATO between the United States on the one hand, and France, the United Kingdom and Canada on the other about the use of force in the execution of the peace mission and about a peace plan had come to the surface again. Those differences of opinion had otherwise not prevented the NATO leaders meeting in Brussels at the beginning of January from threatening the use of air power if the Bosnian Serbs did not respect the Freedom of Movement of UNPROFOR. The Government leaders of NATO had also declared themselves in favour of the Canadian battalion in Srebrenica being replaced by Dutchbat, and of Tuzla airport being opened for the supply of humanitarian aid. The use of force to do this was permitted.

When barely a month later, after the savage shelling of the market in Sarajevo, NATO issued an ultimatum to the VRS about the removal of artillery beyond the range of the Bosnian capital, results had been achieved: the VRS agreed to the introduction of a Heavy Weapon Exclusion Zone around the city. The Russian Government was very put out about this unilateral action by NATO. The transfer of a Russian battalion of the peacekeeping force – as rapid as it was unexpected for the outside world – from Croatia to the Serbian part of Sarajevo on 17February 1994 was intended as a face-saving exercise for the Russians. The fact that the Russian Federation wanted to play a more active role had also already become clear from its participation in the discussions on a ceasefire between the Croats and the Croatian Serbs in the Krajina in February 1994.

More important was the fact that it was the Russian Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Vitaly Churkin, in consultation with UNPROFOR, who had planned that transfer. Moscow had wanted to demonstrate by its diplomatic and military action that it wished to be more involved in the international decision-making outside the Security Council on the former Yugoslavia. There were no NATO air strikes: the VRS fulfilled its promises about the Heavy Weapon Exclusion Zone around Sarajevo, partly because the Serbs did not want to alienate the Russians, now that there was a Russian battalion in Sarajevo.[1296]

The split within NATO on the face of it appeared to have been overcome by this satisfactory outcome of the crisis about Sarajevo. This was only on the surface, however, because the fundamental difference of opinion remained: Canada and the Western European members did not want to intervene in favour of one of the warring factions, on account of the risks for their UNPROFOR troops; Washington remained morally and politically on the side of the Bosnian Muslims and advocated tough action against the Bosnian Serbs as the aggressors in the conflict. The Americans were not, however, prepared to deploy more than the US Air Force and the US Navy under the umbrella of NATO for this purpose; after the debacle of the peacekeeping mission in Somalia, the Clinton Government was certainly not prepared to deploy ground troops and run the risk of Americans casualties again.[1297]

The British Government had the most concerns about the opposing views within NATO concerning the solution of the conflict in the former Yugoslavia. Since the Clinton Government had

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[1296] Gow, Triumph of the Lack of Will, p. 148. Owen, Balkan Odyssey, p. 267.

[1297] Bert, Reluctant Superpower, pp.75-76. Burg & Shoup, War in Bosnia, pp. 286-287.

taken office at the beginning of 1993, London had seen little of the 'special relationship' with Washington. Clinton's Washington seemed to be keeping its distance from its most important European ally, rather than taking London into its confidence as an important discussion partner. This was due to the fact that British Prime Minister John Major had supported the sitting president, George Bush, during the election campaign in 1992. The British Government became increasingly concerned about the chill in transatlantic relations, because it was also manifesting itself in other fields. British Prime Minister John Major therefore decided at the end of 1993, on the advice of Pauline Neville-Jones, his international and security policy adviser and chair of the Joint Intelligence Committee, to make an attempt to reverse the downward spiral in Anglo-American relations. In consultation with his Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Douglas Hurd, he appointed Neville-Jones Political Director of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, and charged her in particular with this task. Early in January 1994 she travelled to Washington and spoke to Clinton's chief advisers at the National Security Council, and with senior officials of the State Department and the Pentagon. Her conclusion was that there was a substantial difference in opinion about the conflict, stemming from differences in analysis and involvement. The Pentagon and the Intelligence community were closest to the European view. She felt that those differences could be bridged only by involving Washington in the discussions on a peace plan in Geneva.[1298]

For the time being, Washington continued to go its own way. In March 1994, after intensive negotiations between the Bosnian Muslims and the Bosnian Croats, presided over by the American diplomat Charles Redman, with the support of the Federal Republic of Germany, the Muslim-Croat Federation was formed. This federation was very similar to the constitutional part of the Owen-Stoltenberg plan: a sovereign federation, with a minimum of central institutions, and with as many powers as possible vested in the component ethnic parts of Muslims and Croats.

Despite the scepticism about the Federation as a 'natural or artificial creation', the circle of negotiators expected it to have 'real potential' as a combination of anti-Serb forces in Bosnia. In the short term in any case, further confrontation between Croatians and Muslims had been prevented, and for Washington that, together with the strengthening of their position against the Bosnian Serbs, was the most important thing at the negotiating table.[1299]

Stagnation in the meantime typified the peace process of the International Conference on the Former Yugoslavia in Geneva presided over by Stoltenberg and Owen. In 1992-1993 the conference had presented three peace plans to the warring factions – the Vance-Owen-plan, the Owen-Stoltenberg peace plan, and the peace plan of the European Union, the fruit of a Franco-German initiative. None of those plans had received the approval of all parties. The peace conference in Geneva seemed to have few remaining options. There were no longer any new variations on the main themes of a peace plan that had any chance of success: there were no possibilities for a different distribution of power between the three ethnic groups, and there was little scope for dividing up the territory between the three groups either. Owen and Stoltenberg felt that new proposals would share the same fate as the three earlier peace plans, because the warring factions knew that the UN and the European Union, as sponsors of the Geneva Convention, were not in a position to enforce a peace settlement.

A new plan would have some prospect of success only if all warring factions were put under the same degree of pressure resulting from American and Russian support of the proposal. Owen and Stoltenberg were aware of the need to involve the United States and the Russian Federation in the peace negotiations. This point of view was reinforced by the fact that Redman and Russian Special Envoy Vitaly Churkin took part in discussions in Pale, Sarajevo and Belgrade during the Gorazde crisis in the spring of 1994. For its part, the US Government wanted cooperation with the European Union, but not with the troika of the European Union or the twelve members individually. As permanent

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[1298] Interviews P. Neville-Jones, 15/11/01 and R.J. Woolsey, 08/06/00.
[1299] Owen, Balkan Odyssey, pp. 268-269. Interview Ch. Redman, 15/10/01

members of the Security Council, France and Great Britain were, of course, partners in Europe, while for action from the Security Council it was also important to consult the Russian Federation.

Owen and Stoltenberg were faced with a dilemma. They had come to the conclusion that continuation of the negotiations on a settlement in the former Yugoslavia by the Geneva route was in fact at a dead end. They also felt that the EU and the Secretary-General of the UN were unlikely to buy the creation of a different framework for the discussions, in which they would not be playing a role. For the sake of combining forces, Owen and Stoltenberg wanted to return to the traditional cooperation between the superpowers most involved: the four members of the Security Council mentioned above, and Germany, because of its influence in Zagreb.

When he introduced his proposal, Owen deliberately did not put all his cards on the table before the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the EU at the General Affairs Council of 18April1994. Had he done so, he would in fact have had to lay the common foreign and security policy of the EU and the role of the EU troika on the table, and that would have been counterproductive. He had assured himself beforehand of the support of Paris, London and Bonn, and decided not to speak openly to the EU Council.

Towards the end of the meeting, which was dealing mainly with the Gorazde crisis, he stated that it was not possible for Washington to operate within the framework of the Yugoslavia Conference (ICFY), and that Washington preferred contacts directly under the level of the co-chairmen. He explained that new 'coordinating mechanisms' were necessary to involve the United States and the Russian Federation in the consultation. The Council asked Lord Owen to do everything possible to talk to the US, bearing in mind the limitations mentioned. According to the Council, it was not necessary to indicate too precisely what exact form the contacts with the US should take.[1300] The next day Owen informed the ministers personally that, 'in the light of yesterday's [Foreign Affairs Council]' the co-chairmen of the Yugoslavia Conference (Owen and Stoltenberg) had decided to form a Contact Group, as a team of the Yugoslavia Conference, for cooperation with the United States and the Russian Federation. This team would act on behalf of the EU and the UN.[1301]

In The Hague, Yugoslavia coordinator Hattinga van 't Sant soon saw through Owen's bright idea. The three large members of the EU wanted to conduct the peace discussions with the United States and the Russian Federation without consulting the other nine members; that was a departure from the decisions taken by the General Affairs Council on 18 April. According to Joris Vos, the Director-General for Political Affairs, a board of directors had been formed with the Contact Group. Foreign Minister Peter Kooijmans did also see advantages: through the Contact Group, the EU would acquire a 'good monitoring system' for the negotiations if the Contact Group reported to the EU ministers; and it was a fact that Washington did not want to work with the troika presided over by the Greeks. There was, of course, criticism of Owen's high-handed action, but no tirade was launched against this violation of the common foreign and security policy of the EU. On the contrary, there was an expression of understanding for the formation of the Contact Group and hope for progress in the peace process.[1302]

At the next meeting of the ad hoc group of the EU for former Yugoslavia, held on 26April 1994, it is true that 'great resentment' was expressed about Owen's decision to form the Contact Group, but that did not prevent a British, French and German member from being appointed, and did not prevent the first meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the five members of the Contact Group from being held in London on that same day. Despite this feeling among the non-EU members of the Contact Group that they were up against the big boys, the meeting endorsed the view that there

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[1300] Owen, Balkan Odyssey, pp. 275-277. ABZ, ARA/DEU/ 05239. Coded cable Bot 126, 19/04/94. Interview Lord Owen, 27/06/01. Interview P. Neville-Jones, 15/11/01.

[1301] Owen, Balkan Odyssey (CD-ROM) document 180: Lord Owen Personal for Foreign Ministers, 19/04/94). ABZ, DEU/ARA/05239. Coded cable COREU athc868, 22/04/94.

[1302] Notes by Hattinga van 't Sant on a meeting with Vos and Kooijmans on text of ABZ, DEU/ARA/ 05239. Coded cable COREU athc868, 22/04/94.

was a need for 'a strong re-invigoration of the negotiating process', and saw the Contact Group as a new step towards that goal. The EU ad hoc group decided on a motion from the Netherlands that Owen would report to the EU on the talks held by the Contact Group.[1303] A discussion along the same lines was repeated in the Political Committee two weeks later: much wailing about the breach of the rules of the Treaty of Maastricht on common foreign and security policy, an attempt by the Dutch to strengthen the official link between the EU and the Contact Group during the negotiations on the former Yugoslavia, and insistence on the presence of the troika for all Contact Group meetings at ministerial level. The General Affairs Council accepted the existence of the Contact Group and thereby implicitly recognized that the Yugoslavia Conference, including the EU, was being sidelined.[1304]

Apart from some EU mutterings from the sidelines, the Contact Group had therefore been formed without any great problems. Until the summer of 1995 this group was to form the core of the negotiating process for a settlement in Bosnia. The Contact Group was in any case more than a contact body of the Yugoslavia Conference for involving the United States and the Russian Federation in the talks in Geneva. The three members appointed by Owen formed only a small part of a tiered diplomatic consultation structure. After some time, the political directors of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs in London, Paris and Bonn, with the American and Russian members, formed the core of the Contact Group.

It was primarily a new consultation body of the five great powers involved in the conflict in the former Yugoslavia. All other statements and explanations about the formation of the Contact Group were intended to sweeten the pill for the European Union and the United Nations. At the negotiations, from the moment that they wanted to lead the talks as a group, the five great powers returned to the earlier tried and tested diplomatic talks at intergovernmental level. The Contact Group, according to the French, was certainly not a 'nouvel instrument de diplomatie multilatérale, multiforme et adaptable' (a new instrument of multilateral, multiform and adaptable diplomacy).[1305] Alain Juppé, the French Minister of Foreign Affairs, subsequently called it 'une méthode de négociation' (a method of negotiation), while one cynical academic described the group as 'Emperors With No Clothes'.[1306] By continuing to use the Yugoslavia Conference as the official forum for talks with the warring factions, the Contact Group left the Yugoslavia Conference alone. In a political sense, however, the Contact Group took over the leading role in the peace process.

The Contact Group was more, however, than just an ad hoc consultation group of ambassadors of the five great powers – although they formed the hard core of the group. There was certainly no question of easy mutual relations between the five at the beginning: Vitaly Churkin, the Russian Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs, as a Minister of State, in fact did not wish to work with the three European representatives, an attitude which he shared with Charles Redman, the US Special Envoy, who for reasons that are otherwise not very clear considered his status higher. Churkin at any rate very soon arranged for his replacement by A.Nikiforov.[1307]

This newly formed group of five tried to draw up a common policy for the peace consultations. To that end, it conducted talks with the parties in the former Yugoslavia, consulted Yasushi Akashi as the representative of the United Nations in the region, and coordinated policy within its own bureaucracy. With this high workload, working groups for sub-topics were also gradually formed, and met on a regular basis. Difficult questions were passed on to the Ministers of Foreign Affairs, although initially it was denied that there was a direct link between the Group and this political top tier.[1308]

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[1303] ABZ, DEU/ARA/ 05239. COREU pesc/sec 488, 27/04/94. ABZ, DEU/ARA/2915. Coded cable Kooijmans 53, 27/04/94.
[1304] ABZ, DEU/ARA/ 05240. Coded cable Bot 164, 11/05/94.
[1305] F. Boidevaix, Une diplomatie informelle pour l'Europe. Le Groupe de Contact Bosnie (Paris [1997]), p. 69. Owen, Balkan Odyssey, 277-278.
[1306] Boidevaix, Une diplomatie informelle pour l'Europe, p.8. Gow, Triumph of Lack of Will, p. 260.
[1307] Interviews P. Neville-Jones, 15/11/01; Ch. Redman, 15/10/01; M. Steiner, 06/07/00.
[1308] ABZ, DEU/ARA/ 05240. Coded cable Bot 164, 11/05/94.

Despite the general conviction that the tide was in favour of the Contact Group taking action, there was absolutely no guarantee of success. Owen and Stoltenberg had correctly assessed the momentum during the Gorazde crisis: this was the right moment for involving the United States and the Russian Federation in the peace process, or in the words of Malcolm Rifkind, the British Minister of Defence and subsequently Minister of Foreign Affairs: 'Fast moving diplomacy needed that a minority led diplomacy.'[1309] Nevertheless, leading the peace talks was going to mean a fair amount of racking of brains. The only thing that united the five was their desire to play a role in the peace process, but in that respect they each, of course, wanted to achieve as much as possible of their own policies. The five great powers did not share much more than a common desire to put an end to the war in Bosnia and prevent its escalation to an international conflict. Only they were keen not to give the same divided and weak impression to the warring factions as they had before at the time of the Gorazde crisis in April 1994.

The Gorazde crisis had broken out at the beginning of April, after the failure of talks on a cessation of hostilities for the whole of Bosnia, as the first step towards a political settlement and the ending of fighting around Gorazde. This dashed hopes that the Bosnian Serbs had become more compliant after the NATO ultimatum of February 1994. Bosnia-Hercegovina Commander Michael Rose suspected that American mediator Charles Redman had played a crucial role in that failure.

Immediately after the breakdown of the talks, the VRS had resumed the battle around the Safe Area of Gorazde. On account of threats against UN personnel, Rose used Close Air Support several times. When the VRS attack was resumed on 16 April, the US Government declared itself in favour of air strikes, for the sake of the credibility of NATO. The VRS aggravated the crisis further by taking UNPROFOR personnel hostage.

On 22 April 1994 NATO issued an ultimatum to the Bosnian Serbs: withdrawal of all troops to a distance of three kilometres from the centre of Gorazde and of heavy weapons to a distance of 20 kilometres outside a Heavy Weapon Exclusion Zone to be set up. The Russian Federation was angered again by this tendency towards unilateral action by NATO, and found that UNPROFOR was on its side. According to Commander Rose, the peacekeeping force ought not to be tempted to intervene in the conflict between Bosnian Muslims and Bosnian Serbs, and that situation would arise if there were air strikes. Akashi blocked the air strikes and, with the cooperation of Milosevic, reached an agreement in Belgrade that put an end to the crisis. UNPROFOR units subsequently went into the city.[1310]

The Gorazde crisis had above all made it clear that the use of force without a clearly defined political strategy on the ending of the conflict was a tricky affair.[1311] International opinion was sharply divided on the degree to which force should be used. Washington adopted the most extreme position in that respect: it regarded the Bosnian Serbs as the aggressor, it did not want to recognize their territorial gains, and it stood morally behind the Bosnian Government. At the opening of the American embassy in Sarajevo at the beginning of May 1994 the US Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Madeleine Albright, expressed that solidarity. In her view, the American support for the Muslims had limitations: yes to the deployment of NATO air power, but no to the deployment of American ground troops.

Before the Gorazde crisis Washington had not had any clear course of action, because of internal divisions within the Government. In the interim, containment seemed to have a higher priority than solution of the conflict. Political discussion at home led to increased pressure to lift the arms embargo, while the use of NATO air power was seen as a means of forcing the Bosnian Serbs to make concessions.[1312] During the month of April some movement occurred in the American standpoint, coinciding with the start of the work of the Contact Group. According to Anthony Lake, National Security Adviser, a turning point had been reached, and Washington wanted to be more directly

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[1309] Boidevaix, Une diplomatie informelle pour l'Europe, p. 11.
[1310] Rose, Fighting for Peace, pp. 99-115. Burg & Shoup, War in Bosnia, pp. 146-150 and 299.
[1311] Burg & Shoup, War in Bosnia, p. 150.
[1312] Burg & Shoup, War in Bosnia, p. 299. Bert, Reluctant Superpower, pp. 212-213.

involved in solving the conflict in Bosnia. This was to be achieved through more intensive diplomatic cooperation with the European allies and the Russian Federation 'to engage the Serbs' in the 'painstaking, delicate and very difficult' negotiating process.

The main point would be the division of the territory, but Lake said nothing about the division mechanism to be applied. The Serbians and the Bosnian Serbs had to realize that there would be economic sanctions if there was 'continued intransigence'; Washington also tried to increase the effectiveness of NATO air power by improving the coordination with the United Nations; Lake hinted that the US Government wanted to drop the complicated dual key procedure and was in favour of a more direct role for NATO. Finally, he held out the prospect of American participation in an implementation force after the achievement of a peace settlement.[1313]

According to Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Vershbow, Washington continued to rule out participation in UNPROFOR, because it did not want to be 'confined' in a United Nations 'straitjacket' . The deployment of American troops for peace enforcement in Bosnia was not a consideration either; Washington wanted in principle to keep its hands free to enable it to intervene if necessary.[1314]

Moscow had been playing a modest, but effective mediating role in the conflict in the former Yugoslavia since the beginning of 1994, first in February, during the Sarajevo crisis, and then at the end of March, for a cessation of hostilities agreement in the Krajina. The special ties with the Serbians as fellow Slavs had played a role in any case. This carefully constructed special position of the Russian Federation in the region was seriously undermined during the Gorazde crisis by the unreliable action of the Bosnian Serbs. Moscow in its own estimation had suffered a serious loss of face because of that course of events.

For the time being, Moscow closed the chapter of solo performance in the region: it no longer wanted to talk to the Bosnian Serbs and decided to be tougher with Milosevic. Moscow expressly declared a desire to cooperate with the United Nations, the European Union and the United States in a common approach to the Bosnian crisis.[1315] Moscow was frustrated by the American attitude, however, which according to Kozyrev was aimed primarily at intensification of the military action against the Bosnian Serbs. The Russian Government therefore definitely wanted to rule out independent NATO action: no use of air power without express UN approval, and only on the basis of Security Council resolutions. There could then be no repeat of the situation in Gorazde, where the Bosnia-Hercegovina Commander had decided to use Close Air Support. In the view of the Russians, the use of air power had no influence on the situation on the ground, and only led to the warring factions adopting an inflexible attitude. The fact that Moscow was on its guard against further aggravation of the situation on the ground was also evident at the beginning of May from its opposition to the designation of new Safe Areas.[1316]

The position of the European members of the Contact Group was known. Their aim was first and foremost to contain the conflict, and preferably to end it quickly. The EU action plan at the end of 1993 remained the basis for a peace settlement for the EU; that was expressly repeated in the ad hoc group on the former Yugoslavia and the Political Committee after the formation of the Contact Group.

In the main, there was no essential difference of opinion between British, French and German standpoints on a peace plan. But there were differences about the means for applying pressure to achieve that objective, such as air power, sanctions and lifting of the arms embargo. Those differences of opinion were connected with the participation in UNPROFOR of France and the United Kingdom

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1313 A. Lake 'Bosnia: America's Interests and America's Role' in: Inside the Army, 11/04/94, pp. 5-8. (text of speech at the Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore (MD) on 7 April 1994) CSKL. Fax Lamat Washington to Sitcen BLS, 21/04/94.
1314 ABZ, Embassy Washington. Coded cable Jacobovits 270, 25/04/94.
1315 ABZ, DEU/ARA/ 05239. Coded cable De Vos from Steenwijk 190, 20/04/94.
1316 UNGE ICFY Box 123 File: fax March 21 – May 3 1994. Annan to Akashi, coded cable 1294, 26/04/94; Appendix: Memorandum of the Russian Permanent Representative. ABZ, DEU/ARA/ 05276. Coded cable Veenendaal NATO 790, 11/05/94; Coded cable Biegman 447, 10/05/94. Owen, Balkan Odyssey, (CD-ROM: COREU on Co-Chairmen's talks in Moscow, 20/04/94).

and their *realpolitik* stance, on the one hand, and the more moralistic position of the Federal Republic of Germany, on the other; their position was similar to that of the Americans and was not tempered by risks to their own troops within the peacekeeping force.[1317]

Clearly, it was going to take a great deal of energy to draft a common policy from the diverging views and approaches of the five members of the Contact Group. Contrary to the high expectations of the outside world, the Contact Group was and remained mainly a discussion forum. Laudatory statements to the media could not disguise that fact.

At its first meeting in London on 26 April 1994, the Contact Group decided to concentrate on a total suspension of hostilities and the territorial 'bottom-line' of the Muslims, and to go to Sarajevo and Pale for talks two days later. These agreements were reached after difficult discussions. All participants agreed that they had to stake everything in order to succeed, but they considered that there was little chance of doing so. There was also little mutual understanding: Redman and Churkin, like Masset and Redman, treated each other with the usual mistrust. Redman and Churkin would have preferred to continue with their own attempts at mediation, while the state of affairs during the Gorazde crisis had also made them very sceptical and pessimistic about the possibilities for cooperation within the Contact Group. It was not surprising that there were very widely diverging opinions on how to tackle the negotiations. It took a great deal of effort on the part of the British and German participants to obtain Churkin's and Redman's approval of a decision on making an inventory of the Muslim 'bottom-line' without an agreement on the procedure after that. Redman automatically advocated support for a Muslim bottom-line of 51% of the territory. Churkin, on the other hand, wanted the Contact Group to have its own map, and the gradual lifting of sanctions in exchange for Bosnian Serb withdrawal to the new boundaries.[1318]

Under pressure to come up with some result within a few weeks and with fundamentally different views on the approach itself, the Contact Group conducted two rounds of talks in Bosnia at the end of April and beginning of May. The Bosnian Government agreed to a ceasefire of limited duration on three conditions: implementation of the Heavy Weapon Exclusion Zone in Gorazde; closing of the border between Republika Srpska and Serbia; and setting up of some sort of Exclusion Zones along the front line/demarcation line, to permit adequate reactions to violations of the ceasefire. Pale wanted a ceasefire without time limit, and proposed withdrawing the VRS units from the front line (50 to 500 metres) and positioning UNPROFOR troops between the warring factions. Implementation of the agreements on Gorazde was guaranteed by Pale.

Both parties also imposed conditions for the resumption of the peace discussions. Sarajevo did not want to begin them until after a full settlement on Gorazde. It also demanded recognition of the territorial integrity of Bosnia and compensation in the form of more terrain on separation from the Serbian part. The territory of the Muslim-Croat Federation would have to comprise all territory where Muslims and Croatians had formed the majority of the population before the start of the war. Izetbegovic promised that he would make a map.[1319] Moreover, a settlement had to be reached within a specific time limit; if it was not, according to Prime Minister Haris Silajdzic, the lifting of the arms embargo and air strikes would have to follow. The Bosnian Serb authorities also laid down their condition: suspension of the sanctions. They did not, however, repeat their demand for recognition of

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[1317] Interviews P. Neville-Jones, 15/11/01 and M. Steiner, 06/07/00.

[1318] ABZ , DEU/ARA/ 05239. Coded cable COREU athc913, 28/04/94; Fax Steiner to Hattinga van 't Sant, 27/04/94; Appendix: German coded message London diplo to Bonn, No.642, 26/04/94.

[1319] Izetbegovic did not keep his promise. His intentions became clear on 11 May 1994, when the result of Muslim-Croatian talks on the territory of the Federation was signed in Vienna. The Federation claimed 58% of the territory. Izetbegovic had talked of 54% in his discussion with the Contact Group. On the American side, it was expressly stated that the demand for 58% was no more than a negotiating position. See: ABZ, DEU/ARA/ 05239. Coded cable COREU athc925, 29/04/94. ABZ, DEU/ARA/ 05240. Coded cable Boddens Hosang 309, 13/05/94; Coded cable Boddens Hosang 310, 14/05/94.

Republika Srpska. Pale also rejected a percentage-wise division of the territory: it asked for division on the basis of qualitative criteria.[1320]

As emerged from the talks with the parties in Bosnia, the Contact Group was still going to have to negotiate a few tough hurdles in order to be able to achieve the twin-track policy of a ceasefire and resumption of the peace talks. That called for political decisions in the short term, in order to put an end to the situation that was also perilous for UNPROFOR.

Boutros Boutros-Ghali, Kofi Annan, Yasushi Akashi and Force Commander Bertrand De Lapresle feared, like the US Government, that the peacekeeping force would creep 'from a humanitarian role into a combatant position'.[1321] This led them to different conclusions. According to Washington, heavier artillery was definitely needed in order to make the Bosnian Serb authorities change their mind. That was the American input at the meeting held on 13May between the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the members of the Contact Group and the EU troika. After a long and difficult meeting, they reached agreement on a clear course for the continuation of the twin-track policy of the Contact Group. It had taken Christopher, Kozyrev, Hurd, Juppé and Kinkel four hours to agree on the communiqué, which after intensive Anglo-German mediation bridged the widely diverging Russian and American standpoints and also found a middle way between the demands of the parties in Bosnia itself.

The Contact Group was united and firmly resolved to work towards an 'early and durable solution' of the conflict at the negotiating table without military means, and promised to make every effort to implement a solution. The five ministers called upon the warring factions to agree to a full ceasefire and to begin parallel talks on a political solution. The ceasefire had to comprise a dispersal of the troops, the withdrawal of heavy weapons and the stationing of UNPROFOR units between the warring factions. The agreement would have to be for four months in the first instance (in accordance with the Muslim view), with an option for extension (a concession towards Republika Srpska). Monitoring of fulfilment of the agreement merited special attention and required reinforcement of UNPROFOR. With regard to the territorial question, the Contact Group pressed for an arrangement

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[1320] ABZ, DEU/ARA/ 05239. Coded cable COREU athc925, 29/04/95. ABZ, DEU/ARA/ 05240. Memo DEU/OE – JLS-MEP, 11/05/94; Coded cable Boddens Hosang 309, 13/05/94.
[1321] Owen, Balkan Odyssey, p. 278. ABZ, Embassy Washington: Coded cable Jacobovits 270, 25/04/94.

along the lines of 51% for the Bosnian Muslims and 49 % for the Serbs. All Security Council resolutions had to be observed and implemented. The lifting of sanctions as a condition for the resumption of the talks was unacceptable. There could be a phased suspension of sanctions only if there was an implementation of a peace settlement, and in particular of the provisions on withdrawal to within agreed boundaries. Finally, the ministers invited the warring factions to start substantive talks within two weeks, presided over by the Contact Group.[1322]

The communiqué had all the advantages and disadvantages of a compromise. The advantage was that the Russian Federation and the United States now also agreed to the percentage-wise division of the territory, the existence side by side of the Federation and Republika Srpska, and the phased suspension of sanctions. The disadvantage was the vagueness on the need for further negotiation, and that for the rest it contained nothing more than expressions of principle that the parties had already put aside in the past. That does not alter the fact that endorsement of the fundamental principles for the negotiations was an important step forward.

However, widely divergent views remained with regard to the treatment of the warring factions, the division of the territory and the suspension of sanctions. The acceptance of the Russian proposal for UNPROFOR units on the demarcation line and withdrawal of the heavy weapons 'to check the Bosnian Serb military machine' still did not mean that Kozyrev's aim of achieving equal treatment of the parties had been taken over. His proposal was in line with the American view that Republika Srpska was not to be trusted, and that thorough monitoring to ensure observation of a ceasefire was essential. That was also the reason why the other elements of the Russian proposal had not gone into the communiqué: withdrawal on the basis of a temporary map of the Contact Group and a start on the suspension of the economic sanctions. That was going much too far, for Washington in any case.

Conversely, the American support for the principle of 51% – 49 % did not yet mean that the Contact Group would be playing an active role in the plotting of the map. Washington wanted to leave that to the warring factions in the first instance. As far as Washington was concerned, the stage for the suspension of sanctions had certainly not been reached yet. Americans thoughts were going in the opposite direction. The State Department had in fact, in the weeks prior to the meeting in Geneva, tried to gain support within the Western camp for a stiffer sanctions regime, an action which, within the EU at any rate, had received no positive response whatsoever.[1323]

The meeting of ministers in Geneva had in any case created a narrow base for the activities of the Contact Group on the basis of the twin-track policy. Akashi continued the talks on a ceasefire. Talks on an official cessation of hostilities were unsuccessful because of opposition from the Bosnian Government. After difficult negotiations, the parties agreed on 8June in Geneva to a ceasefire for a month. For UNPROFOR that agreement was also important for other reasons. Since the Muslim-Croat Federation had been formed in March 1994 the ABiH had been able to deploy against the VRS 15 brigades that had first been at the front with the Bosnian Croats. The ABiH had also been receiving supplies secretly by sea through Croatian territory. According to UNPROFOR, both factors would strengthen the Bosnian Government's conviction that they could gain more on the battlefield than at the conference table, an observation that was perfectly in tune with the earlier mentioned analysis of Bosnia-Hercegovina Commander Michael Rose at the start of his mission in January 1994.[1324] The ceasefire did not last long: after one week the ABiH resumed the battle at Mount Ozren in central Bosnia and in Bihac, although that did not prevent an extension in July.[1325]

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[1322] ABZ, DEU/ARA/ 05240. Communiqué of the Meeting of Foreign Ministers in Geneva, 13 May 1994.
[1323] ABZ, DEU/ARA/ 05265: Dornbush to Kooijmans, 28/04/94 with Appendix Christopher to Kooijmans, 28/04/94. ABZ, DEU/ARA/ 05265. COREU pesc/pres/ath1019, 11/05/94 (text of letter of EU president to Christopher, 10/05/94).ABZ, DEU/ARA/ 05265. Coded cable Jacobovits 285, 29/04/94.
[1324] UNGE UNPROFOR Box 120, file: Civil Affairs Sector NE. Weekly BH political assessment (68), 27/05/94, pp. 1-2.
[1325] UNNY, DPKO, coded cables UNPROFOR: Z-950, Akashi to Annan, 21/06/94. Z-1056, Akashi to Annan, 15/07/94. Burg & Shoup, War in Bosnia, pp. 302-303.

The Contact Group's road towards a result was longer. Because Washington had objected to the Contact Group drawing up its own map on the basis of the 51% – 49% principle, it started talks on a territorial division in Talloires in France with representatives of the Federation and Republika Srpska. For Washington this was already a concession, since the United States in fact wanted the Bosnian Government to have the 51% – 49% map drawn up, and wanted to present the map as a fait accompli to Pale after it had been approved by the Contact Group. Alain Juppé, the French Minister of Foreign Affairs, had rejected this approach as 'asymmetrical and unfair'.[1326] After the failure of the talks in Talloires, the Contact Group set to work itself.[1327] The presentation of the Contact Group's map on 6 July made a resolute impression through the preconditions of the ministers: the Federation and Republika Srpska had to reply within two weeks with an unconditional Yes or No. Endorsement would be rewarded with 'incentives', rejection punished with 'disincentives'. At the end of July the ministers would meet for the third time in Geneva to discuss the consequences of the replies from Sarajevo and Pale.[1328]

The map produced by the Contact Group was 'a reasonable balance'. For the members of the Contact Group, any modification would be possible only on the basis of mutual agreement between Sarajevo and Pale. After the fiasco of Talloires, that was no more than a diplomatic phrase. With the proposed division of the territory, the Federation was receiving more than the Muslim and Croatian entities would receive under the Owen-Stoltenberg plan.

None of the parties was satisfied with the map: ABiH and VRS both complained that their territory had been broken up into a number of unconnected parts. The main features were as follows.

Sarajevo and the surrounding area were not divided, but were placed under the administration of the United Nations. Brcko in the north went largely into the hands of the Federation and acquired a direct connection to the central part of the Federation. That meant an actual partition between the eastern and western part of Republika Srpska, instead of a connection by means of a land corridor. The Muslim region around the three eastern enclaves would be extended: Gorazde was acquiring a direct connection with the Sarajevo region, and Srebrenica and Zepa were to be connected with each other.

Nevertheless, the Bosnian Muslims were dissatisfied with the map. Places that they regarded as Muslim terrain, such as Bratunac, Zvornik and Prijedor, fell outside the allotted area. Besides, the map did not meet Sarajevo's demand of 58%, but that could be no surprise for Sarajevo, after it had accepted the principle of 51% – 49% as the basis for the division. Izetbegovic decided, however, to make a tactical choice: 'the plan is bad – it is an injustice – but the option of saying "no" would be worse for our people'. Besides, he assumed that the Bosnian Serb Parliament would reject the Contact Group's map, and that this rejection would deal the final blow to the map. The Parliament followed Izetbegovic on 18 July 1994.[1329]

*The reaction of the Bosnian Serbs to the map: neither Yes, nor No*

What leaked out from the meeting behind closed doors of the Bosnian Serb Parliament on 18July seemed to confirm the prediction of Izetbegovic. The plan was rejected in fierce nationalistic terms, because according to Vice-President Plavsic it was aiming for 'a complete destruction and vanishing of the Serb people'. This wave of emotion did not stop the debates late in the evening from tending towards a strategic option for acceptance under certain conditions. The object of this 'Yes, provided that' answer was that in that way they would remain involved in the peace process and still to be able to change the map.[1330] In an atmosphere of drama, the final answer from Pale went in a sealed envelope to

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[1326] ABZ, DEU/ARA/ 05240. Coded cable Jacobovits 309, 14/05/94.
[1327] ABZ, DEU/ARA/ 05240. COREU pesc/sec659, 01/06/94.
[1328] ABZ, DEU/ARA/ 05240. COREU pesc/sec 741, 07/07/94.
[1329] Burg & Shoup, War in Bosnia, p. 303. UNGE UNPROFOR Box 120, file: Civil Affairs Sector NE. Weekly BH political assessment (76), 24/07/94, pp. 2-3.
[1330] Confidential information (166).

Geneva, to be handed over on 20July. It stated that an answer to the Peace Plan was not possible because elements such as constitutional arrangements, the Sarajevo question, access to the sea for Republika Srpska, implementation of the peace plan and the lifting of sanctions were missing. The Bosnian Serb delegation had authorization to continue the peace talks, during which process the map 'can serve, in considerable measure, as a basis for further negotiations.'[1331]

Strictly speaking, this answer was not a Yes, and in the opinion of Charles Redman, the American member of the Contact Group, this was a case for applying the incentives and disincentives. On the other hand, Andrei Kozyrev, the Russian Foreign Minister, found the statement positive, regarded the demand for constitutional settlements 'reasonable' and saw scope for further negotiations.[1332] The Contact Group seemed to have been torn apart by the answer from Pale.

However, the five members were not giving up that easily; in order to prepare for the meeting of the ministers in Geneva, the members made feverish attempts to paper over the cracks. At the instigation of the Russians, the Contact Group itself met in Moscow to discuss the joint answer.[1333] President Yeltsin sent his Minister of Defence to Belgrade to press Milosevic and a Bosnian Serb delegation (Karadzic, Mladic and Krajisnik) 'in no uncertain terms' to accept the plan. Milosevic wanted to accept the map, but Karadzic went no further than to promise to propose reconsideration of the decision at a new meeting of Parliament on 28 July.[1334] Probably concerned about the lack of action at the meeting in Moscow, Warren Christopher called two days before the meeting of ministers in Geneva on 30 July for a decision to be taken on disincentives in the form of at least tightening of sanctions and Heavy Weapon Exclusion Zones.[1335]

For the outside world, the third conference of ministers of the Contact Group showed unanimity. The communiqué repeated that the continued existence of a sovereign Bosnia-Hercegovina within the recognized international boundaries and the right of Displaced Persons to return constituted the fundamental principles of the Contact Group's plan. They called upon the Bosnian Government to maintain its acceptance of the map. They called urgently upon Pale for reconsideration and a 'clear acceptance'. That was more than had been anticipated when the map had been presented at the beginning of July: Pale was not faced directly with concrete disincentives, but was given a description of what the Contact Group had in mind, which was sanctions and Heavy Weapon Exclusion Zones. The sanctions package comprised extension of the sanctions by the Security Council against the former Yugoslavia, preparation of a resolution for the suspension of the sanctions, and a call for strict monitoring of the observance of the existing sanctions. In the case of the Heavy Weapon Exclusion Zones, the Contact Group held out the prospect of strict enforcement and extension to other Safe Areas. Finally, they announced that a proposal to the Security Council for lifting of the arms embargo for Bosnia would be the answer to a 'continuing rejection' of the map by Pale, a decision that would also have consequences for the presence of UNPROFOR.[1336] This unequivocal language of the ministers did not, however, reflect more than the importance attached by the Contact Group to maintenance of the internal consensus and to the unacceptability of the Bosnian Serb answer. The communiqué uncovered serious differences of opinion within the Contact Group, also in the matter of sanctions. A decision to take military measures with regard to the Heavy Weapon Exclusion Zone was

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[1331] Burg & Shoup, War in Bosnia, p. 303. ABZ, DEU/ARA/ 05240. COREU pesc/pres/bon814, 21/07/94 (text of Bosnian-Serb delegation statement and quotation on p.2). UNGE UNPROFOR Box, file: Civil Affairs Sector NE. Weekly BH political assessment (76), 24/07/94, p. 3.

[1332] Confidential information (166).

[1333] ABZ, DEU/ARA/ 05240. Coded cable COREU pesc/sec 803, 27/07/94.

[1334] ABZ, DEU/ARA/ 05240. COREU pesc/pres/bon 896, 29/07/94. Karadzic thought after the discussion with the Russian Minister of Defence in Belgrade on 27 July that the Russian Federation would defend the RS if it came to a war after the rejection of the CG plan. See: Silber & Little, Death of Yugoslavia, p. 379.

[1335] ABZ, DEU/ARA/ 05240. Coded cable Celer circ 467, 29/07/94 (letter from Christopher to Juppé, Hurd, Kinkel and Kozyrev, 28/07/94).

[1336] Owen, Balkan Odyssey, CD-ROM: communiqué CG conference of ministers Geneva 30/07/94.

not taken either, because only the UN and NATO were competent to do so, and the consequences for the troops on the ground had to be examined properly first.[1337]

The conference of ministers of the Contact Group on 30 July 1994 had used forceful language, but had certainly not taken a hard line: it had merely announced that measures were being prepared and had taken no decisions. In the political sense, the Contact Group seemed to have reached the limit of its possibilities: there was still consensus about the need for acceptance of the map by the warring factions, but opinions were greatly divided on the means to bridle the Bosnian Serb resolve. This was primarily due to the widely differing views discussed earlier on the nature of the conflict and on how it should be tackled. Despite the fury about the negative response, Moscow still wanted to try to win Pale over by implementing the suspension of the sanctions. The resolute stance of the Americans on tightening and extension of sanctions was offset by the hesitancy of the other four participants about the effect of parts of the list of mainly disincentives in the event of rejection of the map. That applied also to the extension of the Heavy Weapon Exclusion Zones. Besides, Pale was stringing the Contact Group along by using the same tactics as it had in the Vance-Owen peace plan in May/June 1993: on 3 August the Parliament decided that a referendum on the map would be held on 27 and 28 August. The outcome of this was predictably negative.

On the face of it, the decision of the previous conference of ministers to encourage acceptance of the map with the list of incentives and disincentives was regarded as a positive instrument. The parties would know what they could expect if they accepted or rejected it. The proposal to link these incentives and disincentives to the proposal of the Contact Group came from Lord Owen, and was intended to sweeten the bitter pill of the map itself.

In the assumption that Pale would reject the map, Owen had proposed announcing the lifting of the arms embargo as a disincentive. He expected that, on account of the side effects (NATO air strikes and prior departure of UNPROFOR), Pale would opt to make the best of a bad job. That proposal was very much in line with the decision taken by the American House of Representatives on 9 June on unilateral lifting of the arms embargo by the Americans. The list of incentives and disincentives was finally drawn up by the Contact Group in Geneva.[1338] The points for that list seemed to be there for the taking: if the map was accepted, things that the parties had always been asking for were held in prospect. The Muslim-Croat Federation could count on implementation of the map being guaranteed internationally, and on help with reconstruction and a fund for the resettlement of Displaced Persons; for the Bosnian Serbs it would mean gradual suspension of the sanctions, linked with vacation of occupied terrain. If the map was rejected by Pale, the existing sanctions would be tightened, a resolution with new sanctions would be presented to the Security Council, and extension and 'strict enforcement' of the Heavy Weapon Exclusion Zone would also follow. The next steps were lifting of the arms embargo and withdrawal of UNPROFOR.[1339]

Little thought had been given to the feasibility of the list. That was not because of shortage of time, because the topic had been under discussion at a high military and political level since the beginning of June. Lifting of the arms embargo was a completely ineffective means of bringing acceptance of the map closer.[1340] After the presentation of the list, Akashi put his finger on the weak point of the list: most of the military elements were unrealistic, and their feasibility had obviously not been examined by experts. In the opinion of Akashi, the application of any disincentive would lead to the VRS losing its last vestige of trust in UNPROFOR, it would regard the peacekeeping force as an ally of the ABiH, and it would therefore approach UNPROFOR as an enemy. The proposed disincentives, in Akashi's view, would therefore lead to escalation and destabilization of the political and military situation in Bosnia and to undermining of the already crumbling position of UNPROFOR. He also warned about the consequences of the lifting of the arms embargo: the departure of

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1337 ABZ, DEU/ARA/ 05240. Coded cable Stokvis 442, 30/07/94.
1338 Owen, Balkan Odyssey, pp. 280-285.
1339 ABZ, DEU/ARA/ 05240. Coded cable COREU pesc/sec741, 07/07/94.
1340 UNNY, DPKO Coded Cables UNPROFOR. Code cable Z-798, Akashi to Annan, 02/07/94.

UNPROFOR would be inevitable, but the execution itself would come up against great problems.[1341] In the opinion of the American, French and British military too, the plan of the Contact Group was militarily unworkable.[1342]

That concern about the consequences of the disincentives and the complexity of the implementation of the Contact Group's map was also conveyed in a letter from the Secretary-General of the UN to the Security Council. If the Contact Group proceeded to apply the disincentives, he would propose withdrawal of UNPROFOR to the Security Council; if the map was accepted, implementation by NATO or an international task force was the obvious course, because the UN itself did not have the means for an operation of that scale.[1343]

Decision-making on these matters was not on the international agenda for the time being. The Contact Group had its hands full with the preparation of two Security Council resolutions on the tightening and suspension of economic and financial sanctions. New financial sanctions met with opposition from the European Central Banks.[1344] The tightening (Resolution942) was directed against Republika Srpska, the suspension (Resolution 943) related to the action against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Milosevic had decided to accept the map after his fruitless pressure on Pale. Since under strong international pressure the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia had closed the border with Republika Srpska from 4August onwards, after the establishment of international monitoring by a special mission of the International Conference on the Former Yugoslavia from 17 September onwards, he could lay claim to suspension of the ban on air traffic and cultural relations.[1345]

On balance, the action of the Contact Group had not brought a political solution a single step closer. That was mainly due to the lack of internal cohesion: the driving force behind the formation of the group had been the desire for common action, but in practice there was no question of common action, or of similar interests. Washington and Moscow in particular sent signals to the parties in Sarajevo and Pale about the ultimatum-like character of the Contact Group plan that were misinterpreted.[1346]

The rejection of the Contact Group's plan was due to a number of interrelated factors. The plan did not take into account the demands of Republika Srpska regarding self-determination and security guarantees. That meant that the Contact Group had not dealt with a possible point for compensation for the loss of terrain (Republika Srpska would have to vacate 20%). According to Akashi, this would have meant 'more legitimacy' in the eyes of Pale and could have been decisive in winning them over.[1347] In order to be able to put such a proposal to Pale, America would have had to put pressure on Sarajevo, but that was still impossible at that time. Finally, there was no credible threat of force for Pale in the event of a rejection. The Contact Group had not yet reached the stage of 'coercive diplomacy'.[1348]

Another quite significant factor was that the Contact Group was in a hurry to achieve a result. In fact, the map required great concessions from both parties. The parties of the Federation kept their objections to themselves and gambled on a Bosnian Serb rejection. The leaders of Republika Srpska were given only two weeks to persuade regional communities on which they greatly depended to settle for 49%, while in their eyes 65% would be a reasonable portion. Besides, the allotted share did not come up to the mark in terms of quality (for example, too little infrastructure, and too few mineral

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1341 Confidential information (86).
1342 Interview L. Smith, 06/06/00. Clark, Waging Modern War, pp. 37-38.
1343 United Nations: Report of the Secretary-General pursuant to Resolution 908 (1994), p.13. S/1994/1067, 17/09/94.
1344 Confidential interview (14).
1345 United Nations Yearbook 1994, pp. 555-558.
1346 Karadzic thought after the meeting with the Russian Minister of Defence in Belgrade on 27 July that the Russian Federation would defend the RS if it came to a war after rejection of the Contact Group plan. Se: Silber & Little, Death of Yugoslavia, p. 379.
1347 UNGE UNPROFOR Box 125 file: 32 Fax In June –July 1994: Z-998, Akashi to Annan, 02/07/94. Burg & Shoup, War in Bosnia, p.306.
1348 Burg & Shoup, War in Bosnia, p. 307.

resources and hospitals). According to the Bosnian Serbs, the Muslims were being given 80% of the economic resources.[1349]

The impetus in the Contact Group's search for a political solution was of a temporary nature and reached stalemate after Pale's rejection of the map. That does not mean that from the beginning of September 1994 onwards the Contact Group's plan played no further role. The isolation of Republika Srpska had produced a situation that made it possible to increase the pressure on Pale. There was consensus on this within the Contact Group.

The isolation of Pale was otherwise not without risk. In UNPROFOR circles it was feared that the mindset among the Bosnian Serb authorities of being the victim of a Western plot would only be reinforced and would make it impossible to negotiate with them. The actual effectiveness of the isolation remained guesswork: the truth would emerge if Pale accepted the map. Pale let it be known in contacts with UNPROFOR and in public statements that it continued to adopt the standpoint that the Contact Group's map could serve as the basis for negotiations, but Karadzic also let it be known that he wished to discuss changes informally with the Government in Sarajevo.[1350]

There was a difference of opinion between UNPROFOR and NATO, and within NATO between the United States and the troop-contributing members, about the use of air power as a means of increasing the pressure on Republika Srpska. In fact, this was the continuation of an old discussion on the basis of new developments, otherwise without much result.

After the failure of its first attempt to achieve peace, the Contact Group did not disappear from the international arena. It continued to function as the main exchange and coordination point for various parts of the Yugoslavia question. The peace plan in Bosnia also remained on the agenda, but the agreement that there could be no direct contact with Pale until the map had been accepted there too meant that there was little it could do.

The Bosnian Serb's rejection of the Contact Group's map did facilitate other developments. As explained above, an unforeseen side effect was the political division between Serbia and Montenegro, on the one hand, and Republika Srpska, on the other hand. With his embargo on military goods, Milosevic opted for a course with some prospect of suspension of the UN sanctions, and therefore closed the border with the republic of Karadzic and Mladic at the beginning of August.

The Contact Group's plan also strengthened the discussion on two crucial topics: further limitation of the military options of the VRS by the setting up of more Heavy Weapon Exclusion Zones around Safe Areas and a more active use of NATO air power and the lifting of the arms embargo for the Muslim-Croat Federation and, as a consequence of this, the departure of UNPROFOR. The discussion of both topics brought the opposing views between both UNPROFOR and NATO and the United States and its European allies to light. In that discussion the Contact Group was able to fulfil a useful task as the centre for discussion and exchange of information on activities of members of the Group in the peace process.[1351]

## 3. Lifting of the arms embargo against Bosnia-Hercegovina

The lifting of the arms embargo had been the most far-reaching of the disincentives in the case of the Contact Group's map. Placing it on the list had been a major concession of the other members to the United States. In the policy of the Clinton Government, lifting of the arms embargo combined with heavy use of air power against the Bosnian Serbs, known as 'lift and strike', had been a serious option.

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[1349] UNNY, DPKO, coded cables UNPROFOR,. No. Z-1002, de La Presle to Annan, 28/06/94 (report of the Force Commander's Conference). UNGE UNPROFOR Box 120, file: Civil Affairs Sector NE. Weekly BH political assessment 80, 20/08/94, p.4. UNGE UNPROFOR Box 208, file BH Command 26-31 August 1994. Fax HX BHC Sarajevo (Daniell) to HQ Unprofor. Confidential information (87).

[1350] CTKL, BH Command MA to Commander at HQ Zagreb, 18/09/94: 'Meeting Pale 18 Sep – Karadzic/Commander BHC'. UNGE UNPROFOR Box 120, file: Civil Affairs Sector NE. Weekly BH political assessment 83, 11/09/94.

[1351] Interview P. Neville-Jones, 15/11/01.

In the discussion with the European allies after it had been presented in the spring of 1993, it emerged that countries with troops on the ground in UNPROFOR were opposed to the lifting of the arms embargo. The views and arguments expressed for and against in 1993 came up for discussion again in 1994. The legal argument that the arms embargo was a violation of the sovereign state of Bosnia-Hercegovina's right to self-defence was countered by the pragmatic arguments: lifting would result in a resumption of the war; Bosnia would not be able to defend itself and would be overrun by the VRS; a continuation of the UNPROFOR peace mission would no longer be possible and, finally, the war could spread to surrounding countries, in particular to Croatia and Macedonia.

For the US Government, the pressure from Congress to lift the embargo was politically an at least equally relevant fact. On 9 June 1994 the House of Representatives had expressed itself in favour of lifting. At the beginning of August the Senate voted for multilateral ending through the Security Council or, if necessary, by means of a unilateral American decision. This amendment of Senators Nunn (Dem., Georgia) and Mitchell (Dem., Maine) formed part of the US Defence Budget Authorization Bill; this bill obliged President Clinton at the time of signing (which he did on 5 October 1994) of this law on the defence budget for 1994-1995 to submit to the Security Council at the same time a draft resolution for lifting of the arms embargo against Bosnia. If the proposal was not approved within two weeks, the government had to take unilateral measures to that effect. With the first mid-term elections for Congress coming up in November 1994, the Clinton Government could not ignore the wishes of Congress. Clinton announced that he would submit a proposal to the Security Council for a lifting of the embargo if Pale had still not accepted the Contact Group's plan on 15 October. He said that this did not rule out a unilateral American decision.[1352]

The lifting of the arms embargo had a great attraction for the American political debate. First of all, it contained a moral call for the correction of 'a misguided policy' adopted at the start of the war. It was also a relatively cheap way of doing something about the Bosnian problem.[1353] Moreover, its simplicity offered every possibility of ignoring the complex situation in Bosnia itself and of fiercely criticizing the failure of UNPROFOR.

It was a public pretence that Clinton and Congress were in agreement. In fact, the US Government was against lifting the embargo. In Brussels the Americans had always said behind the scenes at the North Atlantic Council that there would be no change of policy without consulting the allies. Indeed, this consensus was not broken.[1354] President Clinton told the Dutch Prime Minister, Wim Kok, in mid-September that he endorsed his objections to the lifting of the embargo.[1355] According to the new Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs, Richard Holbrooke, Clinton wanted to 'avoid the lifting of the embargo with its far-reaching adverse consequences'. The US Government was assiduously looking for alternatives.[1356]

For the time being, however, the US Government was doing a dangerous version of the splits with its policy. The lifting of the arms embargo was part of a much greater problem: the Americans had not had a policy of their own since joining the Contact Group. Washington had accepted the fundamental principle of percentage-wise division of the territory of Bosnia-Hercegovina, but further departure from the policy pursued earlier had not been considered. That meant in practice that no analysis of the actual possibilities for a solution to the conflict had been made, but that the existing lines were being pursued. This had been reflected in the incentives and disincentives of the Contact Group.

In the short term, that produced tensions in two respects. The peace process led by the Contact Group became deadlocked owing to differences of opinion on the implementation of the ultimatum about the map. Furthermore, the announcement of tightening up and extension of the Heavy Weapon

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[1352] UNGE UNPROFOR Box 120, file: Civil Affairs Sector NE. Weekly BH political assessment No. 79, 13/08/94, p.2. Weekly BH political assessment No. 80, 20/08/94, p.3.
[1353] Bert, Reluctant Superpower, p. 179.
[1354] Interview L.W. Veenendaal, 17/08/00.
[1355] DJZ. No.D94/368, DAB to Minister of Defence, 20/09/94.
[1356] Confidential information (92).

Exclusion Zones and lifting of the arms embargo led to discussions on the effectiveness of these means of pressure and on the consequences of their use. Those discussions were conducted at various levels, first and foremost within UNPROFOR.

The first reaction was clear and simple: extension and tightening up of the Heavy Weapon Exclusion Zones was militarily impossible. Lifting of the arms embargo would mean the deathblow for the peace mission itself, and the announcement of it would also initiate the planning of the withdrawal itself. At the same time, these two topics were discussed within NATO, which led to a clear confrontation between the American and the European/Canadian approach. Between NATO and UN/UNPROFOR there was a similar dividing line. Characteristic of these discussions was the fact that the militrary on the whole held the opinion that the chosen military disincentives were unsuitable for the political objective.

The Pentagon too had its doubts about the consequences of the lifting of the arms embargo. In the eyes of the planners of the Chiefs of Staff, its placing on the list of disincentives was another example of Clintonian decision-making. It might seem a good thing to decide 'to hit the Serbs hard', but military leaders thought that it was also necessary to know what to do if the strike did not have the desired effect, and that had not been worked out.[1357] The Pentagon therefore made its own analysis: an effective 'lift and strike' policy in Bosnia was not possible. Lifting the arms embargo would be very dangerous because of the consequences: the withdrawal of UNPROFOR. More time was also needed to teach the ABiH how to handle the weapons.[1358]

On account of the enormous pressure from Congress in favour of lifting of the arms embargo for Bosnia, Clinton had not publicly opposed the lifting. He himself had been looking mainly at the domestic aspects of it, and he was not given any clear advice from his chief advisers on security and foreign policy because of their differences of opinion. Clinton played for time with a suggestion that a decision be taken to lift the embargo, but that its implementation be suspended for six months, in the hope that a political settlement would be reached during that moratorium. Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic agreed to this proposal on 16 September 1994, in his address to the United Nations General Assembly. He did lay down his conditions: UNPROFOR and NATO were to take action against all Bosnian Serb breaches of Security Council resolutions. Izetbegovic's most important demand was that UNPROFOR should remain.[1359]

The American draft resolution did not, however, have a ghost of a chance at the Security Council. In July 1994 the British Government had still been prepared to knuckle under and accept lifting of the embargo, on account of its 'special relationship' with Washington. However, the moratorium created scope, and that reinforced the opposition of the other permanent members of the Security Council to the American proposal. During the first informal discussion of the American proposal on 28 October 1994 US Permanent Representative Madeleine Albright's colleagues showed no appreciation whatsoever of the proposal. According to the British Permanent Representative, Sir David Hannay, and also according to his French colleague Jean-Bernard Mérimée, acceptance would mean that the Council was abandoning the peace option and was opting for war. The lifting of the embargo in their view was an act of despair that would unleash a chain reaction: UNPROFOR would withdraw immediately, and there would be hardly any humanitarian aid. Also, tensions would arise within the Muslim-Croat Federation, which would be reflected in Croatia and other countries; finally, the peace process of the Contact Group would cease, and the international pressure on Republika Srpska to accept the Contact Group would jeopardize the plan. The Russian Ambassador, J.M.Vorontsov, challenged Albright's claim that there was consensus within the Contact Group about lifting the embargo: the moment had not arrived for this far-reaching measure, which from Albright's point of view was 'a last resort', because the Contact Group was still in the middle of consultations

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[1357] Halberstam, War, pp. 246-247.

[1358] Clark, Waging Modern War, pp. 39-41.

[1359] Gow, Triumph of the Lack of Will, p. 220. Republic of Bosnia and Hercegovina. Permanent Mission to the United Nations New York, Statement by Alija Izetbegovic at the 49th Session of the General Assembly, 27/09/94, pp. 5-6.

about the constitutional construction.[1360] During the public debate in the Security Council on 8 and 9 November it became clear that the draft resolution was not going to make it; it even seemed likely that it would not even gain a simple majority.

The Americans did not have time to gain more support for the draft resolution, because the time limit of fourteen days laid down by the Senate for acceptance had expired. The Clinton Government tried to limit as much as possible the damage arising from the failure to pass the resolution. The government announced that it would not be proceeding to a unilateral lifting of the arms embargo, and it did not commit itself to such a step six months later either.

The Nunn-Mitchell amendment also stipulated that American cooperation in the international supervision of compliance with the arms embargo against Bosnia had to end. The amendment therefore did not call for unilateral lifting of the embargo by the Americans, but committed them to withdrawal from the operation of carrying out voluntary supervision of compliance with the embargo. This led to special instructions for the American units in the case of Operation Sharp Guard in the Adriatic Sea. They had to cease their activities as soon as it was found that a ship was carrying weapons destined for Bosnia. All other American activities in the context of international cooperation with regard to the conflict in Bosnia, such as in Operation Deny Flight and NATO operations like Close Air Support and the supervision of economic sanctions, were not affected by the implementing measures of the Nunn-Mitchell amendment.[1361] The American authorities had therefore found a middle way. According to the American authorities, the practical consequences of the measures would be 'nil', because the supply of weapons from particularly Pakistan and Iran to Bosnia was not by sea, but mainly by air. Since the beginning of Sharp Guard only three ships with weapons for Bosnia had been intercepted.

The US Government felt that it was doing everything in its power to minimize the damage for the allies.[1362] In a practical and technical sense, that was true, but in a political sense the gulf between the American and the European view of the conflict had plainly surfaced again, and they were as sharply divided as ever. The fundamental standpoint of the US Government remained that the embargo 'had unfairly hurt the victims of the Bosnian conflict'.[1363] Washington continued to take this as the basis for arguments in favour of a tough approach to Pale, and continued to put pressure on UNPROFOR and NATO to deploy air power whenever there was a VRS violation of the Safe Areas and the Heavy Weapon Exclusion Zones regime. In the words of NATO Secretary-General, Willy Claes, after a visit to Washington in November 1994, the US Government was still 'extremely sympathetic' to the views of the European partners, while in the American Congress a lack of understanding for the policy of the allies prevailed. Even more disconcerting was the fact that the Republican leaders in particular, the great advocates of lifting of the arms embargo, lacked the most elementary knowledge of the state of affairs – for example, concerning the relationship between UN and NATO in the protection of the Safe Areas.[1364]

The fear was justified that Congress would impose further policy on the lifting of the arms embargo on the US Government. The election results of November 1994 meant that the Republicans had gained a majority in both the House of Representatives and the Senate. The new Congress was expected to be less receptive than the sitting one to arguments against lifting the embargo. According to the State Department, measures like the Nunn-Mitchell amendment would be an excellent way of showing dissatisfaction with the conduct of UNPROFOR and the UN. In November 1994 the direct practical consequences remained extremely limited – since Washington was continuing to take part in

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[1360] Confidential information (93).
[1361] Bstas. Memo D94/484, DAB to Minister and Junior Minister, 11/11/94.
[1362] ABZ, DWH/ARA/00844. Coded cable Jacobovits 688, 11/11/94. ABZ, DDI/DEU/05277. Background information for Ministerial WEU Noordwijk, 14/11/94.
[1363] DAB. Memo D94/484, DAB to Minister, 11/11/94.
[1364] ABZ, DDI/DEU/05241. Coded cable Veenendaal 1881, 22/11/94.

all other NATO operations for the former Bosnia. The political repercussions were all the greater: a clear dent had been made in relations between the EU and the United States.[1365]

For the actual supply of military equipment to the warring factions this made little difference. The official policy line in Washington remained that it would not supply weapons to any of the parties in the conflict. The Nunn-Mitchell amendment did, however, stipulate that Washington would consult with Sarajevo about unilateral lifting of the embargo and training of the ABiH. Those talks had begun on 15 November. This seemed to be the next step down a slippery slope. Washington had agreed earlier to the secret supply of weapons by Islamic states to Bosnia by way of Croatia (see Chapter 4 of the Intelligence Appendix to this report). The US Ambassador in Zagreb, Peter Galbraith, and the newly appointed Richard Holbrooke were the driving forces behind this deal.[1366] According to French sources, Washington was supplying heavy mortars to the ABiH.[1367] At informal 'briefing meetings' of the members of the NATO Council without Secretary-General Willy Claes present, the Americans tried to persuade other members, including the Netherlands, also to supply weapons to the ABiH and to participate in a training programme.[1368] American involvement in supplies of weapons to the ABiH was generally assumed, without the ins and outs of the matter being clear at that time.[1369]

As already mentioned, the Dutch Government, through its newly elected Prime Minister, Wim Kok, had been able to inform Clinton directly in September 1994 of its objections to the lifting of the embargo. It deplored the American policy for two reasons. First, because of the political repercussions mentioned earlier. The submission of the draft resolution to the Security Council showed a break in the consensus of the Contact Group. With regard to the matter itself, the Dutch Government still felt that the disadvantages of lifting of the arms embargo outweighed the moral right of the Muslims to self-defence.[1370] This was not an immutable standpoint, but lifting the embargo did remain the last resort. The Government would opt for it only it was found that, despite maximum pressure, the Bosnian Serbs were continuing to reject the Contact Group's peace plan.

Since the other disincentives, such as sanctions and enforcing Heavy Weapon Exclusion Zones, had 'no quickly appreciable effect' on the policy of Pale, the moment did come for looking at lifting of the arms embargo.[1371] A decision to lift would, however, have far-reaching consequences, it was felt at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The negotiating process would stop, the parties would resume fighting, UNPROFOR would probably withdraw from some parts of Bosnia, and large troop-contributing countries like France and Great Britain would withdraw. The consequences for the Bosnian people would therefore be purely negative.[1372] Did Washington not see that the VRS would not wait until the spring of 1995 to strike its military blow? The Government in The Hague was extremely disappointed about the fact that the proposal for lifting the embargo did not form part of a 'comprehensive approach for Bosnia and Croatia', as had been promised earlier by Minister of State Kornblum.[1373] The Government in The Hague held back as much as possible during the debate about the lifting: it had rejected a request from the British to make a statement as a troop-contributing country at the Security Council meeting on 8 and 9 November.[1374] It obviously wanted to avoid a confrontation between the Dutch and American points of view.

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1365 ABZ, DEU/ARA/05241. Coded cable Jacobovits 688, 12/11/94 with note from deputy DEU.
1366 Burg & Shoup, War in Bosnia, pp. 307-308. Wiebes, Appendix on Intelligence, Chapter 4.
1367 ABZ, DEU/ARA/05241. Coded cable Wijnaendts 28, 28/11/94.
1368 Interview L.W. Veenendaal, 17/08/00.
1369 Interviews L.W. Veenendaal, 17/08/00 and N. Biegman, 03/07/00.
1370 TK, Parliamentary session 1994-1995, letter 16/09/95.
1371 ABZ, DEU/ARA/ 05241. No. DEU-923, Deputy DEU to DGPZ, 28/11/94. ABZ, 999.4 WEU Yugoslavia part 8. Coded cable Celer circ707, 28/11/94.
1372 ABZ, DEU/ARA/ 03051. Discussion points for General Council EU 28/11/94. DJZ file Lekken: No.D94/450, DAB to Minister, 02/11/94 (re. interview Voorhoeve with Sacirbey on 26/10/94).
1373 ABZ, DEU/ARA/ 05241. Speaking notes for DGPZ and Minister, 07-08/11/94.
1374 ABZ, DEU/ARA/ 05241. Coded cable Biegman 1160, 04/11/94; Coded cable Van Mierlo 389, 07/11/94.

Lifting the arms embargo was mainly the topic of an internal American debate. That does not mean that it was passed over at the UN, UNPROFOR and the troop-contributing countries, but they could do little to influence it, because of the high level of American party-political ingredients. That does not mean that the debate on lifting of the embargo was conducted only in the United States. After all, its implementation would have direct repercussions for UNPROFOR and the troop-contributing countries. The fact is that from the moment that it was mentioned as a disincentive by the Contact Group the discussion of its possible consequences began. The main consequence would undoubtedly be the withdrawal of the peacekeeping force, with all the destabilizing consequences that this would have. However, after the rejection of the Contact Group's peace plan, the discussion between UN/UNPROFOR and NATO concentrated on the implementation of another disincentive, namely the setting up of Heavy Weapon Exclusion Zones around all Safe Areas, and in that connection a more resolute use of air power in the course of monitoring whether the regulations imposed were being observed.

## 4. More robust use of air power?

Since Resolution 836 the use of air power in the form of Close Air Support and air strikes had been a topic of discussion between UN/UNPROFOR and NATO. It had acquired a new element after the setting up of the Heavy Weapon Exclusion Zones in Sarajevo (February 1994) and Gorazde (April 1994). In both cases the zone had been set up as a countermeasure of UNPROFOR against VRS shelling of the Safe Area. As a measure against violation, UNPROFOR could decide to ask NATO to use air power.

As explained in paragraph 2 of this chapter, extension and stricter use of the Heavy Weapon Exclusion Zone was one of the disincentives of the Contact Group in the event of a Bosnian Serb rejection of the map. According to Bosnia-Hercegovina Command and Force Commander Bertrand de Lapresle, it was a question of a political response of the Contact Group to a political decision of the Bosnian Serbs: implementation would mean 'serious difficulties for UNPROFOR'. 'UNPROFOR would be perceived to be one of the combatants as a result of actions taken not by itself, but by the Contact Group'.[1375]

The US Government pressed first and foremost for strict maintenance of the Heavy Weapon Exclusion Zone regime. This amounted to every violation being directly responded to with an air strike. In practice, it appeared that UNPROFOR was not prepared to do this. Its task in the former Yugoslavia was not to enforce peace by armed means. According to Force Commander Bertrand de Lapresle, two conditions had to be met before any use of air power: the air power had to be directed against a specific violation in time and place, and had to be in proportion to the nature of the violation. An 'overly robust action' such as that envisaged by NATO 'would have a catastrophic effect' on the UN troops and on the situation in Bosnia itself. According to Bosnia-Hercegovina Commander Michael Rose, there were also other, more peaceable ways of removing heavy weapons of the VRS discovered within the Safe Area of Sarajevo.[1376]

In conjunction with the discussion on lifting of the arms embargo, this American pressure for rigorous use of air power led to great irritation among the NATO allies. The call for tougher action from the American side increased the risk for the allied troops on the ground and destroyed all hope of a withdrawal of UNPROFOR without resistance. Withdrawal from a hostile environment was a much more realistic scenario under those circumstances. It seemed achievable only in the form of a NATO operation with the participation of American troops.[1377] According to a plan of Bosnia-Hercegovina Command, in a worst-case scenario three divisions would be needed for the evacuation of 6,000 men

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[1375] DCBC: BH Command documents sent to Lt.-Col Metzelaar of DCBC, 26/07/94.
[1376] UNNY, DPKO, UNPROFOR Coded Cables. Nr. Z-1435, De Lapresle to Annan.
[1377] ABZ: DEU/ARA/ 05276. Coded cable Veenendaal 1335, 03/09/94.

from Sarajevo and the three eastern enclaves.[1378] That made it clear that more robust action required the preparation of a major withdrawal operation for UNPROFOR.

The discussions concentrated on the military planning, Heavy Weapon Exclusion Zones and the consequences of the lifting of the arms embargo. A serious difference of opinion became apparent here between the United States and the troop-contributing allies. According to the Americans, the lifting of the arms embargo fitted into the approach of the Contact Group. They saw few advantages in cooperation with the UN in the planning of the evacuation of UNPROFOR.[1379] The main issue in the discussions was the deployment of American troops. On that point the US Government was not going to budge for the time being: there could be no question of it until after a peace settlement, and that could be achieved only by putting the Bosnian Serbs under pressure by strict enforcement and extension of the Heavy Weapon Exclusion Zones and ultimately lifting the arms embargo.[1380]

In fact, what it boiled down to was that in September Washington declared that it did not want to talk about possible consequences of the use of the disincentives and did not want to make any promise whatsoever on the deployment of American troops in a withdrawal of UNPROFOR from a 'hostile' environment. That could result in a grave debacle.

NATO was heading for a serious internal crisis, the worst since the end of the Cold War. That was also the opinion of a large number of those involved on the American side. Washington was pressing particularly for the use of more force, without having a good idea of what was in fact happening in Bosnia and what UNPROFOR was doing. The Pentagon was an exception to this. The Pentagon was afraid of a 'major rift in US-European relations'.[1381] At the informal meeting in Seville on 29 and 30 September the Ministers of Defence tried to avert the crisis and plot a common course of action for NATO in Bosnia and for cooperation with UNPROFOR.

The discussion in Seville focused on the question of action to defend the Safe Areas and violation of the Heavy Weapon Exclusion Zones. Although it was not difficult for the participants to agree to the proposal for 'more robust' action put forward by US Secretary William Perry, differences of opinion remained on the precise meaning of the term and to a certain degree also about its objective. That difference of opinion emerged in particular when it came to placing it in the context of the former Yugoslavia. British Minister Malcolm Rifkind and his French colleague Léotard argued from the point of view of UNPROFOR: the containment approach, granting of humanitarian aid and lasting peace through a, sadly enough, slow peace process. In addition to other means, a 'robust response' by NATO in the Heavy Weapon Exclusion Zones could promote acceptance of the peace plan put forward by the Contact Group, provided that there was a proportional use of military capabilities.

Perry showed his dissatisfaction about the recent use of air power by UNPROFOR and repeated that he wished to force the Bosnian Serbs by bombing to accept the Contact Group peace plan. He rejected the 'hesitant "tit-for-tat" approach' of UNPROFOR as well as an 'all-out air campaign'. Perry pleaded for taking a middle way by giving a more precise description in the existing NATO regulations of what 'robust enforcement' meant for the Weapon Exclusion Zone and the 'strangulation' of Sarajevo.[1382]

The discussions revolved mainly around two points: the question of whether NATO should act independently or in consultation with the UN and UNPROFOR, and how to deal with the risks for UNPROFOR of a more robust action. The differences were clear. The US Government felt the growing pressure of Congress for lifting the arms embargo and wanted – with a postponement of this until the spring of 1995 as a realistic option – to bring about the peace plan proposed by the Contact Group before that time by a tougher approach, an essential part of which would be more robust action by NATO. Turkey and the Federal Republic of Germany supported the American standpoint. France,

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1378 UNGE UNPROFOR Box 208 file: BHCommand 15-17 Aug 94. Fax HQ BHC to HQ UNPROFOR, 16/08/94.
1379 Confidential information (170).
1380 ABZ: DEU/ARA/ 05276. Coded cable Veenendaal 1344, 06/09/94.
1381 Interviews J. Pardew 30/11/00 and L. Smith, 06/06/00.
1382 ABZ, DEU/ARA/ 05276. Coded cable Van Mierlo 377, 03/10/94; Coded cable Veenendaal 1534, 03/10/94.

the United Kingdom and other participants in UNPROFOR had less high expectations from more air strikes.

Vis-à-vis the media, the participants demonstrated above all their agreement on more robust action. Perry gave the impression that his entire proposal had been accepted. However, it also emerged from reports in Dutch newspapers that there was no unanimity yet concerning the specific details.[1383] Perry himself went to Split to brief Akashi and Force Commander Bertrand de Lapresle on the results of Seville.

Akashi was quite relieved to find that Perry was basing his position on the dual key and the leading role of UNPROFOR for the use of air power. According to Perry, the discussions in Seville had focused mainly on what NATO could do 'to be more constructive and supportive of UNPROFOR'. All participating NATO countries would offer conclusions from Seville to the Secretary-General of the UN and ask for 'appropriate guidance' to be given to UNPROFOR. The differences of opinion between the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and Republika Srpska were an important strategic change. The immediate withdrawal of UNPROFOR was dropped with the postponement of a possible lifting of the arms embargo until the spring of 1995. A peace agreement had to be on the table within six months now. Akashi found that the NATO timetable was tighter than that of UNPROFOR, in particular with regard to pressure on Republika Srpska. The UNPROFOR delegation also pointed out that Perry was reasoning from a different perspective. He believed in reaching a peace agreement by means of disincentives; UNPROFOR did not believe in the effect of military pressure. According to UNPROFOR, an economic, political and social blockade could achieve that.[1384]

To recapitulate, the discussion within NATO had delivered only the appearance of agreement. The American course of a tough approach to Pale had still not been adopted by the NATO countries that were supplying troops to UNPROFOR. For them, pressure for increased use of air power was no problem, so long as the principle of the 'dual key' was retained. The decision remained up to UNPROFOR and ruled out independent action by NATO. That did not alter the fact that the discussion about the consequences of more robust action that had been opened within NATO was to lead to great tensions. The situation in Bosnia itself had also become more explosive as a result of the resumption of fighting in the summer, and had led to discussion on taking a tougher line.

## 5. The new Dutch 'purple' Government and Bosnia

On 22 August 1994, after lengthy negotiations, the first 'purple' Dutch Government took office. This Government of PvdA (Labour Party), VVD (Liberal Conservatives) and D'66 (Liberal Democrats) was presided over by Social Democrat Prime Minister Wim Kok, who had been the Deputy Prime Minister in the last Government of Prime Minister Ruud Lubbers. H.A.F.M.O. van Mierlo, the political leader of D'66 (Democrats), became Minister of Foreign Affairs and Dr.J.J.C.Voorhoeve, former chairman of the VVD and since 1990 director of the 'Clingendael' Institute for International Relations, was given the Defence portfolio. The two new ministers had a differing knowledge of the Yugoslavia question.

The Catholic Hans van Mierlo had studied law in Nijmegen. He subsequently worked as a journalist in Amsterdam; he felt very much at home in the Amsterdam environment. He had been one of the founder members of Democraten '66, a new political party of the liberal left with sweeping views on state and political renewal: an elected prime minister, reintroduction of the districts system and the referendum were the main elements. Van Mierlo, at the time sometimes referred to as 'the Dutch Kennedy', became the political leader of D'66. He was popular, but not uncontroversial within the party. His ideas on the young party being merged in a progressive people's party met with resistance from other party members. Disappointed about the failure of the progressive cooperation, he resigned

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[1383] 'NATO promises to take tougher action in Bosnia', NRC Handelsblad, 30/09/94. 'NATO going to take more 'robust' action against the Serbs', De Volkskrant, 30/09/94.

[1384] UNGE ICFY Box 127, file:Fax In file 34 13 Sep – 6 Oct 94. Coded cable Z-1512 Akashi to Annan, 04/10/94.

as party chairman and withdrew from politics. In 1981, however, he made his comeback as Minister of Defence in the Van Agt-II Government. He turned out to be a good national moderator in the heated national debate about the positioning of cruise missiles. In 1982 his political career appeared to be at an end again, and D'66 a doomed party. Under Van Mierlo, the party nevertheless began to recover in 1986, and won 24 seats in the 1994 elections. Van Mierlo had rational and personal motives for accepting the post of Foreign Affairs. First, he was the spiritual father of the 'purple' coalition; secondly, he saw this ministerial post as the crown of his political career.[1385]

Voorhoeve had no experience whatsoever as a minister in 1994. His career up to 1994 had been on two tracks: that of the university and scientific institutes, on the one hand, and the party political, on the other hand. He had trained as an agricultural engineer in Wageningen, but during his study decided to specialize in the field of international relations. He became known in professional circles by a study on Dutch foreign policy after the Second World War, soon became an associate professor in international relations in Wageningen, and worked first at the Telders Foundation of the VVD, and later at the Scientific Council for Government Policy. Voorhoeve's political ambitions received a boost when in 1982 he became a member of Parliament and later the chairman of a sometimes sharply divided party. He proved unable to soothe the tensions within the party, and in the debates in Parliament did not always prove to be on the alert. He left the political arena and in 1990 became director of the Clingendael Institute, an environment in which he clearly thrived better. His internationalism and idealism were factors that in the debate on the former Yugoslavia led to his siding with the advocates of intervention for humanitarian reasons.[1386]

When the Government was being formed in 1994 Yugoslavia had hardly played any role. The outgoing Lubbers Government in its final months had spoken of the general aspects of the Bosnia policy, but it had not been seriously worried about the situation of Dutchbat in Srebrenica. Prime Minister Ruud Lubbers had felt sure after a visit to the NATO base in Villafranca – purely from seeing the aircraft – that Close Air Support had been properly arranged. After a visit to Srebrenica in May 1994, Lubbers and Minister Relus ter Beek were convinced that Dutchbat was doing a good job and that the battalion felt the same.[1387]

The new Prime Minister, Wim Kok, as the political leader of the PvdA (Labour) and Deputy Prime Minister, had been very familiar with the Yugoslavia dossier. At the time of formation of the government there had been no major developments in the region itself. During his discussions with Kok, who had been charged with forming the new government, Voorhoeve had spoken of Bosnia and his concerns about the situation of Dutchbat in Srebrenica, without making a political point of it. During the handover discussions which Voorhoeve had with Ter Beek and Van Mierlo had with Kooijmans neither Bosnia nor Srebrenica were discussed as an acute problem, nor was Bosnia discussed during the constitutional consultation of the 'purple Government.[1388]

That does not alter the fact that the Yugoslavia dossier had become complicated at the end of August 1994. The Contact Group's plan had been rejected by the Bosnian Serbs; the application of the disincentives was causing serious differences of opinion within the Contact Group; there were serious differences of opinion between UNPROFOR and NATO about the enforcement of the Heavy Weapon Exclusion Zones; UNPROFOR had started the planning of the withdrawal; a unilateral lifting of the arms embargo by the Americans seemed imminent and, finally, within NATO a rift was growing between the American and European view on Bosnia policy; in Bosnia itself the situation had become unclear because of the Serbian embargo against Republika Srpska and its effects on Pale's policy. All this seemed good reason for Van Mierlo and Voorhoeve to draft a Dutch policy line. Their

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[1385] D. Hellema, 'A charming government minister' in: Hellema, Zeeman and Van der Zwan (Ed.), De Nederlandse ministers van Buitenlandse Zaken in de twintigste eeuw, Den Haag 1999, pp. 295-308.
[1386] E. Nysingh, 'An idealist fails to save the day at Defence' De Volkskrant, 09/12/95.
[1387] Ter Beek, Manoeuvring, pp. 212-213. Vertrekpunt Den Haag, p. 158. Interviews R.J.M. Lubbers, 14/10/99 and R. ter Beek, 23/12/99.
[1388] Vertrekpunt Den Haag, pp. 158-159. Interviews J.J.C. Voorhoeve, 15/04/97; H.A.F.M.O. van Mierlo, 19/05/00.

predecessors, Kooijmans and Ter Beek, had after all been strong supporters of the Contact Group's proposal and had advocated the use of the disincentives after Pale's rejection of the map.

In the first month after they took office, the new Government ministers, on the initiative of Voorhoeve, did in fact develop a perspective for Dutch policy in the former Yugoslavia. Voorhoeve had been greatly concerned with the Srebrenica dossier from the start. He was aware of the precarious situation of the population in the enclave and of the militarily dangerous situation of Dutchbat. At the end of August he had asked the Chief of Defence Staff to go to Srebrenica in order to look at whether, in consultation with the ABiH, a defence strategy could be organized for the enclave. 'It would be a hopeless task' was Van den Breemen's reply, as Voorhoeve recalled later.[1389]

Voorhoeve had subsequently, on the advice of Van den Breemen, visited the former Yugoslavia together with Couzy from 9 to 12 September 1994. He called at all the points that were important to the Netherlands during this flying visit: Villafranca, Split, Sarajevo (for a talk with Bosnia-Hercegovina Commander Michael Rose), Srebrenica, Lukavac (Support Command of Dutchbat) and, finally, Busovaca. The Chief of Defence Staff had advised Voorhoeve not to respond to a possible proposal by Rose – made during a visit to Dutchbat in Srebrenica shortly before –to station the company from Simin Han in the enclave too. That would not make the enclave more defensible and would only increase the logistical problems. Rose did not bring up the matter during his interview with Voorhoeve.[1390] In Srebrenica Voorhoeve discussed with the battalion staff – battalion commandant Everts was on leave - options for an 'evacuation from the enclave in a "hostile environment" from Srebrenica' of Dutchbat, UNMO, UNHCR, UnCivPol and the NGOs.[1391]

Nevertheless, Couzy returned disappointed: his expectation of being able to exchange views directly with the new minister during the trip were not fulfilled. After the official programme, the minister withdrew, and no exchange of views between the two occurred, contrary to the expectation of the Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army.[1392] Couzy's statement that he had not managed to have a private talk with Voorhoeve was countered by Voorhoeve's view that Couzy was difficult to understand because he was open and friendly one time and adopted a hostile attitude the next.[1393]

After returning to The Hague, Voorhoeve told Muhamed Sacirbey, the Bosnian Permanent Representative to the UN, that 'the current hopeless situation surrounding the enclaves' simply could not go on. He suggested by way of a solution that the population be moved to an area that was easier to defend.[1394]

In order to coordinate the stance of Van Mierlo at the United Nations General Assembly and that of Voorhoeve at the informal meeting of NATO Ministers of Defence in Seville, they laid down policies at the instigation of Voorhoeve. These policies were directed at two main issues: the international reactions to the rejection of the Contact Group's plan by Republika Srpska, and improvement of Dutchbat's position in Srebrenica. The Netherlands needed to be more closely involved in the first place, and in any case needed to be better informed about the activities of the Contact Group through the appointment of a special contact. Voorhoeve and Van Mierlo put forward two arguments for this: the substantial Dutch contribution to UNPROFOR and the 'vulnerable position' of Dutchbat in 'isolated' Srebrenica. Priority was given in the policy to prevention of the lifting of the arms embargo, this being for a whole range of reasons: the inevitable resumption of the war would mean failure of the peace process; the negative repercussions for humanitarian aid would be incalculable; the Contact Group would probably break up, and the necessary withdrawal of UNPROFOR was not without its risks. According to Voorhoeve and Van Mierlo, the Netherlands

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1389 Interview J.J.C. Voorhoeve, 13/03/97 and 15/04/97.
1390 Interview J.J.C. Voorhoeve, 15/04/97.
1391 DCBC, CDS/OZ to CDS, no.joego.002, 16/09/94.
1392 Interview H. Couzy, 04/10/01.
1393 Interview J.J.C. Voorhoeve, 01/10/01.
1394 DJZ file Lekken ('Leaks'): memo DAB D94/368, 20/09/94.

would press for clear agreements against unilateral withdrawal of national contingents, while at the same time a serious preparation of evacuation scenarios with the United States on the basis of coordination between UNPROFOR and NATO ought to begin. For the sake of the safety of the personnel, it would not be possible to take the decision to lift the embargo until after the completion of the planning and until there was certainty about the availability of sufficient troops – including American troops – for the performance of that operation. Apart from its rejection of the lifting of the arms embargo, the Dutch Government also opposed the 'politically motivated' extension of the Heavy Weapon Exclusion Zones on account of its escalating effect. With regard to Dutchbat, the policy focused with great emphasis on Dutchbat being relieved on 1July 1995 and on 'risk and burden sharing' through the stationing of contingents from several countries in the Safe Areas.[1395]

During his visit to Srebrenica Voorhoeve had seen how Dutchbat was trapped. In talks with the battalion officers about a possible 'hostile environment' evacuation it had emerged that such an evacuation was not in fact possible, either by air or by road. Any preparatory measure by Dutchbat (withdrawal of observation posts; collection of personnel at the compound in Potocari) would be noticed by the Muslim population, who would undoubtedly prevent their departure. Withdrawal in those circumstances would claim victims both on the Muslim and on the Dutchbat side.[1396] The prospects were additionally bleak because there was still no agreement between UNPROFOR and NATO on this type of evacuation. The deployment of American troops – in Srebrenica, for example, for evacuation by air using Chinook helicopters – could be carried out only as part of a NATO operation. That led Voorhoeve to the conclusion that Dutchbat would remain in Srebrenica for the time being.[1397] This analysis had been reflected in the policy plan: stationing of a contingent of another country in addition to Dutchbat and quicker and better planning between NATO and UNPROFOR.

The policies of Van Mierlo and Voorhoeve were very much focused on the strengthening and continuation of international cooperation regarding the Bosnia question. In that respect there was no difference from the policy of the Lubbers Government, although there had been a shift in the priorities. Of course, a solution to the conflict on the basis of the Contact Group map remained the fundamental principle, but the conditions for this had worsened. That was due to a difference in view regarding the consequences of the use of the disincentives against Republika Srpska. Dutch policy had changed to the extent that the cautious support for the extension of the number of Heavy Weapon Exclusion Zones to all Safe Areas at the beginning of August[1398] had changed to a rejection of this extension in the second half of September.

That change reflected a more cautious policy, because the discussion of the use of disincentives had also produced a lack of consensus within the Contact Group and differences of opinion between UN/UNPROFOR and the troop-contributing countries, on the one hand, and NATO and Washington, on the other. It revolved around the question of what to do if UNPROFOR could no longer fulfil its mandate because Republika Srpska regarded the peacekeeping force as a combatant on the Federation's side. That would certainly be the case if the arms embargo were lifted and, in the view of UNPROFOR and the Western troop-contributing nations, also if the Heavy Weapon Exclusion Zones were extended. The Dutch Government feared that if UNPROFOR were withdrawn, there would be no common approach. France, Great Britain and Canada might even withdraw their troops from Bosnia off their own bat.[1399]

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1395 ABZ, DEU/ARA/ 05276.Coded cable Van Mierlo circ 552, 23/09/94.
1396 DCBC. Background information for closed briefing for Permanent Commissions for Defence and Foreign Affairs, 18/10/94.
1397 DCBC, CDS/OZ to CDS, No. Joego.002, 16/09/94.
1398 ABZ, DEU/ARA/02078. Coded cable Kooijmans 292, 19/07/94. ABZ, DEU/ARA/ 05240. Coded cable Celer 127, 03/08/94. ABZ, DEU/ARA/ 00797. Memorandum No.627/94, Acting DEU to Deputy DGPZ [Director-General for Political Affairs], 08/08/94.
1399 The Canadian government had already told the US government in May/June that Canadian withdrawal would be 'unavoidable' if the weapons embargo were lifted. ABZ, DEU/ARA/02109. Coded cable Fietelaars 101, 26/09/94.

What the Netherlands wanted to achieve first and foremost with the new policy of Van Mierlo and Voorhoeve was the conclusion of clear international agreements on a possible decision to withdraw UNPROFOR, and for the execution of the withdrawal to be on the basis of an evacuation plan of UNPROFOR and NATO. For the Netherlands, a common evacuation plan was, of course, very important because of the presence of Dutchbat in Srebrenica. In that respect the policy of the two ministers in the Purple Government was new: investigation of possibilities for evacuation in the event of an emergency situation, and internationalization through stationing of a military engineering or medical unit of a different nationality.

The first opportunity for articulating this policy occurred at the informal meeting of the NATO Ministers of Defence in Seville and during Van Mierlo's stay in New York at the UN General Assembly. It emerged from conversations at the UN headquarters and in the lobbies that the discussion about the lifting of the arms embargo had been put on the back burner through the postponement of the decision until the spring of 1995. The differences of view about the use of air power had remained, and the discussions on this between the UN and NATO were still in progress. In the meantime, the planning for evacuation by UNPROFOR simply continued.[1400]

In the short term the Netherlands did have some success in its attempts to be more closely involved with the Contact Group. Since the formation of the Group in April 1994 the Federal Republic of Germany had been keeping the EU informed fairly openly in briefings about the discussions in that Group. The Netherlands wanted to be more involved in the activities of the Contact Group through prior consultation on account of its military contribution to UNPROFOR, Van Mierlo had said in his address to the General Assembly. The Dutch were thinking along the lines of having their own special contact, or of frequent information being passed on by telephone or in personal conversations by those most closely involved. The Netherlands knocked at the door of the United States, and the matter was soon settled.

J. Vos, the Director-General for Political Affairs, broached the matter at the end of September 1994 in a discussion with Holbrooke in New York; Holbrooke referred him to Charles Thomas, the American member of the Contact Group. The result of the Vos discussions at the beginning of October at the State Department and at the National Security Council was the appointment of special contacts on the American and Dutch sides, Assistant Secretary J. Kornblum and Ambassador Jacobovits in Washington, respectively. The exact purpose of this special 'liaison' remained vague. The American discussion partners of Vos thought it remarkable that the Dutch Government had come knocking on Washington's door and had not gone to the European members of the Contact Group.[1401] According to Vos, the Government in The Hague wanted to know at the earliest possible stage what had taken place in the Contact Group and in what direction ideas were going, 'so that we can make our desired contribution to it'. A factor of additional importance was that it had to be possible also to demonstrate to Parliament where necessary that the Netherlands was being involved more than in the past in the shaping of ideas and even decision-making in the Contact Group'.[1402]

The special liaison was quickly created. It was not very effective, being mainly one-way traffic. P. de Gooijer, the Councillor for political affairs at the embassy in Washington, who had been involved in bringing about the agreement, said later about it: 'In practice nothing has actually come of it. (…) I think the answer must be seen as: if anything happens, you can phone.'[1403]

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[1400] ABZ, DEU/ARA/ 05241. Coded cable Biegman 919, 26/09/94; Coded cable COREU pesc/sec 957, 28/09/94. ABZ, DEU/ARA/ 05276. Coded cable Biegman 926, 27/09/94; Coded cable Biegman 927, 27/09/94.

[1401] ABZ, PVNY, file 910 Yugoslavia/UNPROFOR/NL participation. Coded cable Biegman 949, 30/09/94. ABZ, Embassy Washington, Coded cable Celer 172, 30/09/94. ABZ, Embassy Washington file 910 Yugoslavia. Memorandum DGPZ to CdP Washington, 06/10/94.

[1402] ABZ, Embassy Washington. Memorandum DGPZ to CdP Washington, 06/10/94.

[1403] Interview P. de Gooijer, 01/07/99.

There was no question of any initiative by the Netherlands for contributing its own proposals. It was primarily a question of prestige, according to Ambassador Jacobovits.[1404] It could hardly be said that there had been a thorough preparation of the initiative, or of its implementation. The Dutch Government, as a member of the North Atlantic Council and the European Union, had two good consultative bodies for collecting information on the state of affairs within the Contact Group and putting forward proposals. The German Government in particular could also be used for this; since April 1994 it had been informing the non-members of the Contact Group in detail about the state of affairs. In short, part of the policy plan of Voorhoeve and Van Mierlo had achieved success, but its significance was extremely vague.

In the decision-making on the international questions such as the peace process, more robust action against the Bosnian Serbs and possible lifting of the arms embargo, the Netherlands played no part. The government, as explained above, had its own view, but internationally that mattered little. The policy in these questions was restricted mainly to following the developments and putting forward the view that international involvement with the former Yugoslavia would be served by strong action against the Bosnian Serbs, and would only be damaged by discussions on lifting of the arms embargo and withdrawal of UNPROFOR. This standpoint was prompted only partly by fear for the position of Dutchbat in Srebrenica.

As will be discussed later in this chapter, the Dutch Government tried in vain to improve the position of Dutchbat. That did not mean that Voorhoeve's concern about Srebrenica resulted in a tendency to weaken the Dutch contribution to UNPROFOR. During the crisis in Bihac in October/November 1994 and the subsequent attempts to strengthen the peacekeeping force it emerged that the Dutch were still fully prepared to deploy resources and troops.

## 6. Crisis in the Safe Area Bihac and possible transfer of a Dutchbat company

Bosnia-Hercegovina Command had a chronic shortage of troops. The extra contingent promised for the Safe Areas in 1993 had not become fully available. Besides, there was a shortage of well-trained troops and of units with Forward Air Controller teams for assistance during the use of Close Air Support and air strikes. In fact, only units from NATO countries were suitable for that job. There had also been a reduction and redeployment of the national contingents. These factors left Bosnia-Hercegovina Command facing difficult decisions. In October 1994 it also looked as if certain countries with the idea of a possible withdrawal of or from UNPROFOR did not wish to commit themselves even further. Concentration of the national contingent in one region was a characteristic of this, combined with rejection of new operational areas.

After the French Government had fixed the upper limit of 6,000 for the French contribution to UNPROFOR, redeployment was necessary in order to strengthen the Sarajevo sector. The French contingent in Bihac handed over its task to a new battalion from Bangladesh on 18 October 1994. It had been equipped by UNPROFOR and trained with equipment from the former East-German army. Bosnia-Hercegovina Commander Michael Rose wanted to deploy a company from a NATO country in addition to this new, inexperienced Bengali battalion. His commission for a British unit for deployment in the Bihac foundered on a rejection from London. Since only French and Dutch troops could now be considered for that task, General Brinkman, the Dutch Chief of Staff of the Bosnia-Hercegovina Command, approached the Dutch military authorities in The Hague.

Bihac was strategically an important area. This area in the north-west of Bosnia lay wedged between the Krajina in Croatia and the western part of Republika Srpska. Besides, the political and military situation in the enclave of Bihac itself was complicated. The south and south-east were in the hands of the Bosnian Serbs. The part that had remained in the hands of the Muslims bordered on Croatia, namely on the northern and western areas in the Krajina protected by UNPROFOR, where

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[1404] Interview A. Jacobovits, 21/09/00.

UN units were stationed. The north-western part of this area, which was completely surrounded by Serbs, had been in the hands of a dissident Muslim group led by Fikret Abdic since the beginning of the war, this group cooperating with the VRS, the Krajina Serbs and the Croatian Government in Zagreb. Although Abdic was numerically in the minority, he was able to maintain his position, thanks to that support. According to the Contact Group map, part of the area occupied by the VRS would fall into the hands of the Federation, including Abdic's region.

In the summer of 1994 the 5th Corps of the ABiH started a campaign against Abdic, and at the end of August Abdic's army fled over the border with Croatia, to the Krajina. After a VRS attack from the Krajina had been repulsed in September, the 5th Corps resumed an offensive on 26October, southwards from the Safe Area around the city of Bihac, a week after the Bengali battalion had taken over the task from the French. The ABiH scored rapid successes, but within two weeks of the start of the counterattack the VRS threatened the city of Bihac.[1405] In order to be able to deal with the situation, Bosnia-Hercegovina Commander Michael Rose had set up a small Sector Headquarters in Bihac under the command of Colonel J.C. Lemieux, of his operational staff. He had also sent a group of Joint Commission Observers (JCOs) to the enclave, so that he could have reliable information on the events.[1406]

The resumption of the conflict between the ABiH and the VRS in the Bihac, and in particular the counteroffensive of the VRS in November was to lead to a conflict between UNPROFOR and NATO on the use of air power and the continuation of the peace mission. Within NATO this led to a deep crisis. Washington and its allies with troops in UNPROFOR were diametrically opposed to each other. In the end, this confrontation led to a change in American policy, which ended the crisis within the alliance and led to discussions of a different approach. For those reasons, the discussion about the approach to the crisis in Bihac was important for the Netherlands. The crisis had an added dimension for the Netherlands, because the Government had been asked by Bosnia-Hercegovina Command at the end of October to transfer a Dutchbat company from Simin Han to Bihac.

The Chief of Staff of Bosnia-Hercegovina Command, Brinkman, had asked the Defence Staff by telephone on 27 October, the day after the start of the ABiH offensive against the VRS, to transfer the Dutchbat company from Simin Han to Bihac. That request set off a rapid decision-making process, lasting a number of days. From the first moment it was clear that, compared with the hesitancy of government ministers, there was a certain eagerness on the part of the military.

On 7 November the government decided on the transfer without any consultation with Parliament. The arguments in the advice of the Chief of Defence Staff were carefully constructed. The main argument was the mission of the company: accompanying humanitarian aid convoys and deployment for drops of food supplies and Close Air Support of the Forward Air Controller team, acting as mobile observation posts, and at platoon level as a Quick Reaction Force. The company was ideal for this, provided that it had two helicopters at its disposal. The consultation by Brinkman with Dutchbat Commander Everts and the company commander showed their enthusiasm for the new assignment: this assignment was a new 'challenge' and would raise the 'morale of the personnel'. The transfer would also contribute towards a 'positive image of the suitability of Dutch units in Peace Support operations'.[1407] The risks of the stationing in Bihac were not great, according to the Defence Staff: the French had experienced few difficulties during their mission in 1993-94, and the ABiH-offensive would surely end soon because of the onset of winter.

However, the Directorate of General Policy Affairs, like the Netherlands Military Intelligence Agency (MID), felt that the developments in the region were unpredictable and that the company was in fact running a risk. Moreover, Bosnia-Hercegovina Command had 'not convincingly' demonstrated the necessity for supporting the battalion from Bangladesh. Finally, there were logistical risks. The

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[1405] Burg & Shoup, War in Bosnia, pp. 154-155. O'Shea, Crisis at Bihac, pp. 83-112.
[1406] Rose, Fighting for Peace, p. 199. The temporary Bihac Sector Command was extended to a permanent command under the Danish General P. Helsø. Interview P. Helsø, 28/10/99.
[1407] DCBC, No.2685. Fax Brinkman to Defence Staff, 01/11/94. Interview P. Everts 27/09/01.

Chief of Defence Staff did not refute these 'reservations', but advised Voorhoeve to accede quickly to the request of Bosnia-Hercegovina Commander Rose.[1408]

Voorhoeve was not convinced. He wanted in particular to know why the British Government had refused, and what the added value of a Dutch company would be. He did not receive any satisfactory answer to those questions. He was concerned about the security risks and the stationing of a Dutch unit as the only NATO unit in Bihac. He wanted to prevent a situation like that in Srebrenica. The suggestion of Prime Minister Wim Kok on the stationing of an Anglo-Dutch unit did not go down well with the British Chief of Defence Staff and Malcolm Rifkind, the Minister of Defence.[1409] A final attempt by Van Mierlo with his colleague Douglas Hurd had no positive effect either. Hurd was not swayed by Van Mierlo's political argument that without Anglo-Dutch cooperation he would not gain parliamentary approval for the deployment in Bihac, or that Dutch support for UNPROFOR would quickly evaporate if there were victims later on.[1410]

It therefore proved impossible to produce an Anglo-Dutch unit for Bihac. The choice lay between rejection of the UNPROFOR request in accordance with the advice of the Directorate of General Policy Affairs at the Ministry of Defence, or consent in accordance with the advice of the Chief of Defence Staff. Prior to that decision, the group authorized by the government for that purpose was given a briefing on Friday 4 November by the Army Crisis Staff.[1411] All aspects were reviewed, and it was said with some emphasis that 'if the Netherlands also refuses (…) part of the UNPROFOR and B-H Command mission in this Safe Area cannot be fulfilled.' It was also recalled that when Dutchbat had been made available the Netherlands had not laid down any 'strict conditions' regarding the deployment area. At the final weighing-up of arguments for and against, the first factor mentioned on the credit side was the making of an additional contribution to the humanitarian mission of UNPROFOR.[1412]

The government delegation opted for transfer of the Dutchbat company to Bihac.[1413] The Parliamentary Committees for Defence and Foreign Affairs agreed, after which the implementation could begin. During the General Consultation with Parliament the main questions raised concerned the existence of an evacuation plan, the safety risks, the need for additional equipment and heavier weaponry, and the use of air power. There was also criticism of the allies who were not prepared to take on this task. The general tone of the exchange of views was that the Netherlands could not refuse the request of Bosnia-Hercegovina Command, despite the increased risk, because rejection would mean that 230,000 people would otherwise be going into the winter in wretched conditions. The situation in Bihac itself was hardly mentioned. The great question of that moment, namely the failure of a Bosnian-Serb counteroffensive to materialize and the likelihood of this, was not discussed either. For an assessment of the safety risk the answer to that question was crucial. Since the commission fell within the mandate and the warring factions had agreed to the presence of UNPROFOR, the Dutch Parliament did not consider that question relevant. They had obviously forgotten the quibbling of the VRS a year earlier about the reconnaissance and deployment of Dutchbat. The ministers did not deal with the small number of questions on the relevance of the conflict in Bihac for the peace plan of the Contact Group and the pro-Muslim stance of Washington.[1414]

The implementation of the transfer in fact foundered on account of the VRS counteroffensive, which had brought the troops of Mladic to within ten kilometres of the Safe Area and the city of Bihac on 17 November. The reconnaissance group from Simin Han did not manage to go further than

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[1408] DCBC, No.198. Nr.S94/061/3731, CDS to Minister, 02/11/94. Interview J.J.C. Voorhoeve, 13/03/97.
[1409] DCBC, No.281/. No. S/94/061/3750 CDS to Minister, 03/11/94. DCBC. Fax BH Command to Army Crisis Staff, 06/11/94 Appendix: memo COS BH Command to CDS. ABZ. DPV/ARA/00581. Van Mierlo to Hurd, 07/11/94.
[1410] ABZ, DPV/ARA/00581. Van Mierlo to Hurd, 07/11/94.
[1411] ABZ, DPV/ARA/00581. Memorandum Van Ees (DPV/PZ) to Chief of DPV, 09/11/94.
[1412] DCBC, No.2684. Briefing of government ministers on Monday, 7 November 1994 [2 p.m.].
[1413] TK, Paliamentary session year 1994-95, 22 181 No. 85.
[1414] TK, Paliamentary session year 1994-95, 22 181 No. 87.

Zagreb, and the rapid transfer was therefore derailed. Moreover, the agreement of the warring factions would be needed for deployment of the company, and that could mean a long delay. The Defence Staff advised Voorhoeve on 17 November not to withdraw the decision to transfer yet, because that could create 'a negative image (…) for the prestige of the Dutch in the world.'[1415]

That advice was the conclusion of a bleak analysis of the military situation in Bihac. Because the VRS counterattack had pushed the ABiH back into the city, the Safe Area of Bihac was now in danger. That sparked off the discussion again on active intervention of UNPROFOR and the use of air power. Of course, following on from this, the chance of VRS measures against UNPROFOR, in addition to the existing ban on convoys, was discussed. The VRS also accused the peacekeeping force of partiality, and it was feared that as the front line neared the city of Bihac the VRS would begin to regard UNPROFOR as an 'undesirable complication'. The recent NATO resolutions on air strikes and the American withdrawal from monitoring of the arms embargo were psychologically of great importance, according to the Force Commander. The ABiH would feel strengthened by this; among the Bosnian Serbs the feeling of intimidation and isolation would increase further.[1416] Mladic had already accused UNPROFOR of taking part in the ABiH offensive in Bihac.[1417]

The US Government wanted UNPROFOR to intervene between the two. If the peacekeeping force did not do that, there was a risk of escalation of the conflict in Bihac and of Croatian intervention. Washington proposed measures that were to the advantage of the Bosnian Muslims: setting up a Heavy Weapon Exclusion Zone combined with a ceasefire in a 10-km radius around Bihac on Bosnian territory. Bosnia-Hercegovina Commander Rose suggested restricting the zone to a radius of three km, approximately the area of the originally respected Safe Area, the boundary of which had never been exactly established.

The differing interpretation of the situation in Bihac also emerged during a conversation between Willy Claes, Secretary-General of NATO and UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali in New York on 17 November 1994. According to the NATO delegation, the ABiH was in danger of being driven back into the city of Bihac; the battalion there was faced with the choice of following the ABiH to the city or withdrawal from the Safe Area. Military intervention in the form of air strikes and drops of food supplies were extremely risky for various reasons. Claes therefore advised Boutros-Ghali that the UN should take action: a strong signal to the Bosnian Serbs to cease their offensive against the city, and the threat of air strikes elsewhere in Bosnia. According to Boutros-Ghali, this was a break with the principle that air strikes had to be made in the region in which the violation had occurred.[1418]

Events took place in rapid succession. Bombing of Bihac on 19 November was responded to, at the request of UNPROFOR, on 21 November with air strikes by 21 aircraft against Ubdina airport in the Krajina, made possible a few days earlier by Security Council Resolution 958 on the use of air power in the Krajina. Two Dutch F-16s also took part in this first NATO air strike.[1419] The unanimity between NATO and UNPROFOR was only temporary. On 22 November NATO bombed three VRS ground-to-air missile installations at Otoka and Dvor in Bihac with the approval of Force Commander Bertrand de Lapresle, as a response to the missile attack on the city.[1420] Bosnia-Hercegovina Commander Michael Rose, who had not been consulted, was 'fuming', because a number of aid

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1415 DCBC. Fax No.219/94 BH Command Fwd to Netherlands Army Crisis Staff, 16/11/94. CDS 199. No. S/94/061/3940, SCOCIS Defence Staff to Minister, 17/11/94.
1416 CDS 1993. No. S/94/061/3940, SCOCIS Defence Staff to Minister, 17/11/94. ABZ, DEU/ARA/ 05277. Coded cable Scheffers 70, 14/11/94. DCBC. DS/OZ: Situation Report Peace Operations No.225/94, 15/11/94.
1417 UNGE UNPROFOR Box file 4.2.2. Fax 215/94 BH Command to HQ Zagreb, 15/11/194: letters to and from Mladic (letter Mladic to Akashi and Rose, 13/11/94).
1418 ABZ, PVNAVO Brussels. SG/04/860, Deputy SG to Permanent Representatives, 18/11/94 Appendix: meeting between NATO Secretary-General and UNPROFOR Secretary-General, 17th November 1994.
1419 International Herald Tribune, 19/11/94. 'None of the full of holes, the F16s did a precision job', De Volkskrant, 23/11/94.
1420 Rose, Fighting for Peace, pp. 202-203. Burg & Shoup, War in Bosnia, pp. 156-157.

convoys were on Bosnian Serb territory in the meantime.[1421] The Bosnian Serbs threatened UNPROFOR with 'war' if the strikes did not stop. The fact that they were serious about it emerged from UNPROFOR personnel and UN military observers being taken hostage, and from the total blockade of all UN traffic.

The VRS was at the border of the Safe Area of Bihac and was determined to destroy the 5th Corps of the ABiH. The American NATO Commander, Admiral Leighton Smith, for his part was intending to take out all ground-to-air missile installations of the VRS because they were preventing him from giving Close Air Support to UNPROFOR in Bosnia. According to De Lapresle and Rose, this was crossing the borderline between peacekeeping and war, but NATO seemed bent on it. The ending of the peace mission was in that case the only option, according to the Force Commander.[1422]

It did not come to a confrontation, because this American proposal did not gain support within NATO; it was referred on to the military staff for advice. An air strike requested by Bosnia-Hercegovina Commander Michael Rose against VRS tanks and artillery did not score a single hit because of a lack of targets. Although the VRS had gone beyond the boundary of the Safe Area set by the UN shortly before that, the city did not fall. The VRS was engaged in fighting on the outskirts of the city, but it was showing no signs of taking the city itself. On 3December the situation at the front line stabilized: one third of the territory of the Safe Area was in VRS hands. Moreover, Republika Srpska appeared to be ready to talk about a cessation of hostilities. The fact that the NATO strike on the ground-to-air missile installations did not proceed meant for the United Nations and UNPROFOR that the dual key had been retained and that the peace mission still existed. (See Chapter 2, Part III for further information on this dual key.) In Washington in the meantime, on account of the opposition of the other NATO countries to American proposals for tough action, it had been decided to take a less aggressive line.[1423] This left the way open for consultation between NATO and the UN for better cooperation in the use of air power.

The Department of Peacekeeping Operations in New York had strengthened the UN position compared with NATO by an unusual step: after receiving the standpoint of the Force Commander mentioned in the previous paragraph, that continuation of the peace mission was pointless after an air campaign by NATO against all ground-to-air missile installations in Bihac, the Secretary-General had not convened the Security Council. On the contrary, Kofi Annan called a meeting of the troop-contributing nations on 28 November.[1424] He asked for the opinion of the troop-contributing nations on a number of options: continuation of the mission under the existing mandate or the switchover to peace enforcement. He also named a third option: withdrawal of UNPROFOR in order to make way for 'more robust and decisive action by others'.[1425]

This was, it should be noted, a sounding of the opinion of the troop contributors on three subjects on which the Security Council alone could decide. In any discussion that followed in the Security Council the result of that sounding could have an influence on a change in the mandate of UNPROFOR. Seventeen of the twenty-five representatives present, including the French, British and Russian envoys, declared that they were in favour of the existing mandate. The other eight were in sympathy with the idea of switching over to peace enforcement.[1426] Biegman, the Dutch envoy, made

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[1421] M. Evans & J. Brand, 'Serbs poised to take Bihac as Nato hits missile sites', The Times, 24/11/94.
[1422] UNGE ICFY Box 129 file: Crypto faxes In 36: Nov-Dec 1994. Coded cable Z-1807, Akashi to Annan, 26/11/94. Appendix: Interoffice memorandum De La Presle to Akashi, 25/11/94. Rose, Fighting for Peace, p. 201.
[1423] Burg & Shoup, War in Bosnia, pp. 157-158. Rose, Fighting for Peace, pp. 204-210. United Nations, Report of the Secretary-General Pursuant to General Assembly Resolution 53/35 (1998) 'Srebrenica Report', §§ 159-160. UNGE UNPROFOR Box 120 file: BHC OCA Weekly Sitreps, 03/12/94.
[1424] UNGE ICFY Box 129 file: Crypto faxes In 36: Nov-Dec 1994. Coded Cable Z-1807, Akashi to Annan, 26/11/94. Appendix: Interoffice memorandum De La Presle to Akashi, 25/11/94.
[1425] ABZ, DPV/ARA/00580. Fax nyu No.11224, 28/11/94 Appendix:'Remarks by Mr. Kofi Annan Meeting with Troop-Contributing Nations'.
[1426] United Nations, Report of the Secretary-General Pursuant to General Assembly Resolution 53/35 (1998) 'Srebrenica Report', §§ 161-163. ABZ, DEU/ARA/05277. Coded cable Biegman 1289, 28/11/94.

critical comments about the action of UNPROFOR in Bihac. He felt that in Bihac it was not a question of responding to daily events, because an excuse could always be thought up for an attack on a Safe Area. The fall of Bihac would be disastrous for the credibility of UNPROFOR. He asked Kofi Annan to explain why the taking out of a number of Bosnian Serb missile installations was considered 'tantamount to going to war with the Serbs'. According to Biegman, the vocation of the UN was to be 'fair', but that certainly did not mean 'impartiality' in all circumstances. During the continuation of the consultation on the following day he repeated his view, and in doing so departed from the instruction from The Hague not to go deeper into the question of guilt on the situation in Bihac, but to focus on better cooperation between NATO and the UN.[1427]

Then there is the question of what position the Dutch Government took during this crucial period in the confrontation between NATO and UNPROFOR. It had stuck its neck out with the decision to station a Dutchbat company in Bihac, a decision that in the view of the German member of the Contact Group was 'courageous'.[1428] However, that decision made little difference in the shaping of policy. In the first instance, Dutch policy had been aimed at bridging the differences of opinion between Washington and its European allies within NATO, and therefore also between NATO and the UN/UNPROFOR. At the ministerial meeting of the Western European Union on 14 November the Netherlands, which was presiding over the meeting, had tried to have the 'differences in emphasis' on the political repercussions of the American withdrawal from monitoring of the arms embargo against Bosnia in the Adriatic Sea (Operation Sharp Guard) 'reduced to their real proportions.'[1429] Unlike most other members of NATO, the Netherlands had in the first instance been 'favourably disposed' towards the American proposal for the setting up of a Heavy Weapon Exclusion Zone of 10 km around Bihac.[1430]

After the NATO action against Ubdina airport, it largely withdrew its support again by pointing out the problems involved in the implementation. It was important to consider what part air power could play and whether sufficient troops were available. Nevertheless, the concrete decisions for action in Bihac were not the central issue in Dutch policymaking. That place was reserved for the great differences of opinion within NATO. The objective of Dutch policy was a 'convergence of views' between the American pro-Bosnian standpoint and the 'strict policy of impartiality in the case of which (…) hardly any distinction is made between aggressor and victim' of the United Kingdom, Spain, Belgium and, to a more limited degree, France. From its 'finely tuned middle position' the Netherlands would advocate keeping up the pressure on the Bosnian Serbs to accept the peace plan put forward by the Contact Group. At the same time, the emergence of an uncontrollable military and political situation had to be prevented. The Government in The Hague had political sympathy for the ABiH operation in Bihac, but the safety of UNPROFOR had now been seriously jeopardized. The Government in The Hague now also found that the ABiH operation in Bihac was 'counterproductive'. The result was that the United States had now asked NATO to limit its consequences. The Dutch Government was afraid that the ABiH would begin new offensives after the winter break. In that situation the position of UNPROFOR would become even more difficult, and it would be necessary to consider the role of the peacekeeping force. That was not only an affair of the troop-contributing nations and the UN. The United States too had to 'expressly bear the responsibility for the role and the safety of UNPROFOR'. So long as no political solution was found, the role of UNPROFOR in the prevention of further escalation and giving of humanitarian aid remained essential.[1431]

There were not many possibilities for implementing this policy, so long as the United States advocated a tougher line than the NATO allies. In major confrontations on this issue the Netherlands

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[1427] ABZ, DEU/ARA/ 05277. Coded cable Biegman 1289, 28/11/94; Coded cable Celer 433, 29/11/94. ABZ, DPV/ARA/02915. Coded cable Biegman 1297, 29/11/94.
[1428] ABZ, DEU/ARA/ 05241. Coded cable Van Walsum 385, 23/11/94.
[1429] ABZ, DEU/ARA/ 05277. Coded cable Van Mierlo 466, 22/11/94.
[1430] DCBC. Coded cable Veenendaal 1822, 15/11/94.
[1431] ABZ, DEU/ARA/05277. Coded cable Van Mierlo 466, 22/11/94.

played no part; during discussions in the North Atlantic Council about NATO policy in Bosnia the Dutch contributions were marginal. From the policy objectives the Netherlands was able to do little more than press within the European Union for sticking to the positions adopted with regard to the withdrawal of UNPROFOR and the lifting of the arms embargo.[1432]

This general policy had only limited significance for the handling of the offer of the Dutchbat company. What did have a direct influence was the taking hostage of 450 blue helmets by the VRS on 26 November. This group included 94 Dutch servicemen: 70 Dutchbat soldiers from Srebrenica were stuck in Zvornik; a fuel convoy with 20 military personnel had been taken hostage in the Papraca area, and 4 UNMOs were trapped in the region of Sarajevo. On 2 December the group in Zvornik was freed, and three days later the other twenty from a fuel convoy in Papraca (Eastern Bosnia) were also freed.[1433]

On 29 November the Defence Staff and the Directorate of General Policy Affairs advised Minister Joris Voorhoeve to postpone of the transfer until after Dutchbat II had been relieved by Dutchbat III in mid-January 1995. In the advice doubt was also expressed about whether or not the transfer would be achievable: there were still no guarantees on medical care and the stationing and Freedom of Movement of a helicopter detachment; there was also doubt about safety guarantees for all three parties in Bihac.[1434] The advice of the Defence Staff therefore did not make any connection whatsoever with the taking of the hostages. Nor did Voorhoeve make that connection in his memorandum in which he took over the proposal. However, in a statement about the hostage-taking to the Dutch Parliament the next day during the discussion of the Defence budget he did explicitly make that connection. He announced that Van Mierlo and he would consult Parliament again in due course. The circumstances in Bihac had changed considerably since the decision at the beginning of November.[1435] The pronouncement of Kofi Annan that he was considering arranging for Banbat and Dutchbat to act as a buffer between the warring factions around the Safe Area of Bihac was also giving concern in The Hague. The Permanent Representative was instructed to point out to Kofi Annan that the company had been offered only for 'humanitarian tasks'.[1436] Bihac subsequently disappeared from the Dutch agenda.

In Bihac the situation stabilized from the beginning of December onwards. The VRS stopped its attack, the 5th Corps withdrew from the city and the shelling eased off. The first UNHCR convoy arrived on 8December. For UNPROFOR, however, it was the start of an extremely difficult period, because Republika Srpska continued its tough stance towards the peacekeeping force: no convoys, shelling, continued hostage-taking. It was a limited state of war, and UNPROFOR could do little about it. The crisis in Bihac had caused UNPROFOR to lose much of its credibility. That loss, combined with the still difficult situation in finding a political solution, increased the pressure at national and international levels to end the peace mission. That was, however, a decision that would have unforeseeable consequences; the question then was what other options there were. First and foremost, there was better coordination between UNPROFOR and NATO with regard to the use of air power. Important steps had already been taken in this direction.

Reconsideration of UNPROFOR's mandate, particularly with regard to the Safe Areas, was a second option. Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali put proposals on it to the Security Council on 1 December. He stated that the Safe Area concept suffered from inherent flaws. There were too few troops available to achieve the deterrence, and the use of air power had its limitations through lack of targets, the presence of ground-to-air missiles and the risk of UN personnel being taken hostage. A

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1432 ABZ, DEU/ARA/2915. Coded cable Bot 424, 29/11/94.
1433 'Dutchbat is vuil maar vrolijk: "Vrij!"' ('Dutchbat dirty, but cheerful:"Free!"'), De Volkskrant, 03/12/94. 'Nog vier militairen vast' ('Another four servicemen trapped'), Algemeen Dagblad, 05/12/94.
1434 DCBC No.139. Memo No.S/94/061/4117, deputy CDS to Minister, 29/11/94; memorandum Voorhoeve for PCDS, 29/11/94.
1435 TK, Paliamentary session 1994-95.
1436 ABZ, DEU/ARA/ 05277. Coded cable Celer 433, 29/11/94.

second shortcoming was that the ABiH was carrying on military operations from the Safe Areas and that, with the exception of Srebrenica and Zepa, military installations had been established in the other four Safe Areas. Finally, there was no clear demarcation of the Safe Areas. According to the Secretary-General, the Safe Area concept was not meeting its main objective: protection of the civil population and delivery of humanitarian aid. Four measures could bring that objective closer: fixing the border of the area, demilitarization and a cessation of hostilities, the ending of acts of provocation in and around those areas together with transitional measures in preparation for a full demilitarization and, finally, full Freedom of Movement. For the implementation of those steps UNPROFOR needed additional resources. Last but not least, he pointed out that a mandate to UNPROFOR for enforcement of the Safe Area regime was incompatible with its peacekeeping task.[1437]

The Secretary-General's report was a sharp analysis of the shortcomings of the Safe Area concept and also the proposed changes. Nevertheless, it did not help the discussion on an improvement of UNPROFOR's mandate – if there was a need for that at that time – along: the existing concept exhibited serious flaws in practice, and an improved concept would be incompatible with the peacekeeping mandate. Besides, his proposal for demilitarization of the Safe Areas had been superseded since the acceptance of Resolution 836 in June 1993. Sacirbey made that clear to the Security Council in no uncertain terms: no demilitarization without guarantees on additional capability for the defence of those areas.[1438] Therefore, from the point of view of the UN, no movement at all could be expected. The UN and UNPROFOR could not themselves solve this squaring of the circle of the Safe Areas.

The movement in the impasse came as a result of the decision by President Clinton to change his policy on Bosnia for the sake of cohesion within NATO. That occurred in the eve of a NATO Conference of Ministers on 1 December. Instead of the deployment of air power as the only means of forcing the Bosnian Serbs to accept the map, Clinton now decided on other instruments such as diplomatic consultation and incentives for winning over the Serbs.[1439] He tried to achieve that by toning down the adamant demand up to the end of November of unconditional acceptance of the Contact Group peace plan.

## 7. Concessions of the Contact Group

After Pale's rejection of the map at the end of July 1994 and the internal differences of opinion on the use of disincentives, the work of the Contact Group was put on the back burner in September and October. All of the members were convinced that the double isolation of Republika Srpska – internationally by the Contact Group, and in the former Yugoslavia by Belgrade after the closure of the border – would bear fruit. The big question was when that effect would emerge through the acceptance of the Contact Group's map. The Contact Group did not have much reliable information on the internal situation and developments in Pale. Pale was 'a book we cannot read', according to the French member. Akashi considered it a handicap that Milosevic was an important informant whose influence was less far-reaching than he himself suggested, and who was certainly 'suspect' with regard to Mladic and Karadzic.[1440] The Contact Group did not have direct, reliable information about the situation in Pale. It was not needed anyway, so long as they assumed that, through its isolation, Pale itself would come round and admit defeat. However, not all members of the Contact Group could manage such patience. From November 1994 onwards that was apparent.

In fact, the talks in the Contact Group had become deadlocked. With regard to the constitutional principles, they had only stated that Bosnia had to continue to exist as a sovereign state.

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[1437] United Nations, document S/1994/1389, 01/12/94.
[1438] United Nations, Report of the Secretary-General Pursuant to General Assembly Resolution 53/35 (1998) 'Srebrenica Report', § 174.
[1439] Burg & Shoup, War in Bosnia, pp. 311-312.
[1440] Confidential information (88).

They had never managed to agree on any further details. Moscow and the European countries were advocates of a 'balanced treatment'. In concrete terms, this meant that the Bosnian Serbs would receive the same special tie with Serbia as the Croatians with Croatia. Washington did subscribe to that principle, but wanted on no condition to record it in a document.[1441]

The situation had also reached stalemate in the field of sanctions. After the sanctions of Serbia and Montenegro against Pale, the Russian member had pleaded for easing of the sanctions, but the other members of the Group felt that Milosevic would then also have to assert his influence for a peace settlement in Croatia.[1442] The three European members wanted to use the instrument of sanctions to break out of the impasse in the talks of the Group. After consultation with the EU, they drafted a plan for a peace settlement in the former Yugoslavia. By broadening the spectrum of the talks, it might perhaps be possible to achieve results all along the line. This proposal consisted of two elements: the existing one for Bosnia (plan A) and four demands to which Belgrade would have to agree (plan B). According to plan B, Belgrade would first of all have to recognize Bosnia-Hercegovina and Croatia; it would then have to commit itself to the implementation of the peace plan for Bosnia, while the Contact Group would give its support to the principle of 'balanced treatment' and the possibility of 'mutually agreed land swaps'. The third demand concerned supporting a regulation of the Yugoslavia Conference for the position of the Serbian areas in Croatia and, finally, continuation of international monitoring of Serbian sanctions against Republika Srpska and restriction of exports to the Krajina. Suspension and subsequent lifting of the sanctions would occur in parallel.[1443]

The US Government supported this 'multitrack approach', because it broke through the one-to-one attitude of Milosevic to Pale and offered more scope for the handling of the sanctions against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. That did not alter the fact that the American objections to 'balanced treatment' remained, which was a concept that could on no account be given a place in a peace settlement.[1444] On the Russian side there were unspecified objections. It emerged later that in particular Andrei Kozyrev, the Foreign Minister, himself had objections to the plan, namely because in the long run it did not appear acceptable for him and his government to make too great demands of Milosevic. With that, the multitrack approach was derailed.[1445]

The Contact Group continued to steer the course of demonstrating at ministerial level at press conferences after each meeting the unity between the parties and progress in the substantive talks. It also did so after the meeting on 2 December at which the 'multitrack approach' had bitten the dust. It was, however, clear that the internal cohesion was under pressure. Whilst the lack of consensus did not affect the approach to Republika Srpska, the crisis about Bihac, the possibility of unilateral lifting of the arms embargo by Washington and the American withdrawal from monitoring compliance with the arms embargo for Bosnia, the possible withdrawal of UNPROFOR and, of course, also the crisis in NATO together constituted a formidable crisis. Against that background, their statement about an important step forward sounded hollow. Yet they had a reason for it. The usual militant demand that Pale accept the Contact Group's peace plan was followed this time by a further explanation regarding two important points. After the signing of the map, the parties could still come to mutual arrangements on changes by agreements on land swaps. There would be room in the constitutional arrangements for 'equitable and balanced arrangements for the Bosniac-Croat and Bosnian Serb entities'.[1446] After the earlier American opposition to the same, but differently worded principle, a point had in any case been scored. Washington did not describe it as a change of policy, but as an 'adjustment to the new

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1441 ABZ, DEU/ARA/02915. Coded cable Bot 365, 28/10/94.
1442 ABZ, DEU/ARA/02915. Coded cable Bot 365, 28/10/94.
1443 ABZ, DEU/ARA/ 05241. COREU pesc/sec 1086, 28/10/94.
1444 ABZ, DEU/ARA/ 05241. Coded cable Bot 375, 07/11/94; Coded cable Veenendaal 1744, 07/11/94; Coded cable Van Mierlo 188, 08/11/94.
1445 ABZ, DEU/ARA/02915. Coded cable Van Mierlo 115, 17/11/94; Coded cable Celer 125, 09//12/94.
1446 ABZ, DEU/ARA/ 05241. Communiqué of Contact Group of ministers, 02/12/94; memorandum De Zwaan to deputy DEU, 02/12/94.

reality'.[1447] Indirectly, the Contact Group made it clear to Pale that signing would open the way to negotiations. That was in any case going in the direction of the condition that the Bosnian Serb Parliament had set at the end of August for acceptance of the map.

Great disunity was hidden behind this façade of unanimity of the Contact Group at the beginning of December. During talks in Belgrade and Zagreb at the end of November the permanent members had already given Akashi to understand that they were aware that a sign of goodwill was necessary to keep the peace process going. The Contact Group could not go much further because they had hardly any means of pressure for turning the peace process in the right direction. Another factor was that each member was making his own analysis of the crisis and drawing his own conclusions.[1448] Pale would agree to the map if it could be assured of certain changes. At the same time, as a result of their isolation, the readiness seemed to be growing to bend the peace process to their will at all costs. On account of these positive and negative signals, UNPROFOR thought it advisable to approach the Bosnian Serbs directly. Akashi wanted to take the initiative himself, but felt that coordination with the Contact Group was necessary. He did not want to interfere with the work of the Contact Group. His objective was to make a ceasefire in Bihac the stepping stone to a ceasefire for a few months throughout Bosnia. Coordination with the Contact Group was necessary to ensure that the peace process could be continued in that period.[1449] A handicap was that the Contact Group could not establish any official contact with Karadzic. That was in fact a crucial part of the isolation policy.

For Washington it did not seem a problem to break that rule. While the ministers of the Contact Group were still at the meeting in Brussels on 2 December, Charles Redman, the former American member of the Contact Group, left his embassy in Bonn for Bosnia for talks in Sarajevo and Pale. All that is known about the content of the conversation between Karadzic and Redman is what the Dutch ambassador in Washington was told by the State Department. Karadzic had shown no interest whatsoever in the decisions of the Contact Group. A closer link with Rest-Yugoslavia had obviously lost all its attraction since the sanctions of Belgrade. He was thinking more in terms of independence or at least far-reaching autonomy for the current Republic of Srpska within a loose Bosnian Union. He had been less reticent about the changes to the map: Pale wanted a broader corridor near Brcko, the three eastern enclaves and the area around Sarajevo. For the short term, the important thing was that, after rounding off the operation at Bihac, Karadzic wanted to agree upon a cessation of hostilities for a long period as part of a definitive arrangement. Since the Bosnian Government also wanted a temporary end to the conflict, this seemed a road with some prospects.[1450]

The objective of Redman's mission was apparently to find out whether and on what conditions Pale wanted to cooperate in a political solution. According to Redman, Karadzic had not shown any interest in negotiations on the basis of the Contact Group plan. It is in any case striking that shortly after his visit the American standpoint on the Contact Group plan began to shift. The first indication of this was given by Thomas, the American member of the Contact Group, with his interpretation at the beginning of December on his way through Belgrade to a meeting with Milosevic. According to Thomas, it was not necessary for the Bosnian Serbs to place their signature under the map, because verbal acceptance was sufficient. The Contact Group plan was not an objective in itself, but had to serve as the basis for a ceasefire and further negotiations. All elements were negotiable except for the 49/51% division of territory. On 5 December 1994 the same statement had been made by the Contact Group in Belgrade to members of the Bosnian Serb Parliament.[1451]

The fact that Pale wanted to negotiate was clear from the course of the talks on a cessation of hostilities that Akashi had started. Karadzic himself presented his own peace plan before the CNN cameras on 14 December, which was followed by an announcement from former President Carter that

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[1447] ABZ, Embassy Washington. Coded cable Jacobovits 741, 06/12/94.
[1448] ABZ, DEU/ARA/ 05241. Coded cable Bot 436, 02/12/94. Confidential information (89).
[1449] Confidential information (90) and (91).
[1450] Owen, Balkan Odyssey, p. 308. ABZ, Embassy Washington. Coded cable Jacobovits 741, 06/12/94.
[1451] ABZ, DEU/ARA/ 05241. Coded cable Lenstra 249, 08/12/94. International Herald Tribune, 22/12/94.

he would go to Pale.[1452] Even before the meeting with the members of the Contact Group in Zagreb op 16 December, Akashi had explained in detail to Karadzic during talks in Pale that there were still good chances for a diplomatic solution. The Contact Group plan was still on the table and Akashi's explanation of its status had a lot in common with that of US Ambassador Thomas: 'While it was still to be used as the basis for negotiations, acceptance of it was no longer a necessary precondition for negotiations. The Contact Group was willing to be a facilitator for adjustments to the plan which would, in the final analysis, have to be accepted by mutual agreement between the parties.'[1453]

That Akashi was not acting upon his own authority to achieve a positive influence on the course of his talks on a cessation of hostilities emerged from the fact that the State Department had also told Carter before his departure for Europe that the plan was a basis for negotiations.[1454] The tough American stance had been toned down in order to make peace negotiations possible. There were several arguments for this. First of all, the fear that the new Republican Congress would force the government to supply weapons to the Muslims, with the risk that the United States would be dragged into the war itself. They also saw it as a new signal to the internally divided NATO that they were in fact very much in favour of a solution by peaceful means.[1455]

The American unilateral shift caused confusion among other members of the Contact Group. The main question was how much of the rigid attitude would be given away. The British Government had no objection to starting negotiations 'on the basis of the Contact Group Plan', provided that its essence remained intact. It could not be a 'springboard for fresh discussions on matters of substance'.[1456] It did not, however, come to an actual test of the American intentions. Carter did succeed in rounding off the negotiations on a cessation of hostilities begun by UNPROFOR, including an agreement on the start of peace talks. The Contact Group plan would in this case, according to the agreement signed in Pale, be 'the basis for negotiation of all points'; according to the agreement with Sarajevo, the acceptance of that plan was 'a starting point'. The stalemate consequently remained, and negotiations did not get off the ground. Washington was still not prepared to put Izetbegovic under pressure. The result was that the talks in the Contact Group had reached total deadlock. The group continued to meet until the end of May, but agreement could not be reached.[1457]

The cessation of hostilities agreed to on 20 December 1994 in any case brought a period of relative calm, which the US Government wanted to use to get negotiations under way. However, the Bosnian Government stuck to the acceptance beforehand of the Contact Group plan by Pale, but in mid-March that proved out of the question because of a statement of the Bosnian Serb Parliament. Within the US Government, the discussion continued about the objectives of its own policy. The pressure from Congress, led by Senator Dole, for the lifting of the arms embargo continued to grow. Within the government, Vice-President Al Gore and UN Permanent Representative Madeleine Albright opposed concessions to Pale or to Milosevic. For the fact that Izetbegovic was sticking to acceptance of the Contact Group plan by Pale meant that pressure on Karadzic by way of Belgrade was the only way forward. Milosevic wanted a reward, however, in the form of suspension of the sanctions. US Secretary of State Richard Holbrooke made every effort to reach a settlement on this point. Negotiations by his colleague, Robert Frasure, in Belgrade on behalf of the Contact Group failed at the beginning of June 1995. A package of proposals for recognition of Bosnia by Rest-Yugoslavia, easing and withdrawal of the sanctions and stricter monitoring at the border between Republika Srpska and Rest-Yugoslavia, was not acceptable to Milosevic. Washington decided to suspend the negotiations and

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[1452] Owen, Balkan Odyssey, p. 309.
[1453] UNGE ICFY Box 130 file: crypto faxes in 37 Dec 1994 Jan 1995. Code cable Z-1944, Akashi to Annan, 16/12/94.
[1454] ABZ, DEU/ARA/ 05142. Coded cable Van Houtum 786, 23/12/94.
[1455] International Herald Tribune, 22/12/94.
[1456] DPKO, Code cable Z-1966, Akashi to Annan, 20/12/94.
[1457] ABZ,DEU/ARA/ 05241. Fax Embassy Washington to DEU/DAV/DPV, 22/12/94. Owen, Balkan Odyssey, pp. 310-315. Burg & Shoup, War in Bosnia, pp. 319-320.

to wait and see whether the new EU mediator, Carl Bildt, would have any success.[1458] The Contact Group dealt the final blow to its own plan by deciding on 29 May that only unconditional acceptance was possible, and that it would not be a basis for negotiations, as had still appeared possible in December 1994.[1459]

## 8. The meeting of the Chiefs of Defence Staff in The Hague: improvement of the effectiveness of UNPROFOR

The prevention of the withdrawal of UNPROFOR was an objective that had broad support within NATO. It was a way of preventing lifting of the arms embargo for Bosnia, an option that in any case remained a serious option for the new American Congress with a Republican majority. Certainly after the serious crisis in NATO at the end of November, Washington wanted to show its allies that it also considered it important for UNPROFOR to continue. UNPROFOR did have to act more effectively then.

With that objective, the NATO Chiefs of Defence Staff met, on the initiative of US Defence Secretary William Perry, in The Hague on 19 December, and their colleagues from other troop-contributing countries joined them the next day to discuss concrete proposals.[1460] The Force Commander and representatives of the military staff of NATO and of the UN secretariat attended the meeting, as did Vitaly Churkin, the Russian Ambassador to NATO, although this was against the wishes of the Dutch host, Henk van der Breemen.[1461] The purpose of the meeting was to draw up a list of proposals with the necessary means for reinforcing the effectiveness and reducing the vulnerability of UNPROFOR.

After the crisis in Bihac, this meeting was a good instrument for the Netherlands to give new impetus to improving cooperation within NATO with regard to UNPROFOR. For the Netherlands, this meeting was significant for two reasons. First, the meeting emphasized the importance that the Netherlands attached to cooperation between NATO and the UN during the peace mission in the former Yugoslavia and to its continuation. In addition – and that was not entirely without self interest – it was a good framework for discussion of the problems of the Safe Areas, with Srebrenica, of course, being able to serve as an example. Safe Areas together with humanitarian aid and Sarajevo formed the main topics of the exchange of views. The British delegation adopted a reticent stance at the meetings. Improvement of the Freedom of Movement was important for the French and Americans. Force Commander Bertrand de Lapresle took the view that within the mandate measures for increasing the Freedom of Movement and resupplying were possible. The talks proceeded in a good atmosphere, and the final document meant a breakthrough in the impasse between NATO and the UN.

After the representatives of the Chiefs of Defence Staffs had worked through the night, at four o'clock there was a report on the table that was accepted the following morning. The result itself, according to SACEUR General Clark was nothing more than a 'menu of requirements and contributions that might help marginally. But we all knew that this would be no quantum improvement, even if fully implemented.'[1462] The basis was formed by a British plan for a 'harder edge' in the execution of the existing mandate.[1463] The point of departure was a permissive, benign environment' because with the 'non-permissive, hostile' variant the proposed measures would have too much of an enforcement character.[1464] The thirteen recommendations were followed by a list of reinforcements for

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[1458] ABZ, Embassy Washington. Coded cable Jacobovits 374, 02/06/94. Owen, Balkan Odyssey, 322. Burg & Shoup, War in Bosnia, 321-322. Daalder, Getting to Dayton, pp.39-40.
[1459] Stoltenberg, De Tusene Dagene, p. 102.
[1460] ABZ, DPV/ARA/00580. Coded cable Veenendaal 2045, 14/12/94.
[1461] Interview H. van den Breemen, 21/09/99.
[1462] Interview H. van den Breemen, 21/09/99 and Clark, Waging Modern War, p. 43.
[1463] CSKL 1993. UNPROFOR – A more robust approach. A Note by the United Kingdom [16/12/94]
[1464] ABZ, DEU/ARA/ 05277. Coded cable Van Mierlo 769, 27/12/94.

direct deployment. The participants would make clear as soon as possible what contribution they were going to make.

The recommendations were aimed at improving the quality of the UNPROFOR battalions and making additional equipment and personnel available. In this respect, the meeting was following the Force Commander: he did not need more infantry or heavier weaponry. In order to increase the self-defence capability, he asked for additional equipment such as radar, night-glasses and means of communication. In the recommendations sharpshooter teams and Tactical Air Control Parties were added. Additional observers (UNMOs and UnCivPols) and specialist military engineering personnel would increase the capacity for keeping the dialogue going between the warring factions. The increase in the effectiveness of UNPROFOR also had to come from better training of the units. In order to be able to parry the lack of freedom of movement, three squadrons of helicopters were needed for providing supplies to Sarajevo and remote areas. The proposals further provided for the building up of a mobile reserve (another word for Quick Reaction Force) per sector and demarcation and demilitarization of the Safe Areas. The list ended with proposals for NATO and UNPROFOR planning, together with the providing of supplies to Sarajevo and the enclaves (Bihac, Gorazde, Zepa and Srebrenica) by means of a corridor by road or by air. The last proposal had to do with improving the image of the peacekeeping force through better information. A recommendation on regrouping to counteract the vulnerability of UNPROFOR units was omitted from the report on the advice of De Lapresle, because this would lead to a resumption of the conflict at places from which units had been removed.[1465]

In consultation with the Pentagon, the Dutch Government tried as far as possible to follow up the so-called 'shopping list' of the meeting of the Chiefs of Defence Staff. Internally, within the Army this was no problem. On the basis of the proposals for improvement of the effectiveness of the UNPROFOR battalions, a proposal was tabled for the improvement of humanitarian aid in the enclave and for increasing the safety of Dutchbat and the population by the deployment of more equipment. However, this did not get much beyond the planning stage, because it was expected that the VRS would block the placing of those additional weapon systems and other resources in the enclave.[1466] At the beginning of 1995, after the arrival of Dutchbat III, the topic disappeared from the agenda.

Maintaining the 'political momentum' internationally was a difficult task. After consultation with his American colleague William Perry, Voorhoeve with that objective wanted to call a meeting of Ministers of Defence in The Hague around New Year 1995, but that plan disappeared from the agenda.[1467] The US Government itself came up with an offer of equipment, but the other participants were slower off the mark. Through the representatives at NATO and the UN in New York, the Netherlands asked for a response from the participants to the shopping list and announced a meeting in New York on 10 January 1995 for a stocktaking of the harvest. The Netherlands wanted in particular to achieve the recommendations for humanitarian aid and resupplying by air as soon as possible, and pressed for the provision of transport aircraft and helicopters with or without crews. The Netherlands itself offered four liaison helicopters, mortar detection radar, two F-27s and twenty UNMOs.[1468] In the end it was found that the UN did not need the light Dutch helicopters.[1469]

The constructive talks in The Hague had hardly any practical yield. When stock was taken of the contributions of participants on 10 January 1995 in New York it was found that not a single country had offered a squadron of resupplying or attack helicopters. France and Great Britain had not yet taken a decision. Of the other NATO countries, Spain promised a company. This was a paltry result for the

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1465 ABZ PVNY. Appendix to No.S94/122/4458, 22 /12/94: Informal CHODS meeting on UNPROFOR. Report. ABZ, DEU/ARA/ 05277. Coded cable Van Mierlo circ 769, 27/12/94.
1466 II DE 0001 to 0192. Internal memorandum Brantz to Chief of Army Crisis staff, 21/12/94. BDL: memo C94/061/4497, Defence Staff to Minister, 23/12/94.
1467 ABZ, DPV/ARA/00580. Coded cable Van Mierlo 212, 22/12/94; Coded cable Van Houtum 793, 29/12/94.
1468 ABZ, DPV/ARA/00580. Coded cable Van Mierlo 509, 22/12/94. CSKL 1993. Coded cable Celer 2, 03/01/95.
1469 ABZ, DEU/ARA/03356. Coded cable Biegman 096, 07/02/95.

members of an organization that had so emphatically wanted to take the lead. Islamic countries offered military observers, UnCivPols and military engineering capacity, in addition to new battalions. All in all the results were meagre. The American and Dutch representatives agreed at the end of it to have bilateral contact in order to try and achieve a better realization of the shopping list.[1470]

Not much zest was evident among the allies. Van den Breemen subsequently attributed this to the differing analyses of the military, on the one hand, and politicians, on the other. Through the materialization of the cessation of hostilities agreement in Bosnia, which had been in force since 1 January 1995, and the apparent headway that was being made by the Contact Group in the peace talks, reinforcement of UNPROFOR had probably become less urgent for politicians.[1471] A factor was that in any case the large European countries (France, the United Kingdom and the Federal Republic of Germany) would have been more prepared to increase their contribution if other countries had also done their share.[1472]

Another factor that played a part was that UNPROFOR itself had set other priorities because of the implementation of the cessation of hostilities agreement: five mechanized infantry battalions. This head wind did not discourage the Dutch military authorities in any case. They drew up plans for a new Dutch contribution. The Defence Staff developed plans for the independent deployment of a few companies of the Royal Netherlands Marine Corps, possibly combined with a unit of British marines or a cavalry reconnaissance unit. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs was in favour of keeping up the 'momentum', but found the objectives still too vague to take a decision.[1473] Van den Breemen put forward, without any effect, a proposal for a European multinational battalion consisting of British, French and Dutch components.[1474] In consultation with Chief of Staff of Bosnia-Hercegovina Command Brinkman, the Chief of Defence Staff discussed yet other options. At the beginning of February, however, the subject faded into the background.[1475]

At the beginning of March, interest in the conclusions of the meeting of the Chiefs of Defence Staffs in December 1994 in The Hague remained only in the Islamic countries. They suggested writing a letter to Boutros-Ghali together with Sweden, Germany, New Zealand and the Netherlands, pressing for more robust action to be taken. Although Ambassador Biegman was sympathetic to a number of specific proposals, he found the time totally unsuitable. In North Atlantic Council circles there was little enthusiasm for a new meeting such as the Dutch Government was keen to have. The US authorities wanted to keep that meeting in reserve in case the developments in Bosnia itself or in the US Congress made it opportune. Other NATO countries wanted for the time being to put all their energy into the military planning of the withdrawal that might be necessary because of the threat from Zagreb not to extend the mandate on 1 April 1995. Ambassador Veenendaal described the mood as follows: 'Pleas not to regard a doomsday scenario as already inevitable, but at the same time to consider under what circumstances UNPROFOR – reinforced or otherwise – would be able to remain, since withdrawal would not solve the problems, but rather aggravate them, are therefore treated with reserve by many.'[1476]

Despite great effort, the Dutch Government proved unable to bring its attempt to achieve actual reinforcement of UNPROFOR to a successful conclusion. In fact, after the meeting in The Hague the tide began to turn. It was unlikely that it was merely a question of not enough sense of urgency among politicians, as the Chief of Defence Staff claimed. The motive for the American

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1470 CRST. Coded cable Schaper 20, 10/01/95.
1471 Interview H. van den Breemen, 21/10/99.
1472 DCBC No. 2038. Coded cable Schaper 24, 11/01/95.
1473 DCBC, No.296. No. S/95/061/96, Van den Breemen and De Winter to Minister, 13/01/95. ABZ, DEU/ARA/ 00797. Memorandum DAV/95-74, 16/01/95.
1474 NIOD: letter from FCO to NIOD, 10/05/01, Appendix: 'HMG Response to NIOD Questionnaire on Fall of Srebrenica', under Question 12.
1475 CRST. S/95/061/407, Van den Breemen to Minister, 30/01/95.
1476 ABZ, DEU/ARA/03356. Coded cable Veenendaal 305, 01/03/95.

initiative had been first and foremost restoration of unity within NATO and, following on from this, better cooperation between NATO and UNPROFOR. In that sense, the objective had been achieved. The meeting in The Hague had been no more than a digression, and after that the international consultation had continued again in the normal organizations. Apart from that, the reinforcement of UNPROFOR no longer had high priority after the cessation of hostilities in Bosnia. Of course, another contributory factor was that, from the point of view of UNPROFOR, close cooperation with NATO in the formulation of a more vigorous execution of the mandate was not the first option after the serious clashes during the Bihac crisis. Dutch policy, which was determined mainly by Minister of Defence Joris Voorhoeve and Chief of Staff Henk van den Breemen, largely ignored those aspects. Apart from their own political motives – fear of a premature end of the peace mission, with all the consequences that would have, and a conflict within NATO – the intention of actual reinforcement of UNPROFOR was a major driving force behind their policy. That had emerged from the response to the shopping list and from the energy put into the development of new Dutch contributions. It does not alter the fact that it is remarkable that, after enthusiasm had waned following the first meeting, the Netherlands continued to aim for a second meeting. The results of that consultation are dealt with in Part III, Chapter 1, as part of a discussion of the changing strategic situation in May/June 1995.

## 9. Test criteria and the Van Middelkoop motion

Voorhoeve kept Parliament regularly informed in writing about all aspects of the operations in the former Yugoslavia, generally in letters and in oral discussions. An exceptional part of this regular contact was the briefing on 18 October 1994 of the Permanent Parliamentary committees for Foreign Affairs and Defence on the possible withdrawal of Dutchbat from Srebrenica.[1477] The consultation between government and Parliament undoubtedly met Parliament's wish to remain informed about the state of affairs and the government's plans for the increase in the Dutch contribution to UNPROFOR and improvement of the position of Dutchbat.

During this period Parliament also continued consultation with the government on greater involvement of Parliament in the decision-making about the deployment of Dutch military units, already discussed in detail in Part I. The Ministers of Defence and of Foreign Affairs had drawn attention in a memorandum in January 1994 to the increased practice of involving Parliament at the earliest possible stage in the decision-making, also in cases of a major change of objective. The government did not share Parliament's wish for deployment to be linked to an Act of Approval. It felt that the existing practice of providing information by means of a letter was sufficient.

The government had followed this procedure when taking the decision to transfer a company of Dutchbat to the Bihac. After the decision had been taken, it had informed Parliament by letter and had exchanged ideas on the matter. When the letter was being discussed on 9 November the procedure itself did not come up for discussion. It did on 21December 1994. It emerged then that dissatisfaction about the procedure had continued to exist and that, with the exception of the VVD (Liberal Conservatives), Parliament remained in favour of a statutory right of approval. The government, through Van Mierlo and Voorhoeve, continued to reject the right of approval, but was prepared to set up a testing framework that it would use when taking a decision about deployment.[1478] Parliament would not settle for that, and in the Van Middelkoop motion asked the government to prepare a regulation on the official right of approval of Parliament for deployment. The VVD (Liberals) party voted against it. The government showed itself rather unbending. It merely promised to think about it.[1479]

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[1477] DCBD, No. 2777. 'Private briefing of the permanent parliamentary committees for Foreign Affairs and Defence on Tuesday, 18 October from 3pm to about 4pm.'
[1478] TK, Paliamentary session year 1994-1995, 23591, No. 2.
[1479] TK, Paliamentary session year 1994-1995, 23591, No. 3.

The setting up of the promised test framework took a long time. On 28 June 1995 the government presented a list of fourteen points.[1480] The points were subdivided according to aspects of political desirability and feasibility. In particular, the five points in the first group gave an insight into what was felt about participation in peace operations. Deployment would be on account of Dutch interests such as keeping international peace and security and promoting the international rule of law. It also had to be in conformity with international law, and had to be effected on the basis of a clear mandate from the UN or another international organization. In the decision-making, factors such as 'solidarity, credibility and the spread of responsibilities, risks and burdens' were also important. The Netherlands preferred a multinational approach and decisions to be taken on a case by case basis. The government pointed out that the list was merely an aid, because a mutual weighing-up of the criteria would be necessary in each case. The discussion started in November 1995. Parliament agreed to the test criteria.[1481] This consultation between government and Parliament took place outside the concrete policy on the former Yugoslavia.

After the discussion of developments in the Dutch sphere, the account in the next paragraph returns to international developments. It picks up the thread of the discussion about, and the preparation for, the withdrawal of UNPROFOR, which was a consequence of the peace plan of the Contact Group in July 1994.

## 10. Withdrawal of UNPROFOR?

After the presentation of the Contact Group plan for Bosnia in July 1994, a discussion started about the withdrawal of UNPROFOR. This discussion was based on the assumption that the peacekeeping force could no longer function if a number of disincentives were used in the event of the peace plan being rejected. This applied in particular in the event of an extension of the Heavy Weapon Exclusion Zones to all Safe Areas and the lifting of the arms embargo. The need for withdrawal was put forward first by UNPROFOR itself and was endorsed by the Secretary-General of the UN. Although the implementation of the two relevant disincentives – setting up of Heavy Weapon Exclusion Zones in all Safe Areas combined with stricter monitoring of their observance and lifting of the arms embargo – was quickly dropped, the question of the withdrawal remained on the political agenda through a possible unilateral ending of the embargo by the Americans. That acute danger also faded away at the end of 1994. However, this did not lead to an end to the discussion about, and the preparation of, UNPROFOR. As stated in paragraph 2 of this chapter, these events had created an atmosphere in which the departure of UNPROFOR became a politically charged topic. The possible withdrawal of UNPROFOR brought a number of matters to the table that were closely related to the execution of the peace operation itself.

First of all, it clearly came to light that UNPROFOR had landed in a difficult situation because of the gradual extension of the mandate and the limited means. In the execution of each part of the mandate – facilitation of humanitarian aid, Safe Areas and Weapon Exclusion Zones – it had to contend with breach of the agreements by the warring factions, its own response to that and accusations of flawed execution of the mission. In fact, it was a matter of a gradually deteriorating situation and increasing powerlessness of UNPROFOR to cope with the situation. In the autumn the situation seemed to be running completely out of control: fighting had resumed at various places in Bosnia, and the Freedom of Movement for UNPROFOR and UNHCR had been violated by both parties.[1482]

In this situation UNPROFOR itself could do relatively little. It could not force the parties to stop fighting, but could only try to persuade them to do so. It could not act against violations of the

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[1480] TK, Paliamentary session year 1994-1995, 23591, No. 5.
[1481] TK, Paliamentary session year 1995-1996, 23591, No. 6.
[1482] Burg & Shoup, War in Bosnia, pp. 152-153.

Freedom of Movement by forcing a way through, because this would result in an outright war situation. From the UNPROFOR point of view, that also applied to Close Air Support and air strikes: those were instruments that could be used only to a limited degree.

The performance of UNPROFOR met with a great deal of criticism in international politics and among the warring factions. In purely military terms, each violation ought to have been followed by a response, but this often did not happen. The safety of UNPROFOR itself played an important part in that decision. There was a presumption that by using more force UNPROFOR would strengthen its position and command respect among the warring factions. According to the UNPROFOR command, that was a great misconception. The use of force in performing the task would lead to escalation and make fulfilment of the mandate totally impossible. This message was expounded repeatedly by Force Commander Bertrand de Lapresle and Bosnia-Hercegovina Commander Michael Rose. Besides, the lightly armed peacekeeping force was not in a position to engage in that confrontation.[1483]

UNPROFOR did not seize the possible lifting of the arms embargo or tightening and extension of the Heavy Weapon Exclusion Zone system as an excuse for ending the mission in the former Yugoslavia as quickly as possible. Akashi and De Lapresle did, however, have serious concerns about a departure in those circumstances. From the beginning of its mission UNPROFOR had been making plans for a possible withdrawal. These plans were based on favourable circumstances, in which it would be possible by means of concentration in various regions to achieve an orderly departure from the area of operations without outside help. On the deployment of Dutchbat in Srebrenica apparently there also existed such a plan for this area.

The chance of implementation of disincentives from the Contact Group plan put the planning in a different perspective. UNPROFOR did not have the facilities for carrying out military operations. According to the headquarters in New York at the beginning of September 1994, in an analysis of the military consequences of the Contact Group plan for UNPROFOR, it was a fundamental misconception that the peacekeeping force in conjunction with Close Air Support could operate as a fighting unit. It was therefore also not capable on its own of withdrawing from a hostile environment.

If in fact the United States withdrew in mid-November from monitoring of the arms embargo, the situation would rapidly deteriorate and necessitate withdrawal from a hostile environment. If negotiations on a departure failed, at least two airborne NATO divisions would be needed to evacuate UNPROFOR. The participation of American ground combat forces would be needed here.[1484]

UNPROFOR consulted with the NATO base in Naples on 23 August about planning of the withdrawal, and then worked out a number of scenarios involving increasingly hostile environments. As usual, the military staff of NATO asked for instructions from the North Atlantic Council about the preconditions for the planning of this operation. The political context was also reflected in the preparation of the decision-making, but had hardly any influence on the discussion. In addition to Combined Planning with UNPROFOR, in other words coordination of the planning in order to avoid duplication of work, and the deployment of ground troops, it was further up to the military authorities to give substance to an evacuation plan for UNPROFOR.[1485]

The speed at which a decision was taken on combined planning between NATO and UNPROFOR for the withdrawal from the former Yugoslavia was an indication of the gravity of the situation. The demand for national plans for evacuation did not come up in the discussion, although UNPROFOR had qualms about this. The consequence of the withdrawal for operations in the former Yugoslavia was not discussed either. In fact, no striking changes occurred. Canada announced at the end of September that it was extending its cooperation in UNPROFOR for six months. Should a situation that seriously threatened the safety of the contingent occur, then Ottawa would consider

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[1483] Confidential information (172).
[1484] UNNY, DPKO, Coded cables UNPROFOR. Coded cable Z-1351, Akashi to Annan, 02/09/94 appendix: Military Impact on UNPROFOR of the Contact Group Proposals, 02/09/94.
[1485] ABZ, DEU/ARA/ 05276. Coded cable Veenendaal 1335, 02/09/94; Coded cable Veenendaal 1344, 06/09/94; Coded cable Veenendaal 1372, 09/09/94.

withdrawal.[1486] After giving the assignment to the military staff, the NATO Council proceeded to the agenda. Not until December would the subject come up for discussion again in the Council.

At working level there were regular contacts between the staff of the Force Commander and the NATO Commander in Chief in Naples. Contacts were also established between the military staff and the UN Secretariat in New York. The advantage of these contacts was that a thorough discussion of matters was possible and many differences of opinion were resolved. The difficult problem was and remained the difference in culture and modus operandi between NATO and UN/UNPROFOR. NATO was essentially a military organization with a political aim; the UN was a political organization. NATO had difficulty in its cooperation with UNPROFOR in accepting that it was performing tasks at the request of the peacekeeping force. The differences became most clearly manifest in the demand of the UN that it fulfil the leading political role, while NATO was striving for the same role by means of the military Command and Control.[1487] Those differences were easier to bridge at working level than at the political level.[1488]

The planning assignment for the withdrawal came up again in the Council at the beginning of December, in the middle of the impasse on Bihac and the arms embargo. During the discussions about those political guidelines to the military planners there was a totally different atmosphere from that in September. At that time there had been a certain resignation, and there was no discussion of the political context of the assignment. In November/December there was a sort of resolve about the need for ensuring that UNPROFOR continued its mission. Despite the great urgency, the regularly recurring message was that it was a matter of planning for a potential situation, not of the implementation of a specific resolution. The plan for the withdrawal was a matter for the whole alliance, a fact that was also emphasized by the US Permanent Representative. Establishing the political parameters of the assignment did not produce any fireworks. The fact that Washington promised to make a contribution in the form of troops for the operation had undoubtedly added to the easing of the tension. The military authorities were given the following guidelines for the planning. The strategic objective of the operation was a NATO operation to support safe, orderly and rapid withdrawal of UNPROFOR. In concrete terms it would be an operation involving the deployment of fighting units under NATO command. In the coordination, account was to be taken of Akashi's own powers.[1489]

In The Hague there was in any case some pessimism before the start of the talks in Brussels. To put it briefly, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was afraid in any case that the planning of the evacuation would become a self-fulfilling prophecy. The plan could also have a negative influence outside the circle of NATO. It could create the impression among the warring factions that NATO was focusing only on the evacuation. UNPROFOR could consequently end up in a downward spiral that for the peacekeeping force meant a serious threat to its safety. In that way UNPROFOR would be even less capable of fulfilling its protective and humanitarian task. The cooperation between NATO and UNPROFOR was in a serious impasse. In the view of the Dutch Government, it was more important to take UNPROFOR out of the downward spiral. The deliberations in The Hague had not produced any concrete solutions, but all the more questions about the positive effects of limiting the mandate and possibilities for a better command of NATO and UNPROFOR.

Briefly summarized, all questions tended towards strengthening of the position of UNPROFOR. The Dutch Government was in favour of this, but there remained the question of how it could be achieved. The Dutch Government did not yet have any clear ideas, apart from the conviction that increasing the number of battalions would not help. UNPROFOR would have to have

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[1486] ABZ, DPV/ARA/ 02109. Coded cable Veenendaal 1495, 26/09/94.
[1487] UNNY, DKPO, Coded cables UNPROFOR. Code cable Z-1814, Akashi to Annan, 27/11/94. ABZ, DEU/ARA/ 05274. Coded cable Biegman 1109, 01/10/94.
[1488] Confidential information (94).
[1489] ABZ, DEU/ARA/ 05277. Coded cable Veenendaal 1894, 23/11/94. DCBC. Coded cable Veenendaal 1960, 30/11/94.

better resources at its disposal. At the meeting of the Chiefs of Defence Staff in The Hague on 19-20 December the first steps had been taken in that direction. (See paragraph 8.)[1490]

In any case this did not allay Dutch fears about signals going out as a result of planning for actual withdrawal. On the contrary, those fears were increased through the possible ending of the peace mission in Croatia on 1 April 1995. The Netherlands, together with other countries, opposed direct preparatory measures for the withdrawal of UNPROFOR. It used two arguments in this respect: preparatory measures could thwart negotiations on UNPROFOR remaining there; besides, the Croatian plan applied only to the task in the United Nations Protected Areas (UNPAs), and the UNPROFOR headquarters could remain with the logistical cluster. In the meantime, the Netherlands received support from other countries, such as Great Britain. However, the French Permanent Representative sounded a different note: steps by the US Congress towards lifting of the arms embargo indicated the continuing importance of the planning.[1491]

After the adoption of the general withdrawal plan codenamed Oplan 40104, a start was made, with an eye on Croatia, on planning for emergency evacuations. This involved an operation in a restricted area and execution in a short period of time. That set more stringent requirements with regard to the preparation. In the case of Oplan 40104 it had been primarily a paper exercise. In the case of emergency evacuations that would not do, and certainty was needed about the available resources through concrete promises from the Member States. This development gave the Netherlands the opportunity to demand attention for the situation in Srebrenica. At the end of April the Chief of Defence Staff was satisfied to find that in the elaboration of plans for the specific part of the Quick Response Options account had also been taken of Dutch wishes with regard to Srebrenica.[1492] At the end of May it appeared that American units and an Anglo-Dutch unit would probably be available for an emergency operation for the evacuation of Dutchbat from Srebrenica.[1493]

The preparation of the plans for emergency evacuation did not mean that the decision-taking on Oplan 40104 had been completed. All kinds of problems remained, both with respect to the military aspects and with respect to the political aspects, and these were solved in the course of the following months. Despite its scepticism about the preparation for the withdrawal, the Netherlands had gained some advantage through the plan for an emergency evacuation from Srebrenica. The question of whether the will or intention for withdrawal was also stimulated by the planning process itself, as the Dutch Government feared, is of a different order. It would not be fair to make a direct connection between statements of the French and British about a possible withdrawal and the planning process within NATO. Those statements had much more to do with the deteriorating situation in Bosnia. Besides, in those cases it was a matter of a unilateral withdrawal. Within the North Atlantic Council the planning began to play a part only from March 1995 onwards, after the military preparation had largely been completed in close cooperation with UNPROFOR. The planning acquired a topical character after the discussion of emergency evacuations, because these required concrete cases to be specified. The start of that planning indicated in any case that the situation concerned remained threatening, but also that the members of NATO intended jointly to face up to that situation.

## 11. Replacement of Dutchbat?

Voorhoeve and Van Mierlo had established in September 1994 that stationing of a company from another NATO country alongside Dutchbat in Srebrenica as an extra safeguard for the safety of the

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1490 ABZ, DEU/ARA/ 05277. Coded unnumbered minute (Van Mierlo), 02/12/94. CSKL 1993. Coded cable Van Mierlo 543, 15/12/94.
1491 ABZ, DEU/ARA/03356. Coded cable Veenendaal 032, 11/01/95; Veenendaal 089, 19/01/95. ABZ, DEU Bosnia NATO.Coded cable Veenendaal 123, 25/01/95. DCBC, 1394. Coded cable Veenendaal 316, 03/02/95.
1492 DCBC: NATO DDP/95/258, 21/03/95. DCBC, No.138. Coded cable Feith 486, 29/03/95. DCBC, No./1835. No.Hipa.408, CDS to MinDef, 27/04/95.
1493 DCBC, 1408. Coded cable Veenendaal 818, 24/05/95.

enclave could work. In their policy plan for Bosnia this internationalization or formation of a multinational unit constituted an important element. It was therefore primarily a point inspired by political considerations, and the operational consequences of which had not been given much thought. Since such another contingent, like Dutchbat, would be familiar with NATO procedures and rules, that would not cause any problems, they assumed. They had given little thought to aspects like language differences, coordination and the consequences for logistical care below battalion level.

The proposal itself did not gain a positive response in NATO and UN circles. Van Mierlo brought it up in September 1994 at the Department for Peacekeeping Operations in New York, but after consultation of UNPROFOR the answer told its own story. In the enclave of Srebrenica there was already a multinational presence, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations in New York argued. UN military observers from five different countries were in fact stationed in the enclave alongside Dutchbat from the Netherlands. UNPROFOR had practical operational objections to the proposal. The main point was, however, that its implementation would lead to harming of the 'stability, continuity and consistency within the area of operation'. According to UNPROFOR, the disadvantages outweighed the advantages.[1494] Voorhoeve's own soundings among other NATO countries at a meeting in Seville at the end of September 1994 did not yield anything either: the French were going to study the proposal; The British drew attention to their task in Gorazde, and Denmark pointed out that it was already making quite a large contribution elsewhere in Bosnia.[1495] The question of internationalization of the UNPROFOR presence in Srebrenica was consequently not over and done with as far as the Netherlands was concerned. In 1995 it also put forward plans for achieving this objective a number of further times to the UN and other countries, but the UN and UNPROFOR continued to reject them.[1496]

As far as Voorhoeve was concerned, internationalization was not the only option. One option was heavier arming of Dutchbat. According to the Chief of Defence Staff, this was not really an option, because the VRS would not allow in this heavier weaponry. Voorhoeve also explored possibilities for ending the mission of Dutchbat. This often took place in talks with Bosnian Permanent Representative to the UN Muhamed Sacirbey, who regularly visited the Netherlands for personal reasons and then also tried to talk to Voorhoeve or Van Mierlo. In his first interview with Sacirbey on 15 September 1994, Voorhoeve put forward the 'dreadful option' of moving the population to easily defendable areas under UN protection.[1497] In October the exchange of the eastern enclaves for Serbian territory around Sarajevo was discussed. During the Bihac crisis the conversion of the Safe Areas to a UN demilitarized zone by analogy with the Russian proposal for Sarajevo was discussed.[1498]

Voorhoeve's way of tackling of the problem was clear. He wanted to strengthen the position of Dutchbat in the enclave and increase the safety of the population in the enclave. Supplying heavier weaponry, moving the population and conversion to a demilitarized zone were options that were not feasible in the autumn of 1994. That also applied to his plan for strengthening the Safe Area concept. At the annual *Wehrkundetagung* in Munich at the beginning of February 1995 he advocated a strengthening of the Safe Area concept in general by means of protection by NATO troops, demilitarization, tit-for-tat response to attacks, assured provision of supplies and taking out the VRS ground-to-air missile installations.[1499] As will emerge later, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was opposed to this idea because internationally it would just not be feasible. This meant that the replacement of Dutchbat in Srebrenica remained the most important option.

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[1494] ABZ, DEU/ARA/ 05276. Coded cable Biegman 926, 30/09/94; Kofi Annan to Van Mierlo, 07/10/94. UNNY, DPKO Unprofor coded cables, Z-1498, Akashi to Annan, 30/09/94.
[1495] Interview J.J.C Voorhoeve, 15/04/97.
[1496] TK, Paliamentary session year 1994-1995, 22 181, No.108, pp.7-8.
[1497] ABZ, DEU/2000/00354. Memo D94/368, Nota DAB, 15/09/94.
[1498] DJZ/BST. Memo D94/450, DAB to Minister, 26/10/94. CRST. Voorhoeve to Van Mierlo, 18/11/94.
[1499] ABZ, DEU/ARA/05277. Voorhoeve to Van Mierlo, 07/02/95; Appendix: Needed: a joint new Bosnia policy.

On 1 July 1995 the Dutch Government was faced with the question of what to do about the ending of Dutchbat's mission in Srebrenica. When Dutchbat had been offered, the Government had not told the UN that it had been made available for eighteen months. Parliament had been told. The Netherlands had taken this fact for granted in its contact with the UN.[1500] Minister Relus ter Beek had announced that decision only in June 1994 'in a private meeting to the Secretary-General of the UN'. The Permanent Representative in New York had repeated it later in writing, because the UN secretariat continued to say that it was not aware of any restriction to eighteen months.[1501]

On the face of it, the announcement of the departure of Dutchbat from Srebrenica did not accord with the training of Dutchbat IV, which the Army had begun. However, this was not thwarting the minister's policy. His ambition was to keep the Dutch contribution to UNPROFOR at the same level, and he assumed that the battalion would be deployed elsewhere in Bosnia after July 1995, preferably in a contiguous operational area for the three companies. A temporary deployment of Dutchbat IV might still be possible in Srebrenica after July 1995, while awaiting the arrival of the replacement. Voorhoeve therefore gave priority to the departure of Dutchbat from Srebrenica. In his opinion, its replacement by a battalion from another country was a problem that the UN had to solve. According to Voorhoeve, that ought not to be too great a problem. In January 1995 a number of Islamic countries had offered new battalions for deployment for monitoring that the cessation of hostilities was being observed. Besides, when the UNPROFOR mandate in Croatia ended on 31 March 1995, as President Tudjman had announced, Eastern European battalions would also become available for deployment in Bosnia. In mid-February 1995 Voorhoeve asked the Defence Staff and Directorate of General Policy Affairs (DAB) to work out a number of options on the basis of a few clear instructions. The basic principle in this case was the departure of Dutchbat from Srebrenica, but he also wanted to consider proposals for an extra term, provided, for example, that there would be internationalization.[1502] So Voorhoeve also wanted to use the concept of internationalization in talks with the United Nations in 1995 about the replacement of Dutchbat.

In a clear analysis of seven options for the Netherlands on 1 July 1995 the conclusion was that the Netherlands had in fact little choice: the option of simply leaving Srebrenica was politically and morally out of the question; the offer of Dutchbat IV offered equally little possibility for departure from Srebrenica, and the prospects for a multinational peacekeeping force or improvement of the status of the enclave through the formation of a demilitarized zone or a UN-administered area were also nil.[1503] The conclusion that the Netherlands could not simply walk out of Srebrenica was also reached by a delegation from the Parliamentary Committees for Defence and Foreign Affairs on the basis of talks with Bosnia-Hercegovina Commander Rupert Smith, Force Commander General Bernard Janvier and Yasushi Akashi during a working visit to Croatia and Bosnia at the end of March 1995. As Akashi said, it was difficult to find a replacement.[1504]

Voorhoeve's announcement to the Parliamentary Committees for Defence and Foreign Affairs on 9 March, that the Netherlands wanted to deploy the battalion elsewhere in Bosnia and that a part of it could possibly remain in Srebrenica if 'a country that was of political and military significance' wanted to share the responsibility in the Safe Area with the Netherlands, was described by his official advisers as wishful thinking more than anything else.[1505] They thought that such a partner was not to be found.

In the official advice, attention was also drawn to the risk that the Netherlands would suffer a serious fall in the ranking of troop suppliers if on its departure from Srebrenica UNPROFOR were to say that it did not need to station a Dutchbat IV elsewhere in Bosnia. Since the Netherlands itself

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[1500] DJZ. 'Visit of Junior Minister Gmelich Meijling to Dutch units in the former Yugoslavia from 10 to 15 October 1994.'
[1501] DCBC, 287. Memo DAB and CDS to Minister, 22/02/95 'Some thoughts on relieving the troops in Srebrenica.'
[1502] DCBC, 381. Memorandum No.10/95, MinDef to CDS and DAB, 16/02/95.
[1503] DAB. Memorandum DAB and CDS to Minister, 22/02/95 'Some thoughts on relieving the troops in Srebrenica.'.
[1504] TK, Paliamentary session year 1994-1995, 22 181, No.108, pp.3 and 7-8.
[1505] TK, Paliamentary session year 1994-1995, 22 181, No.92, pp.5-6. DAB. Memorandum DAB and CDS to Minister, 22/02/95 'Some thoughts on relieving the troops in Srebrenica.'.

possessed 'no credible means of pressure' for achieving replacement of Dutchbat in Srebrenica, Voorhoeve had to ask the Secretary-General of the UN to press for that replacement. If DutchbatIV were to be offered, clear agreements had to be reached on the preconditions, and preferably an agreement with the Americans on extraction in an emergency situation.[1506]

Before his meeting with Boutros Boutros-Ghali on 17 March 1995, Voorhoeve was instructed by the government to press for the replacement of Dutchbat. The UN would have to find the successor, and the Netherlands was prepared to stay longer in Srebrenica only if a decision was taken to station a multinational peacekeeping force.[1507] However, Voorhoeve's talks with Boutros-Ghali and Kofi Annan did not produce anything more than diplomatic pleasantries: praise for the quality of the Dutch contribution to peace operations, also outside Bosnia, and the promise of every cooperation, but without giving much hope of finding a replacement. It was striking that at the start of the conversation Kofi Annan did mention the possibility of internationalization of Srebrenica. A few months earlier he himself had rejected it out of hand. After all, the Dutch Government wanted to offer that option 'only as a last resort' after 'an all-out effort by the UN'. Voorhoeve therefore did not respond to Annan's suggestion and confined himself to announcing the departure of Dutchbat from Srebrenica.[1508] The mutual standpoints were now clear, but there was really no prospect of a solution. The replacement of Dutchbat by a Pakistani battalion – a suggestion of US Secretary of Defence William Perry during a conversation with Voorhoeve a few days earlier – was an option with no prospects, according to the Dutch Government. The Bosnian Serbs would not allow in a battalion from a Muslim country.[1509]

The Dutch Government first awaited action from the UN, but the UN did not want Dutchbat to leave. There was not much hope from that quarter either. After these first steps, there was a period of quiet, during which the Netherlands continued to hold the standpoint that the UN had to arrange for replacement. When that failed to happen, in the end the Dutch Government itself set about finding a replacement for Dutchbat from the beginning of May onwards. Voorhoeve played a leading and controlling part in this, as in the preceding phase. The possibilities were limited. It was clear that no candidates were available within NATO. In general, the proportion of western countries in UNPROFOR was falling, while that of non-western, in particular Islamic, countries was growing. The possibilities were further limited because the Netherlands did not want to approach an Islamic country: it was assumed that the Bosnian Serbs would not allow them to be stationed in Srebrenica. Attention was focused on four battalions that would become available through the redeployment of UNPROFOR in Croatia when the mandate was extended on 1 April 1995. Of these, only a Ukrainian battalion could in fact be considered.[1510] The seeking of the cooperation of the Ukraine and the UN for the replacement of Dutchbat is discussed further in Chapter 4 of PartIII.

## 12. A balance in Bosnia policy?

Dutch policy on troops in Bosnia was largely influenced by developments in the peace process and the international discussion on continuation or withdrawal of the peacekeeping force as a necessary consequence of a possible unilateral lifting of the arms embargo by the Americans. In parallel with this, but less politically explosive, were talks on the reinforcement of UNPROFOR.

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[1506] DCBC, 287. Memorandum DAB and CDS to Minister, 22/02/95 'Some thoughts on relieving the troops in Srebrenica.'
[1507] Objectivized summary of the minutes of the Ministerial Council meeting of 10/03/95, prepared for the purposes of the present NIOD study.
[1508] ABZ, DPV/ARA/00581. Coded cable Van Mierlo 067, 16/03/95. ABZ, DEU/ARA/03356. Coded cable Biegman 212, 17/03/95.
[1509] ABZ, DEU/ARA/03356. Coded cable Jacobovits 192, 15/03/95. ABZ, DPV/ARA/00581. Coded cable Van Mierlo 067, 16/03/95.
[1510] ABZ, DEU/ARA/03356. Coded cable Biegman 390, 05/05/95. ABZ, DPV/ARA/00580. Coded cable Biegman 428, 16/05/95.

In Srebrenica, Dutchbat was under the impression that little was being done in the Netherlands to improve its position in the enclave. The battalion felt abandoned to its fate. Communication with The Hague was difficult. On the other hand, the authorities could do relatively little to improve the position of Dutchbat. The logistical resupply, such as supplies of fuel and food, was a UN responsibility, but because of the Bosnian Serb restriction on freedom of movement providing supplies to the battalion had become an increasing problem. As explained in the Appendix 'Resupply by air', the UN authorities tried to arrange the resupplying in the spring.

It is difficult to establish to what extent in general the Netherlands put pressure on UNPROFOR to improve the situation in Srebrenica. There was regular contact between the military authorities in the Netherlands and Bosnia-Hercegovina Command in Sarajevo and Kiseljak and UNPROFOR in Zagreb. That contact went mainly through the Dutch officers at those headquarters. However, Bosnia-Hercegovina Command had few possibilities within the limits of the peacekeeping concept to do anything for Srebrenica, or Dutchbat in Srebrenica. In practice, it was found that attention could be drawn to the concern about the situation in Srebrenica only through the political line of the minister and contacts at the highest military level. Voorhoeve did that in his bilateral contacts and at ministerial meetings of NATO and the Western European Union. The Chief of Defence Staff and the Commander in Chief of the Netherlands Army followed the same course on the margins of international consultation. The same happened at UNPROFOR in Zagreb and Bosnia-Hercegovina Command in Sarajevo.

It sometimes produced an unexpected positive reaction: when at the end of November Junior Minister Gmelich Meijling described the American withdrawal from Operation Sharp Guard as leaving in the lurch allies who had deployed their troops in Bosnia, US Defence Secretary William Perry spontaneously promised American support if Dutchbat got into difficulties.[1511] That did not, however, give solace regarding the everyday problems.

In The Hague, the authorities were therefore aware of the difficult situation in Srebrenica. Several political and military authorities had visited the enclave and were familiar with the situation and the working conditions. After his visit in September 1994, Voorhoeve was deeply affected and had drawn his conclusions: in the following months he tried to achieve two objectives. In the first instance, he tried to achieve 'internationalization' of the presence in Srebrenica by stationing of a contingent from another NATO country and ending the assignment in Srebrenica on 1 July 1995. He linked those objectives: if internationalization came about, as far as he was concerned continuation of the mission after 1 July was negotiable. Voorhoeve was convinced that the presence of troops from another NATO country would increase the safety of the Dutch contingent. With these objectives, he wanted to put an end to what he later called the 'hostage-taking situation'.[1512]

Voorhoeve's approach to the problem of Dutchbat in Srebrenica was in keeping with his view of the general policy in Bosnia. He was committed to the objective of the peace mission in the former Yugoslavia and was seeking ways of improving the quality of that mission. The quality in his view was permanently under pressure because of inadequate UNPROFOR resources. Fitting in with that line of thought were his proposals for reinforcing UNPROFOR and his readiness to assist with ad hoc measures in crisis situations. Reinforcement of UNPROFOR in his view was the central theme. With respect to this he was also looking for a construct in which the Netherlands could cooperate with another, preferably NATO country. Realization of the desired cooperation seldom proved possible in practice, because the potential partners were not interested, or were not in a position to increase their contribution to UNPROFOR. In the Netherlands too, the scope for increasing the contribution to UNPROFOR was limited, but the possibilities were thoroughly examined and translated into proposals.

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[1511] Interview J.C. Gmelich Meijling, 04/12/01.
[1512] Interview J.J.C. Voorhoeve, 13/03/97.

Srebrenica and the reinforcement of UNPROFOR were cases in which Voorhoeve, despite all the restrictions, could conduct his own policy. Since the deployment of Dutchbat in March 1994 a de facto sharing of work had grown between the departments of Defence and Foreign Affairs. Defence dealt with the military aspects, Foreign Affairs with the political and international aspects. Coordination at official level took place mainly during the Defence Management Crisis Centre briefings in the bunker. After the Kok Government took office, the situation remained essentially the same, although Van Mierlo gave his colleague at Defence more scope. Political talks in the context of the European Union and NATO on the central issues of the Yugoslavia case remained the domain of Foreign Affairs. In those bodies the Dutch representative could express the Dutch point of view on the peace process, lifting of the arms embargo or withdrawal of UNPROFOR, but this had little effect internationally.

Defence in fact bore the responsibility for all other matters, also at international level. It involved above all lobbying for Dutchbat. Defence was aware of the fact that the possibilities for the Netherlands to exert international influence were very limited. In a recommendation on possible Dutch proposals, that awareness was put in a nutshell: 'The countries of the Contact Group determine the policy. The Dutch have little influence. That is a fait accompli.'[1513] That did not mean, of course, that the Netherlands did not have its own view. Maintenance and strengthening of international cohesion were keywords for the Netherlands. In The Hague they were well aware that there was little question of this in reality. This produced a certain nervousness in the way in which the Dutch acted, expressed both in the call for strengthening of the cooperation within NATO and UNPROFOR and in the support for special initiatives such as the meeting of the Chiefs of Defence Staff in December 1994 in The Hague.

That nervous activity manifested itself at Defence particularly because of the concern for Dutch troops in Bosnia. Foreign Affairs, on the other hand, had in the meantime opted for a low-profile approach. In the rising tensions within NATO about the course of Bosnia policy and the path to a peace settlement it seemed best not to express an opinion any more than was necessary in the debate. The Dutch Government wanted to stand by Washington if it was a matter of taking a tough line on the Bosnian Serbs, but there were limits to that support. That emerged most clearly in the discussion on the arms embargo, but it was also evident in the regulation of a special status for Bihac in November 1994. Ultimately, there was no difference of view between Defence and Foreign Affairs about the objectives of the policy: UNPROFOR had to remain in Bosnia until a political settlement had been achieved. The continuation of humanitarian aid was a task which the Netherlands, NATO and the troop suppliers could not shirk. Conflicts within NATO on the execution of those tasks would have a counterproductive effect and therefore had to be reconciled.

The question of whether the high level of activity by Defence was also an indication of lack of confidence that the cohesion would be maintained by the West is difficult to answer. What is clear is that at the beginning of 1995 there were differences of view between Voorhoeve and Van Mierlo concerning the degree of activism that the Netherlands had to display in order to turn the tide. Although Foreign Affairs shared Voorhoeve's concern about the risks of the lifting of the arms embargo and the withdrawal of UNPROFOR, it advocated a not too assertive course. This difference of view was manifest in connection with Voorhoeve's proposal at the beginning of February 1995 for the publication of an article in an American newspaper on a new Bosnia policy. Voorhoeve had pointed out in Munich in February 1995 the acute danger of a resumption of the war in the former Yugoslavia in the event of the withdrawal of UNPROFOR combined with unilateral lifting of the arms embargo by the United States. He rejected out of hand criticism of the poor functioning of the peacekeeping force and called for a reinforcement of the Safe Area concept by means of protection by NATO troops, demilitarization, tit-for-tat response to attacks, assured resupply and taking out of the ground-to-air missile installations of the VRS.[1514] All points of the proposal involved a toughening of the international line taken so far.

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[1513] DS. Note D95/073, DAB (De Winter) to Minister, 16/02/95.

[1514] ABZ, DEU/ARA/05277. Voorhoeve to Van Mierlo, 07/02/95; Appendix: Needed: a joint new Bosnia policy.

Van Mierlo advised against the publication of the article; Foreign Affairs officials felt besieged by this pleading for a change in the international line by way of a newspaper article. The reactions were harsh: it was an unfeasible proposal, its execution would mean war, and approval of the Government was needed on the basis of 'a well thought-out paper' from Defence and Foreign Affairs.[1515]

The background to this incident was not just a difference of view on the policy to be pursued. It also had to do with Voorhoeve's dissatisfaction about the lack of response from Foreign Affairs and Van Mierlo, as he subsequently stated. According to Voorhoeve, Foreign Affairs did not respond to his initiatives for policy changes after the establishment of a common line at the end of September 1994. What exactly Foreign Affairs therefore regarded as 'not feasible', 'not fitting in with international policy' or 'unsupported by the Bosnian Government' remained unanswered questions for Voorhoeve. That also applied to Voorhoeve's pleading in September 1994 for contact to be established with the Contact Group concerning preventive evacuation, and that of October 1994 concerning exchange of territory.[1516] On the other hand, Voorhoeve himself had informed the Government about the gravity of the situation, but had never emphasized the need for attention to his problems with Foreign Affairs; it was not Prime Minister Wim Kok's style to take the matter in hand on his own initiative, according to a senior advisor of the Prime Minister.[1517]

This clash between Voorhoeve and Van Mierlo illustrates more than a difference of opinion concerning policy. It also makes clear that in the policy concerning Bosnia and Srebrenica Voorhoeve had in fact become the minister in the driving seat. He did this with great conviction and effort, but also in his own way, with the associated limitations: he had little need of advice, plotted his own course and regarded his official advisers mainly as implementers. Van Mierlo had a totally different style of tackling matters and, on the whole, less knowledge of the case. He gave Voorhoeve the scope that the latter wanted, but not the practical response or the support that Voorhoeve expected.

With regard to the international side of the policy, there was in fact little choice: up to the end of May they muddled their way through internationally. The Dutch complaints about greater cohesion and reinforcement of UNPROFOR had little effect. Internationally, there was little sign of movement in the first few months of 1995, even after the hectic final months of 1994. To everyone's surprise, the cessation of hostilities that had lasted for four months was still holding reasonably well, although the number of violations, particularly by the ABiH, was steadily increasing. However, likewise against everyone's expectations, there was little movement in the peace talks in the meantime. Bosnia did not disappear from the international agenda, but it had been put on the back burner. This situation did not change until after the end of the cessation of hostilities and the resumption of the war in May 1995.

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[1515] ABZ, DEU/ARA/ 05277 Voorhoeve to Van Mierlo, 07/02/95; Appendix: Needed: a joint new Bosnia policy. Handwritten comments on the appendix. Interview J.J.C. Voorhoeve, 15/4/97.

[1516] Interview J.J.C. Voorhoeve, 15/04/97.

1517[1517] Interview J.P.M.H. Merckelbach, 24/05/00.