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LOCALLY SENSITIVE

R0050422

MIO.SREB.002

UNMO HQ  
SNE

See Distr

26 Jul 95

POSTSCRIPT TO SREBRENICA

Reference:

- A. MIO.ASS.SREB001 dated 7 Jul 95.

GENERAL

1. Background. The enclave of SREBRENICA, with a reported population of over 40,000, fell to the BSA over a very short space of time and amidst some controversy. The international media was focussed upon the enclave's plight, and the International Community claimed that the war had reached a watershed.
2. Ref A. Ref A proved to be totally incorrect in its assessments probably because it made the cardinal error of attempting to look at the situation from a military standpoint. It is possible that the main thrust of the paper was correct from this narrow viewpoint but political and, to a lesser extent, historical reasons have always taken precedence.
3. Chronology. A chronology of events is at Annex A.

AIM

4. The aim of this paper is to examine the events leading up to the fall of SREBRENICA and the resultant fall-out in order to ascertain the reasoning behind them, which may provide lessons for the future.

FACTORS WITHIN SREBRENICA

5. Ground. In general terms the area is mainly steep wooded hillsides. One road runs N - S through the enclave with another running off it to the W. The quality of the ground is probably best summed up by the fact that over 200 Sq Km only supported a population of approx 7,000 before the war discounting SREBRENICA. As a result movement is slow with very few opportunities for Armr and the advantage lying with the defenders.
6. ABiH Leadership. ORIC, the charismatic Commander of SREBRENICA, was not allowed to return by either BiH Government or 2 Corps. The reasoning in Ref A may be false and it was instead a deliberate attempt to weaken 28 Div. Whatever the reasons it certainly succeeded in doing so according to UN reports, which claimed that the local

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Commanders seemed incapable of taking any decisive action. This was not unexpected as it had been clear for several months that there were several factions within the enclave, who were only kept in check by ORIC. ZULFO TURSUNOVIC, Comd of 281 Bde (AOR Bandera Triangle), had always taken a consistently aggressive line wanting to attack the BSA from the enclave, and it was his AOR which seems to have seen the fiercest fighting. Reports about ZULFO himself are contradictory with stories that he offered soldiers food and money to stay and fight whilst others state that he was one of those who recommended eventual withdrawal. Comment: it is possible that he finally realised the position was hopeless and tried to at least organise a planned withdrawal. Comment ends. RAMIZ, COS, seems to have taken a very supine role and did not even attempt to seize the heavy weaponry held by UN. The last time he was sighted by the UNMOs seems to have been at the meeting where the UN announced airstrikes were going to take place, and took to the woods from B Coy the next day. Comment: It is easy to find conspiracy theories however the 'leadership' seems to have done little or nothing to co-ordinate /improve the situation.

7. Population of SREBRENICA. The population of SREBRENICA was made up of 75% refugees. As a result they were not committed to the defence of the area in the way that the population of ZEPA is. This may go a long way to explain why defences crumbled so quickly once the leadership failed to materialise (especially as there is some evidence emerging that ORIC used to keep support by terror).

8. Strength.

a. BSA. There have been varying estimates of 1 - 3,000 Inf with up to 20 Tanks as well as Arty and MLRS. The local Bdes would probably have around 1500 Inf in total and there was already Arty and some tanks around the area. The ZVORNIK Bde is stronger and there were reports of 5 tanks and possibly Inf moving S from that area. Finally there are reports of Regular Yugoslav Army units being used. As a result the total was probably no less than 2,000 Inf. The number of tanks is more difficult to estimate but there never seems to be more than 6 mobile at any one time with some others being used as fire platforms. Certainly not enough to suggest large numbers needed to be brought in.

b. ABiH. Not known however the usual estimate of 10% of population would give a force of approx 4,000. It was not clear before the attack whether all were armed but it was believed that at least half had SA as well as HMGs, Lt Mors, and anti-tank weapons including RPGs and more modern ones (certainly all capable of destroying the tanks against them). There are reports that many of these weapons were thrown away during the march to friendly lines because of the weight. Comment: this suggests a collapse of discipline and little control not least because such weapons could have been cached for future use by guerilla parties. Comment ends.

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c Conclusion. The above figures would suggest that the ABiH had the force ratios to defend the enclave particularly considering its hilly, wooded nature.

9. Morale. UN reports all stated that ABiH morale was high. However that of the civilians was certainly not, either in the short-term because of the fighting/shelling, or in the long-term with food short, and that would have affected the soldiers. It seems more likely that individual groups of soldiers seemed willing to fight because there was no alternative. Once one was offered (withdrawal) they took it.

10. BSA Strategy. The BSA tactics however seemed to be to rely on shelling, both direct and indirect, to break down resistance. Interestingly their main axis of advance was from the SE along the road towards SREBRENICA. It is of note that the BSA did not attempt to advance from the N down the road and OP P remained astride the road until the end. Comment: This may have been deliberate in order not to cut off the 2 main Dutch positions thus giving B Coy and the refugees an escape route out of SREBRENICA. Comment ends. It is not clear whether the BSA tried to prevent the ABiH from escaping in the N and W or whether this was again part of the plan to weaken resistance by providing escape routes. There were certainly some BSA troops in these areas probably from the MILICI Bde as they engaged UN OPs but it may well be they were used for channelling/ambushing the escaping ABiH.

11. ABiH Withdrawal. Rumours of the ABiH fighting their way out began to be reported from 11 Jul with the final meeting between RAMIZ and UN the night before. However the town of SREBRENICA was only entered that day. For a large body of men from all over the enclave to start such an operation the planning and forming-up must have started sometime earlier. There therefore seem to be 2 possibilities:

a. ABiH were planning to withdraw long before the situation necessitated it. This is supported by the seemingly poor resistance put up by the ABiH.

b. The break-out was not planned but rather carried out by small groups resulting in fighting/ambushes in the W and NW as troops from the E side tried to get through.

An interesting footnote to this withdrawal is a well-sourced report that HAKIA (Chief of Police, ORIC's henchman and possible War Criminal) escaped with 56 of his men leaving some who volunteered to stay and fight. This seems a large percentage from an approx total of 120 when considering they were meant to be keeping law and order.

12. Conclusion. The advantages militarily seem to have been with the defenders to at least hold out for rather longer and have inflicted greater losses on the BSA than believed. However the ABiH leadership seems to have actually acted against their own interests to carry out a successful defence with little co-ordination (except possibly in the withdrawal), and no attempt to seize the heavy weapons held by the UN, whilst more

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junior individuals have been allowed to make their own decisions and run.

EVENTS WITHIN TUZLA REGION

13. Diversionary Attack. 2 Corps did nothing to release the pressure on the enclave. DRINA CORPS was known to be stretched in terms of resources and yet no effort was made to carry out a diversionary attack along 24 Div/Drina Corps CL.

14. ORIC (Comd 28 Div). As mentioned above ORIC is reported as not being allowed to return to the enclave right up to the end. It is rumoured that he was finally allowed to break through the CL to help his men in their withdrawal.

15. ZEPA. ZEPA, as a smaller enclave with reported internal conflicts, was always thought more likely to fall if the BSA attacked. However the troops here have put up a much better defence, which has already lasted considerably longer than that of SREBRENICA. The main difference here seems to have been the decision not to withdraw but reform up in the hills where the equipment advantage of the BSA is smaller. This may be because of their background in that most of these are local mountain people, who are proud of their heritage in that no-one has ever really captured their mountain fortresses including the Germans in WW2.

16. SDA. The local SDA refused to help the UN at all in the initial stages of the evacuation and yet within 48 Hrs was able to hand in itemised demands for the care of the refugees. These demands clearly showed that careful planning over a period of time had taken place. Interestingly the CAO's reports discern a marked reduction in complaints about UN performance once rumours of ABiH poor performance began to appear.

17. SDP. The local President of the SDP Party, ZLATKO DUKIC, in an interview with ECMM stated that SREBRENICA had been part of a deal involving a convoy route to SARAJEVO through the VOGOSCA region. Comment: Interestingly this rather far-fetched idea was also reported by an SDA supporter. Comment ends. He went on to say that the fall of the enclave was part of an orchestrated attempt to discredit the West to gain Islamic support. He supported this by pointing out ORIC being kept away and the '6,000' ABiH soldiers failure to fight.

18. Morale.

a. BiH. The fall of SREBRENICA has resulted in a collapse in 2 Corps morale, which had already been badly affected by the failure of SARAJEVO Offensive. The attitude of the civilian population suggests that war-weariness is growing, and there is some cynicism to the events with rumours of deals etc.

b. BSA. Morale and motivation within BSA seemed to be low especially after

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SARAJEVO where they held on but only at some cost with the medical system failing. The ease with which they captured the enclave has restored their faith in their superiority to the Bosnians and they have regained the initiative.

INTERNATIONAL EVENTS

19. Public Opinion. International interest in Bosnia had been waning as the war dragged on. This in turn had meant that public pressure on the Western Democracies to act was reducing. A major incident of this nature has swamped the media for several weeks and strengthened public opinion. This could result in the double goal of the Arms Embargo being lifted and public opinion preventing countries withdrawing their forces.

20. Arms Embargo. It has been a long cherished hope of BiH to get the Arms Embargo lifted, and recently it has become the Number One priority. Hope was increased when the Senate and the Congress of the USA voted in favour of lifting it. These hopes were however dashed when the President vetoed it requiring a two thirds majority in both houses to overturn his decision, which they had not achieved in the first vote. As the issue became debated it was clear that they were unlikely to get the required majority as too many other issues hung upon it. The enclave's collapse gave the campaign a strong boost, which has now been shown by the Senate voting by more than two thirds in favour of lifting the embargo.

21. UN Involvement. The UN has hesitated from taking a more positive role throughout the year with the bombing of the Ammo Dump at PALE on 25 May a major departure from previous airstrikes as it was a secondary target. SREBRENICA was supposedly a demilitarised zone protected by the UN. BiH would therefore gain whatever the UN did in that the UN either became embroiled in the conflict on the Bosnian side or was further discredited in the eyes of the world, which in turn would support Bosnia. Indeed the UN has now agreed to a more streamlined system for calling airstrikes and may well take a more robust view in the future. Conversely a proper defence by ABiH would have lost them support as the area was meant to be demilitarised.

CONCLUSIONS

22. The overwhelming evidence above seems to suggest that:

- a. The ABiH should have been able to defend the enclave for at least a longer period providing proper leadership had been offered
- b. BiH Government had a lot to gain from the fall of the enclave.

23. Nevertheless the deliberate loss of the enclave is still extremely machiavellian and could have backfired. The reason that probably swayed the decision-makers was the realisation that the BSA probably intended to keep up the pressure in any case as it

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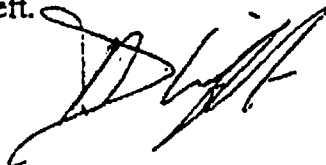
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wanted to get the BiH to the negotiating table. Under these circumstances the enclave was likely to fall in the long-term by the prevention of convoys, which would be disastrous in winter. Comment: it is of note that the world's media failed to show live pictures of the starving people throughout Jun, which meant that the Govt were getting little media value from it.

24. The only major negative point is the contribution to the low morale of both the civilians and Armija in Central Bosnia, which started with the failure of the SARAJEVO Offensive. This is further exacerbated by the BSA regaining its self-confidence, which had been severely dented in previous months.

25. The final point is that the inhabitants of SREBRENICA are probably already enjoying a better standard of living with certainly better security. Under these circumstances many are pleased to have left.



PHD WRIGHT  
Maj  
UNMO MIO SNE

Annex:

A. Chronology of Events in SREBRENICA

Distribution:

UNMO HQ ZAGREB (For COO/MIO)  
UNMO-HQ SARAJEVO (For COO/MIO)  
CAO SNE  
G2 SNE

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Annex A To  
MIO.SREB002  
Dated 26 Jul 95

CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS IN SREBRENICA

1. Jun 95. As reported in Ref A only 3 of the 12 UNHCR convoys made it, Comment: The situation for the inhabitants of the enclave was getting steadily worse and would have become untenable by winter at the latest. Under these circumstances losing the enclave quickly would not be such an unattractive option either to the BiH Government or to the locals (many of whom have already expressed their pleasure at being out of the enclave despite the methods used). Comment ends.

2. 4/5 Jul 95. BSA Armr and Inf were reported to be travelling S from ZVORNIK area. Comment: These are believed to have come from the ZVORNIK and OSMACI Bdes as their part of the CL was no longer under threat having caused heavy cas on ABiH attack earlier. Comment Ends. RAMIZ (COS 28 Div) later reported that 2 groups of BSA troops from 2 buses and 2 trucks (approx 120?) had dismounted at:

051400B      ZELENE JADAR (CP 660798)  
→ 051930B      ZALASIE (CP 659798)

The DCOS 28 Div claimed at 061900B Jul 95 that the trucks used had earlier been seen crossing from Serbia across the bridge at SKELANI 20 Kms SE of enclave and from this concluded that regular Serbian Army troops were being used. Comment: SKELANI Bde also originates from this area with over 9,000 Serbs in area before war. Comment ends.

3. 6 Jul 95. BSA started shelling in earnest including some UN positions particularly in the S and SE areas and the towns of POCARI and SREBRENICA. RAMIZ requested that DUTCHBAT released their small-arms claiming attack was worst since arrival of UNPROFOR with heavy concentrations of BSA all around enclave. DUTCHBAT refused stating that they would be released if situation got worse. DUTCHBAT OPs reported sighting BSA Armr in following areas:

OP H (CP 645852). Several Tks moving along CL.  
OP F (CP 652807). 2 Tks stationary NE of OP at approx 0600 Hrs.

BiH reported (unconfirmed) at 1300 Hrs a 3-pronged Inf attack from:

OP E (CP 649801) towards VRHOVI (CP 643805)  
CL towards DOGAZI (CP 650910)  
CL towards BIJECEVA (CP 625935)

All fighting ceased around 1930 Hrs because of a heavy thunderstorm. The Mayor of

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SREBRENICA at this stage still believed that the BSA were only attempting to annex some strategic positions.

4. 7 Jul 95. Heavy shelling continued throughout the am particularly around POTOCARI and SREBRENICA. The BSA were reported by local sources to be regrouping in NE and SE. UNMOs believed that civilian property was being targeted. UNMOs met OSMAN SULJIC (SREBRENICA President) who complained about UN inaction and that the media was reporting that BiH was firing back with heavy weapons they did not have, and stated that the BiH had not responded to BSA attacks and would not. He also emphasised the lack of food in the enclave. Comment: At the time this did not seem significant but his emphasis that they were not responding and the shortage of food at the same time may tenuously suggest an official policy that is already becoming discernable. Comment Ends. DUTCHBAT later confirmed the position of BSA M-63 MRLS to the N.

5. 8 Jul 95. Shelling reported to have intensified during the day with BSA advances. A BSA tank was reported on the road at Grid CP 641819, which suggests limit of exploitation. The following DUTCHBAT OPs were confirmed as taken:

OP F (CP 652807) Occupied by BSA at approx 1500 Hrs. Dutch soldier killed by ABiH when withdrawing. The ABiH position to the front of the OP did not fire back when a tank engaged it. It was reported that JNA troops had taken this OP (2 Tks reported there) but not by Dutch.

OP U (In SE) DUTCHBAT personnel made POW by 2030 Hrs.

OP S (CP 638800) DUTCHBAT personnel surrounded by BSA by 2030 Hrs.

DUTCHBAT and RAMIZ met in evening. Chief topics of conversation was UN failure to defend the enclave and DUTCHBAT attempt to get agreement for BiH/BSA meeting. RAMIZ personally agreed but claimed he would need clearance from higher authority. Comment: This seems to contradict his original point which was to prevent a massacre unless he was merely seeking UN military support. Comment Ends. Bosnians now becoming increasingly obstructive towards DUTCHBAT with OP H under fire, and civilians and soldiers making their way into B Coy compound at SREBRENICA. Swedish shelter village (CP 625818) almost completely abandoned by that night.

6. 9 Jul 95. Refugees from outlying villages and Swedish Shelter now in SREBRENICA adding to the chaos. By 1200 Hrs BSA entered Swedish village; and by 1400 Hrs unconfirmed reports that 4 x BSA Tks are at CP 636834 and thus town ready to fall. In am meetings between DUTCHBAT, RAMIZ and OSMAN involved mutual recriminations: DUTCHBAT LO accused RAMIZ of ordering his troops to remove the weapons in the custody of B Coy. RAMIZ however stated that he had been ordered to demand the return of these weapons and those of the Dutch but had not bothered as he had anticipated the Dutch response. Comment: This seems almost surreal - by this stage the ABiH had every justification for demanding the return of their weapons and yet they



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did not. 2 possible reasons: they were already well-enough armed or they did not intend to fight. Comment ends. At this stage the UNMOs still believed the ABiH would put up a strong resistance to the S. During the PM the BSA concentrated on shelling 2 ABiH strongholds in the hills at ZANIK (CP 654883) and area CP 648860. In the W a PT-76 was unloaded from low-loader at SIMICI (CP 5187) and later advanced to the E with a T-55 engaging ABiH positions. The following DUTCHBAT OPs were under threat:

OP S (CP 638800) Taken approx 0800 Hrs.  
 OP H (CP 605810) Captured.  
 OP K (CP 610805) By 1400 Dutch considering withdrawal.  
 OP M (CP 576920) By 1630 Dutch considering withdrawal.

7. 10 Jul 95. The BSA continued to exert pressure with indirect fire beginning to target the hospital to the N of the town, which meant that the UNMOs were unable to remain in PTT building and withdrew to DUTCHBAT Compound. AA guns also brought up for Direct Fire onto S part of town. Reports that BSA burnt the villages of PUSMULIC (CP635825) and BOROVAC (CP 622820). The following Dutch OPS came under attack:

OP D (CP 575834) Returned to B Coy compound having been surrounded by ABiH.

OP A (CP 553901) Being attacked by BSA.

Comment: These 2 OPs emphasise the general nature of the BSA attack from all directions. Comment ends.

In a meeting with RAMIZ and OSMAN the CO DUTCHBAT reported the ultimatums given to him by the BSA, which he had turned down, he in turn had stated that the BSA were to withdraw to the 1993 lines or face major airstrikes. Interestingly the enclave seemed to be very quiet on return from the meeting, which may suggest the BSA had stopped to consider the threat. However the Bosnians were not impressed with it and stated it would not work.

8. 11 Jul 95. It was reported as quiet in the am until 1100 Hrs' with UN awaiting airstrikes. Refugees began streaming into POTOACARI with over 20,000 by 1600 Hrs. B Coy moved from SREBRENICA to POTOACARI during pm. At this stage the reports of BSA strength were between 1 and 3,000. Also rumours that the ABiH were fighting their way out. BSA stopped shelling at approx 1730 Hrs. The DUTCHBAT OPs were:

OP N (CP 613940) Under BSA fire.

OP M (CP 576920) Forced to withdraw to position 400M S of old loc.

The following OPs were still in position at 1900 Hrs:

OP A (CP 553900) Note it was under fire on 10<sup>th</sup>.

OP C (CP 538850)

OP M (CP 570918) New location as stated above

OP N (CP 613940)

OP P (CP 645918)

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OP Q (CP 658893)  
OP R (CP 659883)

BSA resumed shelling at 1845 Hrs from DUGO POLJE (CP 644922) towards BUDAK (CP 635912) and GRADAC (CP 635898). NATO Airstrike destroyed one tank and one bunker.

9. 12 Jul 95. Estimated 30,000 at POTACARI with 8,000 being escorted there by one DUTCHBAT APC, which had abandoned its OP. DUTCHBAT OP situation:

OP C	Captured including APC. Men withdrawing on foot.
OP R and Q	Surrounded by BSA by 0930 Hrs and captured by 1030 Hrs.
OP P	2 x BSA Tks approaching OP at 0930 Hrs.

Transportation of DPs started at 1400 Hrs with an estimated 5,000 moved on first day.

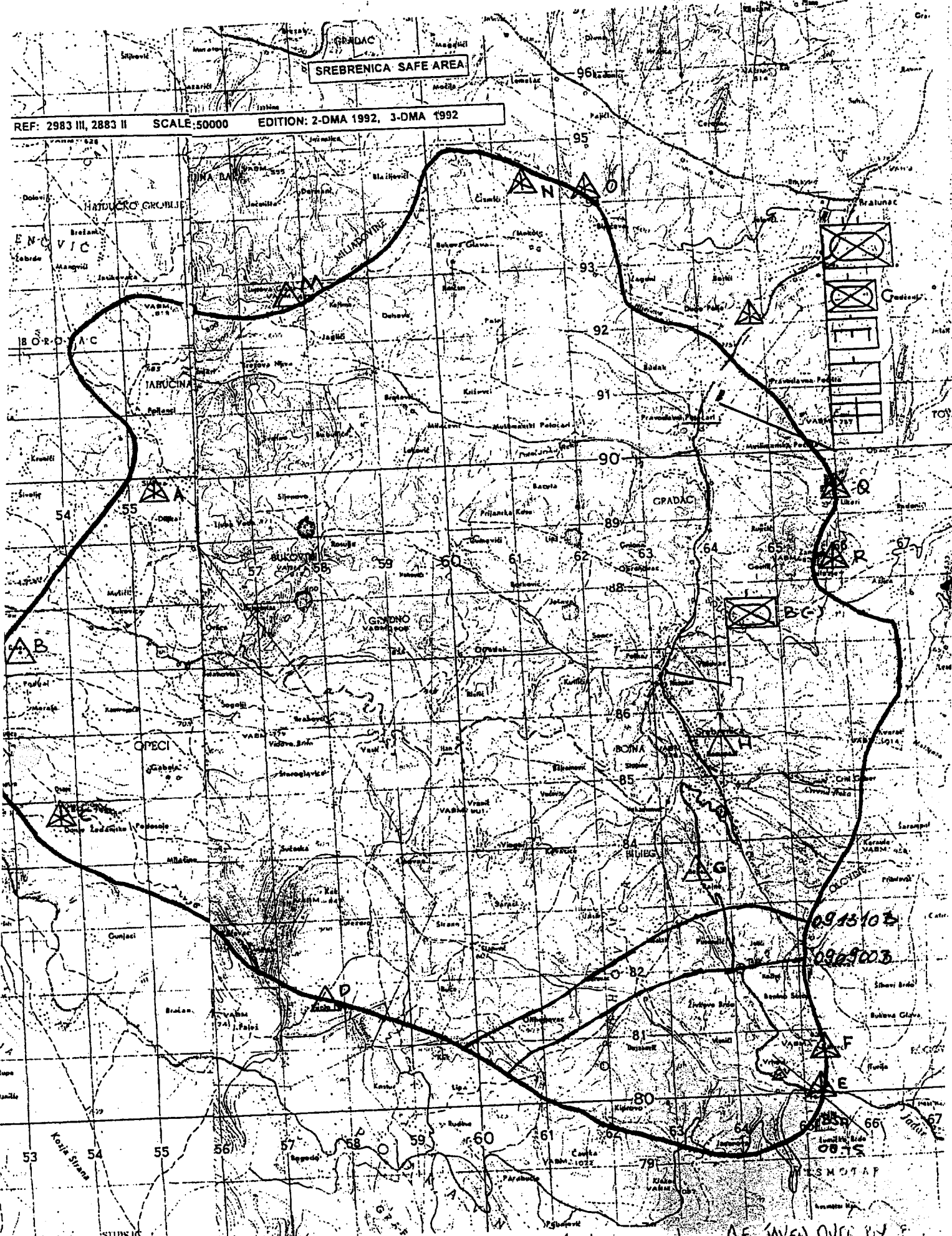
10. 13 Jul 95. The BSA transportation of the refugees continued extremely efficiently. DUTCHBAT OPs A and C remaining in location awaiting clearance from BSA to move back to HQ. Comment: this contradicts position of OP C given yesterday. Comment Ends. MLADIC informed UN several hundred dead ABiH in W of area (BANDERA TRIANGLE). UNMO patrol returned to SREBRENICA and reported looting etc. Their report also states: "The first 2 DUTCHBAT APC's are already being taken by the BSA as well as at least 9 lightskin vehicles". The report goes onto say that they believe BSA will take all equipment and vehicles.

11. 14 Jul 95. UNMOs report that fighting is still going on in the BANDERA TRIANGLE. Interestingly the BSA took up positions around SREBRENICA in order to be able to defend it. Comment: This seems the best indication available that the BSA were still unsure about the situation and definitely suggests that this was not part of a deal. Comment ends. Rumours there are 10,000 muslim males (3,000 armed) in the forests. Comment: These presumably were the ones who fought their way out. Comment ends.

12. 15 - 21 Jul 95. UN involved with evacuation and treatment of wounded. On 18 Jul UNMOs report sound of very little fighting with small groups going into the mountains on patrol.

SREBRENICA SAFE AREA

REF: 2983 III, 2883 II SCALE: 50000 EDITION: 2-DMA 1992, 3-DMA 1992



DF - taken over by 854 AE - taken over by 8  
(030815F Jun 95)

SITUATION IN SEBRENICA  
FROM 08 TO 09 OF JULY

R0050433

