

The Cold War Commander Guide to refighting actions in the Former Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) and the Balkans Conflict 1991-1999

By Noshier (a.k.a Paul Martin)

Ever since CWC was released earlier this year I have been busily putting together 'alternative' army lists for other conflicts not covered in the rules. As an ex-serviceman who served tours of duty in the Balkans, I was keen to combine my limited knowledge about the conflict with well researched information in a bid to come up with some new lists, scenarios (including some 'what ifs') and house rules that would capture the essence of the conflict.

The conflict displays an interesting and eclectic mix of military hardware being used including dated Warsaw Pact equipment as well as both Soviet, U.S and German WWII surpluses: all the usual suspects. Add to this Yugoslavia's one time virtual self-sufficiency in the research, development and production of most of its own military equipment such as the M84 MBT (based on the Soviet T72) the BOV family of 4x4 APC's and its talent for producing landmines – more on this later – and you have a basis for some very interesting match ups. All this and I haven't even introduced the factor of UN Intervention!

The civil war of 1991 which came about following the break-up of the Yugoslav Federation saw Croats, Serbs, Bosniacs, Herzegovinians, Montenegrins, Kosovars and Albanians alike battling their neighbours and often themselves in some of the fiercest fighting witnessed on former Soviet soil. Match-ups between any of the protagonists are not beyond the realms of belief and have the distinct possibility of generating a new CWC House Rule on unreliable allies – certainly when "outside influences" are looking on!

It is worth noting that Yugoslavia was a major supplier in the landmines trade with the former Soviet Union and, as such, the use of landmines was commonplace throughout the conflict. A recent UN estimate indicates that there are in excess of 1.5 million landmines still buried in 30,000 minefields throughout FRY. Again in an adaptation of existing CWC Rules, I would suggest the introduction of a 'house rule' when fighting actions of the period.

The early 90's saw the United Nations enter the scene, primarily with economic sanctions (against Serbia and Montenegro) which were swiftly followed by military intervention. Conflict between the protagonists continued with some spectacular Croatian and Croatian-

Muslim alliance victories over the Bosnian Serbs to whom Serbia refused to offer any support. This withdrawal of support forced the Bosnian Serbs to accept an agreement on the partitioning of the country with Serbia's reward being the lifting of trade sanctions.

December 1995 saw the signing of the Dayton Peace Accord and the introduction of IFOR, a NATO led multinational Implementation Force, with a principal one year mandate to enforce the ceasefire between the Bosniac/Croat Federation and the 'Republika Srpska' (Bosnian/Serb Republic).

Peace is never lasting and in true Balkans style the Serbs were soon clawing away at another neighbour. 1996 saw the eruption of the Kosovo conflict pitting Albanian extremists and radicals against the recently formed Serbian state, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

Army Lists

I have drawn most of my inspiration for the following army lists directly from the outstanding historical lists available on free download from GHQ's site. They are of course tailored into the CWC format.



Bosniac/Herzegovinian Forces

ARBiH; Armija Republike Bosne i Hercegovine 1991-95

Using dated, often obsolete WWII leftovers, it is unsurprising that this army is only capable of small scale actions against local militias or against Serbian Militia formations. The Bosnian Army contained single battalions of Afghan, Palestinian and Turkish Mujahideen Volunteers, hence their incorporation into the army list.

Serbian Militia Forces 1991-2001

Throughout the conflict there were eight independent Militia Brigades active within Bosnia and Croatia. Despite having a similar array of obsolete WWII leftovers as the Bosnians, the Serbs did have a degree of backing from the Yugoslav Army – largely when it suited Slobodan Milosevic's wider gains, but even then their support was only infantry.



Serbian Militia Badges

L to R:

Serbian White Eagles

Serbian Volunteer
Guard

Arkan's Tigers

Croatian Forces, Hrvatsko Vijece Obrane, 1991-2001

The Croatian Army, although notably better equipped than their Serbian and Bosnian neighbours was largely an infantry army – 22 Infantry Brigades as opposed to 4 Mechanised Brigades and any scenario including the Croats should reflect this factor. Tanks were generally present only in Brigade level actions due to the limited number available. One Fascist Commando Battalion of 9 stands may be fielded, but this must be commanded by a Fascist HQ stand.



Yugoslav People's Army 1991 – early 1992 & the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, 1995-1999

Following Croatian independence of June 1991, The Yugoslav People's Army (JA) saw an opportunity to attack. Almost one third of Croatian territory was soon occupied which led to the UN Intervention of 1992.



However, as Slovenia followed the Croat example of independence, fighting erupted internally within the ranks of the JNA as the Officer Corps (predominantly Serbs and Montenegrins), slugged it out with Slovene Militia and the civilian reserve which saw the embarrassing withdrawal of the defeated JNA, tail between proverbial legs.

This army list can also be used for the conflict in Kosovo (1996 to 1999) as the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia armed forces. However, the army showed little zest for a fight against the highly trained Western professional armies of NATO, despite successes in highlighting many shortcomings of NATO's air campaign through the use of simple but highly effective camouflage, concealment and deception efforts which saw the vast bulk of the armed forces escape destruction. (see Kosovo War Article).

Serbian Regular Forces - Army Republika Srpska 1992 to 1995

With Slovenia back in Slovene hands, a hardcore element of the JNA formed a new Serbian Army known as the Army Republika Srpska. Despite a shortage of manpower, much of the military hardware was handed over to the ARS enabling the army to continue its fight in the northern areas of Bosnia where the Serb population was dense.



The advantage given to the ARS in holding the lions share of the JNA equipment, combined with the savage implementation of widespread terror tactics saw entire areas ethnically cleansed of unsuitable populations creating a flood of 3 million refugees.

This army list presents an interesting mix of old and new. The usual aging mix of Cold War Soviet equipment is on display as is some of Yugoslavia's "home grown" equipment in the form of the BOV and MVP series of APC's and the M84/85 MBT. It is the only Balkans protagonist able to field any air support other than its predecessor from which the air support fleet originated.



Kosovo Liberation Army, 1996 to 1999

Formed from the backbone of a disgruntled and persecuted Albanian populace, this small but potent force grew to a position where it was able to take military action against the far better equipped Serbian forces under Slobodan Milosevic. Touted as a “terrorist movement” by the Serbs (and more controversially by the Western Media and diplomats) the KLA soon began to assert its

authority particularly through the western areas of Kosovo. Realistically the army is capable of only limited actions.

CWC Balkans Conflict House Rules

Fragile Regulars

All regular infantry (where indicated in Army Lists) are classed as fragile in any engagement with UN troops which is an attempt to represent their reticence to engage with professional regulars.

Minefields

All protagonists in the Balkans made extensive and liberal use of landmines throughout the campaign. To reflect this, the points cost for unmarked minefields should be halved.

Booby Traps

All protagonists in the Balkans made good use of booby traps throughout the war in particular road side devices. The normal rules for booby traps used in CWC apply and each army list identifies how many booby traps may be purchased. The points cost for booby traps should be halved.

Camouflage, concealment and deception

Throughout the Kosovo conflict the Serbs continually performed small miracles in preventing NATO Airplanes from attacking ground targets – not just in terms of SAM sites and tanks, but in preventing the destruction of militarily critical infrastructures such as bridges and buildings.

To represent this in games of CWC I would suggest the use of the hidden deployment rule, but also suggest that targets of air-strikes become harder to hit by having an improved cover bonus of one better category than that which the unit is in, i.e. if the unit is in partial cover it is hit on a 6 instead of 5 or 6. A unit in the open is hit on 5 or 6 instead of 4, 5 or 6 and so on.

This rule should only be available to Federal Republic of Yugoslavia forces in Kosovo.

Unreliable allies

Balkans Armies often forged temporary alliances to take control of local situations. To represent such an alliance a single command in any force may come from another Ethnic group, or if preferred a totally different Balkans list (other than an enemy it is actually fighting). Please note that Militia and Volunteer troop types that are represented within their primary faction army list are not affected by this rule – however, if militia types are taken from a different list they become subject to the ruling.

A force taking this option may spend up to 15% of the original total force cost **above that of the original points balance before the random modifier roll result is applied**. The trade off for this option is that the command is unreliable!

Allied forces always adopt a Fixed Formation and cannot receive commands from the Army's CO.

The first time an allied HQ blunders, roll the blunder as normal applying the relevant result. If the same command blunders again do not roll for the blunder but roll on the following table instead:

Die roll	Result
1-3	The commander rolls as normal on the normal blunder table
4-5	The commander rolls as normal on the normal blunder table. Any un-suppressed units following the result of the blunder immediately retreat two full moves towards the nearest table edge. All units end the move suppressed.
6	The whole command switches sides unless the opponent is a UN opponent whereby it retreats from the battlefield. Units lost to this retreat count towards the Breakpoint of the army.

All future blunders add +1 to the die roll on this table

Common 'Allegiances' during the Balkans conflict

- Infighting within the ranks of the JNA, Serbs and Montenegrin Officer Corps against Slovene Militia and the Civilian Armed Reserve
- ARBiH infighting between Bosniacs and Bosniac Croats
- ARBiH & Serb Militia Units – against Croat paramilitary units
- ARS & ARBiH Bosnian Serbs – typically against UN Units or Croatia
- ARS & Serb Militia Units – against anyone and everyone!

Authors notes:

This is very much a 'work under construction' and I would very much welcome any feedback (positive or negative) on how the content may be improved.

Much of the work (particularly the Army Lists) comes directly from the free downloads on GHQ's website whilst the historical aspect comes largely from the internet and my own personal experience of serving in the Balkans with Her Majesty's finest!

If you would like to comment, please feel free to email me:

Scarborolad1@ntlworld.com

Paul Martin
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