

Canadian Police in the Balkans: the United Nations, Trust, Adaptation and Success

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Canadian police officers demonstrated their effectiveness in their roles as peacekeepers during the various missions to the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s. The experiences of Canadian police officers while deployed to the Balkans also displayed several similar patterns despite each region's UN mission being separate. Over the course of their deployments, Canadian police integrated into an environment that was foreign both culturally and linguistically, gaining the confidence of the people while working effectively with their UN military counterparts. This success occurred despite poor preparation by higher authorities, the dangers and alien nature of the conflicts present, and the relatively brief length of their deployments. In contrast to the failures of the UN in countries like Somalia in the 1990s, the UN's efforts in the Balkans have prevented the region from falling into further chaos. The efforts of Canada's police in the region contributed to the relative success of the UN's operations in the former Yugoslavia.

Three Canadian police officers were gracious enough to be interviewed concerning their time served on the UN missions in the Balkans. Two officers, Jack Gallop and John Buis, were, and in Buis' case still are, part of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. A third, Bud Snow, was part of the Halifax Regional Police who also sent officers to join UNMIK (United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo) in 1999. All three were not part of the same deployment. Buis was sent over in 1994 to Croatia as part of UNPROFOR (United Nations Protection Force). In 1999, Gallop went into Bosnia with UNMIBH (United Nations Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina). Despite the different deployments, all three shared common goals and experiences in the former Yugoslavia. Interviews of Canadian officers who served on UN missions to the Balkans helped to shed light on the role played by Canada's police there.

In 1992, there was a crisis in the Balkans as the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, commonly known simply as Yugoslavia, broke apart. The country split into warring factions divided along ethnic lines accompanied by complex political roots of the conflict itself. Just one example was that the Serbs who lived across the land were intent on creating a greater Serbia that included areas where Croats, Bosniaks and Albanians lived.<sup>1</sup> From 1994-1999, lulls in the violence prompted military and political intervention from the United Nations and NATO to restore order. Usually precipitated by NATO bombing campaigns, the UN deployed military forces, comprised of soldiers from western nations and others to help enforce an often-coercive peace. The UN soldiers combatted hostile local militants and enforced the peace while diplomacy took place to restore stability as the new republics emerged out of the former Yugoslavia. To keep the peace, UN missions in the Balkans employed the use of police officers in the different regions, including officers from Canada's local and federal departments.

For Canada's contribution, the UN police largely recruited from the Royal Canadian Mounted Police with officers of local Canadian departments supplementing their ranks. The Canadian officers sent to the Balkans were not rookies; most had many years of experience and were reliable members of law enforcement.<sup>2</sup> Many of the Canadian officers also had performed specialized duties such as forensics work or had served as detectives across Canada.<sup>3</sup> This stood in marked contrast to the capabilities and experience of non-Canadian officers who they worked alongside in their respective regions. For example, one Canadian officer was partnered with an

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<sup>1</sup> Guzina, Dejan. "Socialist Serbia's Narratives: From Yugoslavia to a Greater Serbia." *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* 17, no. 1 (2003): 98-101.

<sup>2</sup> John Buis, telephone interview by author, Victoria BC, March 14, 2019; Jack Gallop, interview by author, Victoria BC, March 9, 2019; Bud Snow, telephone interview by author, Victoria BC, March 12, 2019.

<sup>3</sup> Gallop Interview; Snow Interview.

officer from Zimbabwe who was previously a game warden and was not trained to perform basic police duties like investigating crime scenes.<sup>4</sup> This disparity in ability among the UN's police was not unique to the missions in the Balkans. UN peacekeeping missions in the 1990s were notorious for having both well-trained American and Canadian contingents alongside poorly trained and often ill-disciplined counterparts in other contingents.<sup>5</sup>

Deployment to the Balkans was a choice for the Canadian officers, their superiors compelled no officers, and all of those sent overseas were to be volunteers. Many Canadian police officers who volunteered had never travelled overseas before their service in the Balkans.<sup>6</sup> Others were former soldiers in the Canadian army with overseas service in West Germany and were glad to return abroad.<sup>7</sup> For example, prior to his deployment, John Buis of the RCMP had not known Canada's federal police even went on overseas duties, let alone peacekeeping.<sup>8</sup> Regardless of their prior knowledge, all volunteer officer showed a strong sense of enthusiasm for the mission.

The officers' decisions to serve on the UN mission meant long-term separation from their families in a dangerous land far away from Canada. For Jack Gallop of the RCMP, the absence of his wife and four children was the hardest part of the mission.<sup>9</sup> The Canadian officers sent abroad did not serve in any capacity as a military force while with the UN missions to the Balkans. Nonetheless, the Canadians found themselves in the same dangerous environment as the UN military forces who were to be their partners on the mission. Studies cited in *Military*

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<sup>4</sup> Snow Interview.

<sup>5</sup> Bowen, Norman. "The Future of United Nations Peacekeeping." *International Journal on World Peace* 14, no. 2 (1997): 16-19.

<sup>6</sup> Snow Interview.

<sup>7</sup> Gallop Interview.

<sup>8</sup> Buis Interview.

<sup>9</sup> Gallop Interview.

*Behavioral Health* present data detailing that deployment often had a negative impact upon families.<sup>10</sup> By 1999, deployments of Canadian officers were limited to periods of usually no more than a full year due to the risks to their mental health while serving abroad.<sup>11</sup>

Unlike the former Yugoslavia, Canada in the Twentieth Century was not a country torn apart by interethnic violence, displacement and religious conflict. Militants from the *Front de libération du Québec* (FLQ), a nationalist terrorist group, committed kidnappings, bank robberies, bombings and even murder in the 1960s and 1970s. The events gripped Canada and dominated the news cycle but the death toll and destruction caused by the FLQ was minimal, and threats of violence were almost completely absent in the 1980s. The experience of the police service in Canada did not prepare the officers who went on the UN mission for the reality on the ground in the Balkans.

The UN mandate prevented officers from acting beyond duties of law enforcement and community work, but aspects of police service like the use of firearms were prominent in their pre-deployment orientations.<sup>12</sup> Orientations for Canadian officers took place in Ottawa and were woefully short, lasting only between five days and two weeks.<sup>13</sup> It was too brief for a mission that could last between six months to a year in a land torn apart by hundreds of years of incomprehensible ethnic tensions. Officers received brief outlines of the history of the conflict including its roots and geographical knowledge but it was too brief given the needs of the mission.<sup>14</sup> The UN missions' *lingua franca* was English and the language sufficiency

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<sup>10</sup> Vest, Bonnie M., Sarah Cercone Heavey, D. Lynn Homish, and Gregory G. Homish. "Marital Satisfaction, Family Support, and Pre-Deployment Resiliency Factors Related to Mental Health Outcomes for Reserve and National Guard Soldiers." *Military Behavioral Health* 5, no. 4 (2017): 313.

<sup>11</sup> Snow Interview.

<sup>12</sup> Snow Interview.

<sup>13</sup> Snow Interview; Gallop Interview.

<sup>14</sup> Gallop Interview.

requirement had prevented some Canadian officers from Quebec from going on the mission as revealed during the Ottawa orientation<sup>15</sup>

Bud Snow described his unit's lack of readiness upon being deployed in 1999, "You weren't really prepared for the nationality problem, what the real problem was and what your mandate was."<sup>16</sup> Surveys conducted prior to the breakup of Yugoslavia showed that the country's population was ostensibly among the most tolerant in the world.<sup>17</sup> This apparent goodwill and tolerance evaporated in the subsequent violence, which was characterized by ethnic cleansing on the part of groups like the Serbs against former non-Serb countrymen.<sup>18</sup> The independent republics that emerged out of the Yugoslav Wars divided along ethnic lines in contrast to the multicultural Yugoslavia that preceded them.

The former Yugoslavia was the scene of varied generational interethnic hatred among the medley of groups who resided there. In the words of Jack Gallop of the RCMP, who arrived in Bosnia in 1999, "It's a place with long memories and short tempers."<sup>19</sup> In the Balkans, the officers would see firsthand the results of ethnic hatred and violence unknown in Canada after the end of World War II. Atrocities perpetrated by Serb nationalists made the *LA Times*' headline in 1992, "Peacemakers No Match for Ancient Balkan Hatred".<sup>20</sup> Despite the pessimistic headline, the Canadian officers proved to be effective assets in the maintaining of law and order despite their inexperience in the environment.

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<sup>15</sup> Snow Interview.

<sup>16</sup> Snow Interview.

<sup>17</sup> Pickering, Paula M. 1966. *Peacebuilding in the Balkans: The View from the Ground Floor* (London;Ithaca [NY]: Cornell University Press, 2007), 20.

<sup>18</sup> Pickering, 25.

<sup>19</sup> Gallop Interview.

<sup>20</sup> Mead, Walter W. Peacemakers No Match for Ancient Balkan Hatred : Yugoslavia: The Serbs Lost the Battle of Kosovo 600 Years Ago, and They Are Determined to Get Revenge--no Matter How Long It Takes." *Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles), August 16, 1992. Accessed March 21, 2019. <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1992-08-16-op-6677-story.html>

Earlier events in Somalia showed the danger of the UN not winning the trust of local populations in conflict zones. In 1993, the United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM) suffered a major setback when militants killed 18 American soldiers from the elite 75<sup>th</sup> Ranger Regiment and Delta Force. The casualties were sustained in a single engagement in Mogadishu and footage emerged of the bodies of fallen American servicemen being mutilated by crowds of angry civilians. Television audiences were horrified and outraged when the media broadcasted the footage. American public opinion on their military's involvement in Somalia plummeted from highs of 71% to 29% after the Battle in Mogadishu. President Bill Clinton soon withdrew both the Rangers and Delta Force from Somalia and the UNOSOM mission's ability to restore order was crippled. UNOSOM ended in 1995, Somalia remained a war-torn region with no prospects of peace, and the mission was a failure.

*If you want to make a difference in your community and your country, explore what we have to offer,* reads the motto on the RCMP's official website.<sup>21</sup> Militaries may have mottos urging recruits to make a difference but the goal is never to be members of the community. Commentators partially attributed the failure of the UN in Somalia to the warring factions viewing heavily armed peacekeepers as merely there to help western imperial objectives.<sup>22</sup> When not useful, armed opponents of the UN in Somalia were effectively able to portray the incoming American soldiers as agents of imperialism and the UN was unable to gain the trust of the locals and work cooperatively.<sup>23</sup> In the Balkans, the ability of the UN police to gain the trust and confidence of the people was key to making their mission work.

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<sup>21</sup> Government of Canada, Royal Canadian Mounted Police. "Police Officer Careers." Royal Canadian Mounted Police. November 01, 2018. Accessed March 31, 2019. <http://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/en/police-officer-careers>.

<sup>22</sup> Michael Wesley, *Casualties of the New World Order: The Causes of Failure of UN Missions to Civil Wars*, (New York; Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire; Macmillan, 1997), 67.

<sup>23</sup> Wesley, *Casualties of the New World Order*, 73.

The Canadian officers initially experienced very different environments from their mission's assigned regions when they first got off the plane. When John Buis arrived in Zagreb, Croatia in 1994, he was assigned to a hotel and got his first impressions of the local Croats, "Croats were standoffish...nothing was done to us but it was tense".<sup>24</sup> In contrast to the destruction in Kosovo, Bud Snow's first impressions of Skopje emphasized the cleanliness and beauty of the Macedonian capital city.<sup>25</sup> Jack Gallop soon headed south to Bosnia but liked the look of the area around Zagreb, noting the strong German influence within Croatia.<sup>26</sup> Usually, the assignments of the UN officers were smaller, rural towns rather than major urban centres like Zagreb or Skopje.<sup>27</sup>

Like in Somalia, regulations restricted the UN military forces in the Balkans to their respective bases when not conducting missions or patrols.<sup>28</sup> By contrast, the Canadian police officers did not reside on any bases for their deployments, initially staying in hotels after landing before travelling to their assigned locations.<sup>29</sup> Once arrived, finding locations to rent was an initial priority for the officers and often was their first interactions in their assigned communities.

To assist him in this, John Buis was assigned an interpreter in the town of Ilok, which was located in 'Sector East' of Croatia, which had Russian and Belgian military peacekeepers attached to that sector.<sup>30</sup> Interpreting for the UN was a lucrative opportunity and even a local university professor received better pay while working as interpreter for the UN officers who did

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<sup>24</sup> Buis Interview.

<sup>25</sup> Snow Interview.

<sup>26</sup> Gallop Interview.

<sup>27</sup> Snow Interview; Gallop Interview; Buis Interview.

<sup>28</sup> Buis Interview.

Snow Interview.

<sup>29</sup> Buis Interview.

<sup>30</sup> Buis Interview.



not speak the local languages.<sup>31</sup> The interpreter directed Buis to a local widow and landlady who was renting rooms in her house out to UN officers assigned to Ilok.<sup>32</sup> In a grim reminder of past events in the former Yugoslavia, Jack Gallop remembered encountering whole groups of widows in his assigned town of Busovaca in Bosnia. By meeting and living with the affected communities, the officers were able to gain the acceptance and trust of the locals. In the words of Jack Gallop, “I tried to really get along and I did, they were very good to me.”<sup>33</sup>

Given that the Canadian officers were foreigners in the Balkans and did not speak the local language, the necessity to build rapport with the locals presented a challenge. Without the trust and confidence of the people, the UN police might have appeared to be overseers rather than the guardians of law and order in the community. The duties of the officers varied between monitoring the conduct of local law enforcement or in their absence, being the law enforcement itself. Therefore, the officers took on a variety of tasks to integrate among the locals to build a good relationship with them.

Positive interactions with the local youth was a way the UN officers built confidence and trust with the local community. Officer John Buis was able to bring with him over two-dozen basketballs to his assigned town of Ilok.<sup>34</sup> One by one, Buis took a basketball and played pickup games with the neighborhood kids in Ilok’s sizable basketball court, “if I lost one (a basketball), it was good... they wanted to play”<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Snow Interview.

<sup>32</sup> Buis Interview.

<sup>33</sup> Gallop Interview.

<sup>34</sup> Buis Interview.

<sup>35</sup> Buis interview.

Officer Bud Snow and his fellow UN officers also carried bags of candies to distribute to the children but found to their surprise that the children already possessed ample amounts.<sup>36</sup> The orientation in Ottawa had presented an exaggerated version of Kosovo's poverty of sweets. With the local youth well sugared, Bud Snow and his partners played soccer with the children in Gnjilene instead.<sup>37</sup> They were popular and were invited guests to many of the area's local weddings.<sup>38</sup> In addition to being official guests, the UN officers drove the elderly guests home after the festivities concluded.<sup>39</sup>

Furthermore, in order to build that trust with the community, the UN officers purchased medical supplies and other essentials from their own pockets to distribute in their assigned communities.<sup>40</sup> The destruction of the Yugoslav Wars and consequent UN sanctions had devastated local healthcare services prior to the deployment of the officers.<sup>41</sup>

Finally, the UN police also connected with the populace by economic participation in the local communities whose economy and currency were devastated by the conflicts.<sup>42</sup> By taking on multiple UN officers, Buis' landlady was able to make a crucial supplement to her meagre income and pension of her deceased husband.<sup>43</sup> On the UN payroll, the arrival of the officers resulted in a much-needed infusion of money into the respective assigned communities. Unlike their military counterparts who ate their meals on base, the UN officers purchased groceries

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<sup>36</sup> Snow interview.

<sup>37</sup> Snow interview.

<sup>38</sup> Snow interview.

<sup>39</sup> Snow interview.

<sup>40</sup> Buis interview.

<sup>41</sup> Kazic, Slobodan. "Health System in Yugoslavia." *The Lancet* 357, no. 9265 (2001): 1369.

<sup>42</sup> Zizmond, Egon. "The Collapse of the Yugoslav Economy." *Soviet Studies* 44, no. 1 (1992): 107-110.; Roger Thurow, "Passport Business Prospers in Yugoslavia --- as Economy Sinks, Sanctions-Busting Operation Thrives," *Wall Street Journal*, 10 May 1993, A6.

<sup>43</sup> Buis interview.

within the community, which only added to their economic presence.<sup>44</sup> Renting and buying groceries was part of what Bud Snow called, “to build that confidence with the people.”<sup>45</sup> As demonstrated in Somalia, the failure of the UN forces successfully integrating into Somali communities helped result in the disastrous outcome of UNOSOM. Through the interactions of the UN police, this did not happen in the Balkans, adding to the success of the mission by comparison.

UN military forces already on the ground were key partners for their incoming police partners and the working relationship between the two elements were largely positive. Unlike the police, the militaries of the UN were trained for duties suited for the role of peace enforcement rather than keeping the peace itself. The UN entrusted their military forces in Kosovo with law enforcement duties that they were not trained for such as road checks and interviewing suspects.<sup>46</sup> Therefore, the arrival of the UN police that included Canadian officers was a major relief for the international military force who could concentrate on duties more suited to their training.<sup>47</sup>

The involvement of the Russian military in Croatia proved to be problematic for the Canadian officers and the UN mission as a whole. With a shared Eastern Orthodox Christian faith and historical political ties to the Serbs, Russia had paid close attention to the breakup of Yugoslavia.<sup>48</sup> The Russian military was involved in the peacekeeping operation, ostensibly in new cooperation with former Cold War enemies like the United States and Western Europe. Indeed, the USSR and the United States had come together in condemning Iraq’s invasion of

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<sup>44</sup> Gallop Interview, Buis Interview.

<sup>45</sup> Snow Interview.

<sup>46</sup> Snow Interview.

<sup>47</sup> Snow Interview.

<sup>48</sup> Cohen, Lenard J. "Russia and the Balkans: Pan-Slavism, Partnership and Power." *International Journal* 49, no. 4 (1994): 817.

Kuwait in 1991 just before the Soviet collapse. However, despite the apparent newfound spirit, Russian-Serb ties led to severe problems for the integrity of UNPROFOR (United Nations Protection Force). For their large role in creating the violence in Yugoslavia, UN sanctions, such as impeding the shipment of fuel, hit the Serbs particularly hard. Despite being part of UNPROFOR, Russian soldiers engaged in the illegal theft, sale and smuggling of valuable fuel to Serb forces in Croatia.<sup>49</sup> RCMP officers were aware of the theft of UN fuel by the Russian forces in Sector East and Canadian officers themselves were conducting internal investigations to this end.<sup>50</sup> As a result, the relationship between Canadian UN police and their Russian counterparts was poor with mutual suspicion.

An example of the unambiguous Russian position was during the Canadian officers' efforts to assist in provisioning civilian communities before the winter months. When Officer Buis attempted to borrow a truck from the Russian military base to transport firewood to an elementary school in Sector East, the Russians refused.<sup>51</sup> Buis had managed to get local woodcutters to produce enough firewood for the schoolchildren in the winter months.<sup>52</sup> To transport it, Buis was compelled to drive nearly one hundred kilometres north to where Belgian UN troops were stationed who had no issue loaning him a five-ton truck.<sup>53</sup>

Aside from the Russians however, the Canadian UN officers maintained excellent working relationships with their counterparts in the international military force. In Kosovo, RCMP officers were permitted to use the shower facilities and eat American delicacies like

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<sup>49</sup> Buis Interview.

<sup>50</sup> Buis, Interview.

<sup>51</sup> Buis interview.

<sup>52</sup> Buis Interview.

<sup>53</sup> Buis Interview.

McDonalds and Pizza Hut at the American base, Camp Bondsteel.<sup>54</sup> Camp Bondsteel remains to this day, a huge military base that, in 1999, housed over seven thousand American servicemen and in the words of Officer Bud Snow, “More gunships than Canada’s ever seen.”<sup>55</sup>

Effective cooperation between the UN police and military was beneficial to both sides. All police operations undertaken with the possibility of violence such as arms seizures, were joint operations with well-armed UN soldiers going along with the officers for security. When Canadian officers were investigating a reported simple domestic dispute in a mostly Serb village, the officers came under fire from concealed militants. Twenty minutes after the engagement began a convoy of Humvee transports arrived filled with heavily armed American soldiers. Covered by the American soldiers, the UN police safely evacuated from the village without harm and turned over the situation to the military.<sup>56</sup>

Murdering a UN police officer carried grave consequences for whichever side perpetrated it, thus the Canadian officers enjoyed a unique sort of immunity while on-duty. However, other non-human elements presented an ever-present danger. Unexploded landmines are a constant danger in recent former warzones and the former Yugoslavia was no different, especially in Bosnia. Mines buried all over Bosnia and Herzegovina sometimes were as small as a hockey puck.<sup>57</sup> UN officials warned Officer Jack Gallop to follow the locals if wandering off the path.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Snow Interview.

<sup>55</sup> Snow Interview.

<sup>56</sup> Snow Interview.

<sup>57</sup> Mitchell, Shannon K. "Death, Disability, Displaced Persons and Development: The Case of Landmines in Bosnia and Herzegovina." *World Development* 32, no. 12 (2004): 2109

<sup>58</sup> Gallop interview.

As of 2019, the Canadian government still warns tourists of the dangers of landmines when travelling to Bosnia and Herzegovina.<sup>59</sup>

Landmines were a huge danger in Kosovo as well. Locals ran their cattle across open fields before crossing to ensure any landmines resulted in bovine rather than human casualties.<sup>60</sup> Activities as simple as going for a jog were dangerous with main roads and hard ground being the relatively safe areas and open fields or soft ground being no-go zones.<sup>61</sup> Even in the Kosovan capital of Pristina, urban parkland was heavily mined and off-limits.<sup>62</sup> Fortunately, for the Canadian officers deployed to the Balkans, no member of the RCMP or other police departments died in the course of their duties. On the RCMP website's Honour Roll of Fallen Officers lists only two casualties from overseas operations and both occurring in Haiti in 2010.<sup>63</sup>

The harsh reality of ethnic tensions in the former Yugoslavia was a product of local cultures where vendettas dating back generations permeated the populace regardless of their background. During Yugoslavia's history as a politically united country, stubborn cultural pride and mutual antagonism prevented any blending of the country's many ethnicities and religions.<sup>64</sup> Officer Bud Snow's interpreter in Kosovo was a Serb whose route home passed through an Albanian-inhabited area. Due to potential harm posed to the interpreter for his ethnicity and work

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<sup>59</sup> Global Affairs Canada. "Travel Advice and Advisories for Bosnia and Herzegovina." Travel.gc.ca. February 01, 2019. Accessed March 31, 2019. <https://travel.gc.ca/destinations/bosnia-and-herzegovina>.

<sup>60</sup> Snow Interview.

<sup>61</sup> Snow Interview.

<sup>62</sup> Snow Interview.

<sup>63</sup> Government of Canada, Royal Canadian Mounted Police. "RCMP Honour Roll." RCMP Honour Roll - Royal Canadian Mounted Police. October 04, 2018. Accessed March 31, 2019. <http://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/hon/honour-honneur-roll-tableau-eng.htm>.

<sup>64</sup> Sekulic, Dusko, Garth Massey, and Randy Hodson. "Who Were the Yugoslavs? Failed Sources of a Common Identity in the Former Yugoslavia." *American Sociological Review* 59, no. 1 (1994): 88.

for the UN, Snow and his fellow officers escorted the interpreter home by car.<sup>65</sup> Snow and Swedish UN soldiers had to escort Albanian children to school to deter their Serb counterparts from assaulting them.<sup>66</sup> Regarding the situation in Bosnia, Officer Jack Gallop remarked, “The biggest thing was trying to get them to work together”.<sup>67</sup>

In Gallop’s experience, the local communities he was assigned to usually displayed no mistreatment of the Canadian police officers. Officer Gallop described his experience in Bosnia, “I was well-treated there, I never had a bad experience with a local at all, they were too busy fighting one another”.<sup>68</sup> Given the high tensions, attempts to make conversation with the locals steered clear of any political discussions.<sup>69</sup> The officers did well in integrating into the community, but their established presence did not assuage the often-violent tensions that pervaded the Balkans.

The officers adapted well but sometimes flare-ups of the violence posed problems for the mission and even a danger to the safety of the officers themselves. The threat posed by local militants was the cause of the abrupt end to John Buis’ time in Ilok during 1994. Ilok was only kilometers away from Croatia’s border with Serbia and Buis had run into a large armoured Serb column operating nearby unbeknownst to the UN in the last month of his deployment.<sup>70</sup> One day, a Norwegian UN policeman in Ilok suddenly informed Buis that Serb militants had threatened to kidnap a UN member in retaliation for the death of one of their own.<sup>71</sup> During the hurried evacuation of the UN police, the local populace Buis had served cried as they crowded the

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<sup>65</sup> Snow interview.

<sup>66</sup> Snow interview.

<sup>67</sup> Gallop interview.

<sup>68</sup> Gallop interview.

<sup>69</sup> Gallop interview.

<sup>70</sup> Buis interview.

<sup>71</sup> Buis Interview.

sidewalks watching the convoy depart Ilok.<sup>72</sup> Travelling to the nearest UN base, staffed by Russians, the base's guards delayed their entrance, eventually granting the Canadians shelter inside shipping containers within the perimeter.<sup>73</sup>

The Croatian War of Independence was just one of over half a dozen conflicts in the former Yugoslavia and the conflict did not end until 1995. For the officers like Bud Snow and Jack Gallop who were deployed with the UN in 1999, the major fighting had ended and their deployments concluded on schedule. The missions continued as new groups of officers arrived to replace them. The UN missions, as a whole, were far from being complete successes. The members of UNPROFOR were unable to halt the massacre of over 8,000 Bosnian Muslims by their Serb counterparts in July 1995 in a UN safe area at Srebrenica<sup>74</sup> NATO was forced to step in and end the violence with UNPROFOR being replaced with the new NATO-led IFOR (Implementation Force).

Like the circumstances of John Buis's sudden withdrawal, events involving armed forces in the Balkans often overpowered the capabilities of the UN to keep the peace and prevent violence. Violence and ethnic tensions did not disappear when Officers Snow and Gallop arrived in 1999 and still exist today. The UN has demonstrated it has the ability to keep the peace even if it sometimes requires NATO support, but it cannot erase hundreds of years of ethnic conflict.

Canadians who served as police officers in the former Yugoslavia while the region rebuilt itself have expressed positive memories of their deployments. Reflecting on his experience in Bosnia and Kosovo, Jack Gallop of the RCMP said, "I saw a note somewhere and thought it

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<sup>72</sup> Buis Interview.

<sup>73</sup> Buis Interview.

<sup>74</sup> Biserko, Sonja. "The Srebrenica Genocide: Serbia in Denial." *Pakistan Horizon* 65, no. 3 (2012): 2.



would appeal to me and it did, it was a great experience.”<sup>75</sup> For John Buis whose deployment came to an abrupt end, it inspired him to go continue to volunteer to serve abroad in places like East Timor and finish the mission there.<sup>76</sup> One sentiment echoed among all was the feeling that things had gotten better in their communities over the course of their missions. Even if that positive change was small, it was progress, which was an accomplishment in itself.<sup>77</sup>

Given the decades long involvement of the UN in the Balkans, the officers’ deployments were brief but Canada’s police performed their duties exceptionally given the circumstances. As Canadians who were not prepared by their upbringings or training for the situation in the Balkans and being unable to speak the local languages, the officers displayed a remarkable ability to adapt. In doing so, the Canadian officers made a major contribution to the relative success of the Balkan UN missions in contrast to the disasters in Somalia and Rwanda. The feeling of success was present among the officers themselves who saw progress in the rebuilding of the region, even if that progress was small. This stands in marked contrast to the experience of other Canadian UN peacekeepers, like Roméo Dallaire, who commanded the ill-fated UN mission during the horrors of the Rwandan Genocide. The Canadian officers in Bosnia demonstrate the importance and viability of UN police officers integrating into foreign communities within the larger mission of peacekeeping.

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<sup>75</sup> Gallop Interview.

<sup>76</sup> Buis Interview.

<sup>77</sup> Gallop Interview; Snow Interview; Buis Interview.

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