



ATLANTSKO VIJEĆE HRVATSKE  
THE ATLANTIC COUNCIL OF CROATIA



Marshall Center  
- Republic of Macedonia



NATO  
Public Diplomacy Division



NATO  
Defense College



European Center  
for Security Studies  
"George C. Marshall"

## *Marshall Center Security Forum - Ohrid 2015*

# Croatian readiness for national security threats

**Monika Begovic MSc**  
**Vice-President of the Atlantic Council of Croatia**

# Atlantic Council of Croatia

- Member of the Atlantic Treaty Association
- Promotes ideas of euro-atlantism
- Aware of benefits of cooperation with regional, European and international partners
- Organizes lectures, seminars, conference; publishes books, journals, policy papers



ATLANTSKO VIJEĆE HRVATSKE  
THE ATLANTIC COUNCIL OF CROATIA

# Topics

- Geopolitical aspect
- Croatia and international community
- National security system of the Republic of Croatia
- Latest developments as threats to (inter)national security
- Importance of cooperation + messages

# Croatia – geopolitical position

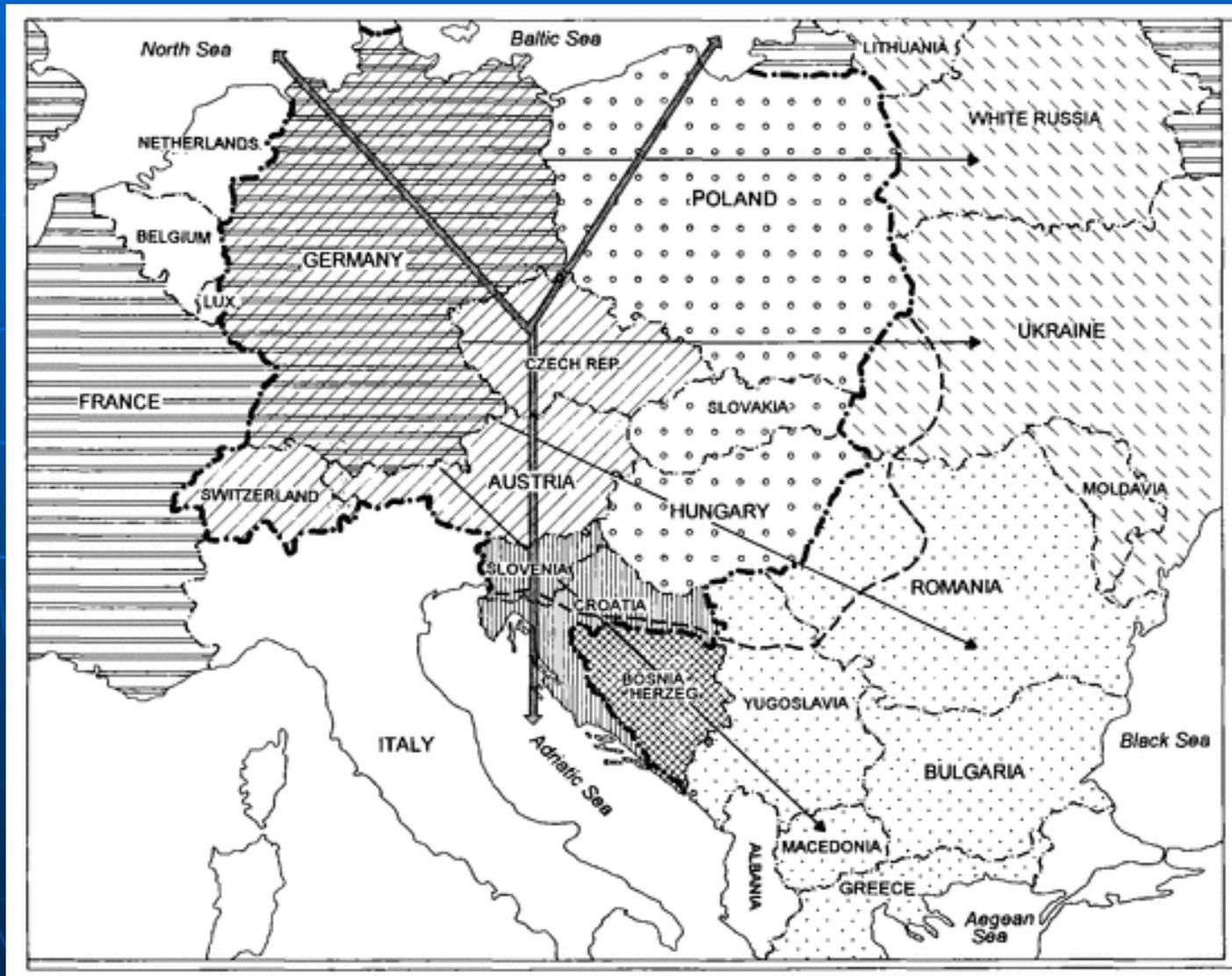
Croatia is at the crossroads of:

Central Europe,  
Southeast Europe and  
the Mediterranean →

so called: *transitional region*

The geopolitical situation of Croatia is determined by influence of different **ethnic, religious, economic and political** factors

# Croatia - geopolitical position



# Croatia and international ties

Member of the United Nations

Member of NATO alliance since 2009

EU member country since 2013

Anti-ISIS coalition (mobilizes more than 60 nations)

*What defense / security preconditions are needed in the contemporary security environment?*

# Croatia and international ties

Croatia is a transitional as well as a post-conflict country, building its international and security strategy on the principles of **cooperative security** and **partnership** in international relations

Croatia has accepted the goals of antiterrorist coalition and the global anti-terrorism engagement

# Croatia and international ties

The membership in NATO implies both privileges and obligations, calling for constant reassessment of Croatia's security environment and the capabilities to respond to the challenges

Military transformation is a continuous process of adaptation of key policy and strategic documents and of abilities to respond to current challenges and threats to national security.

# Croatia and international ties

Small countries as Croatia don't have a decisive role in countering the global threats but can provide a substantial contribution to the world peace and security by stabilising their respective environment and by playing a constructive role in multinational structures.

Croatia supports the countries from the region aspiring for membership in the Euro-Atlantic integrations as relevant for peace and stability

# National security system of the Republic of Croatia

In 2006, the security system in the Republic of Croatia was reformed by passing the Security Intelligence System of the Republic of Croatia **Act**.

In accordance with this Act two security and intelligence services were established:

**the Security and Intelligence Agency (SOA) and**

**the Military Security and Intelligence Agency (VSOA)**

# National security system of the Republic of Croatia

Other offices:

**National Security Council (VNS)** – formed to ease the cooperation between the President of the Republic of Croatia and President of the Government of the Republic of Croatia

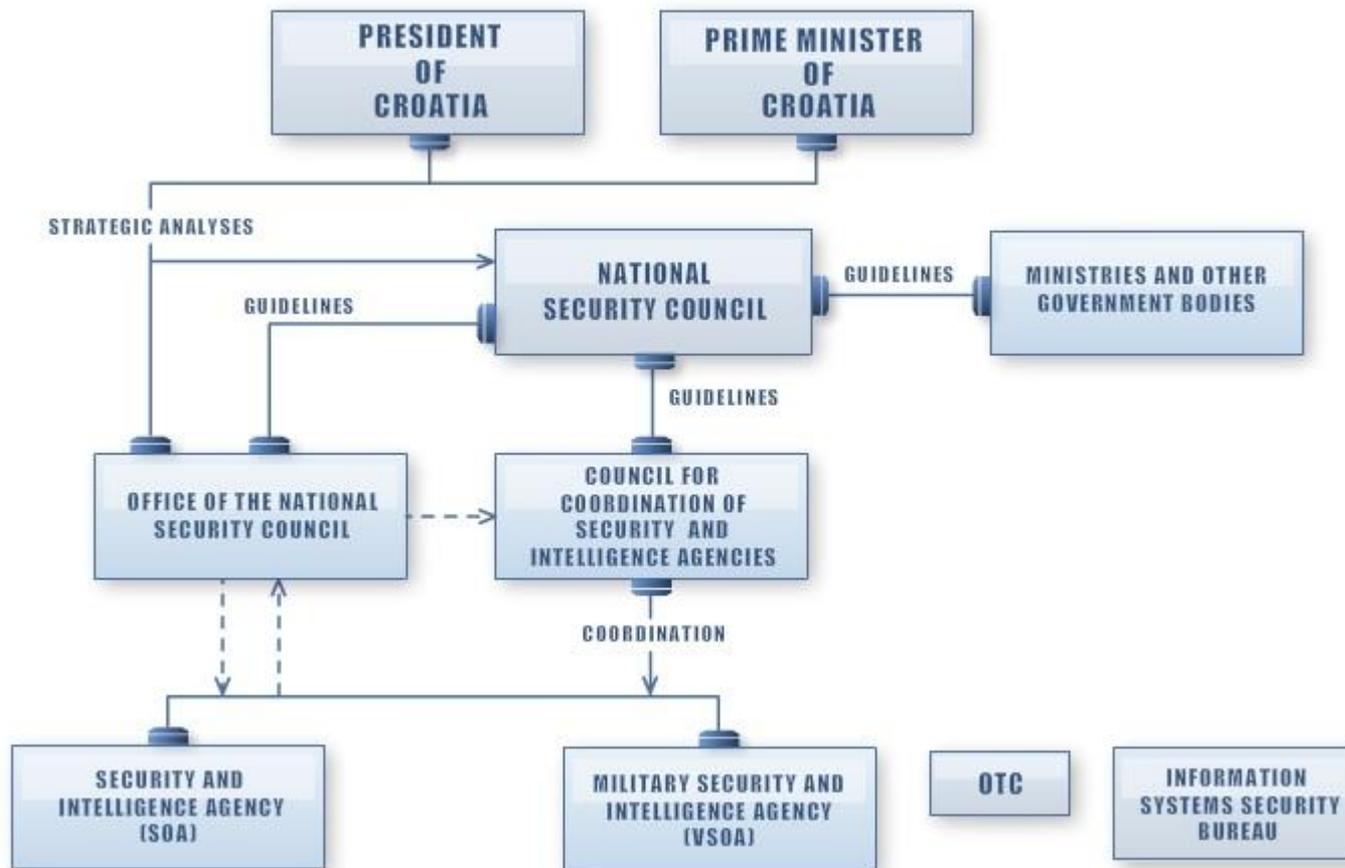
**Office of the National Security Council** – assists in the supervision of the security and intelligence agencies

**Office for the security of information systems (ZSIS)**

Operative center for **telecommunication supervision (OTC)**

# National security system of the Republic of Croatia

CROATIAN SECURITY AND INTELLIGENCE SYSTEM - DIAGRAM



# National security system of the Republic of Croatia

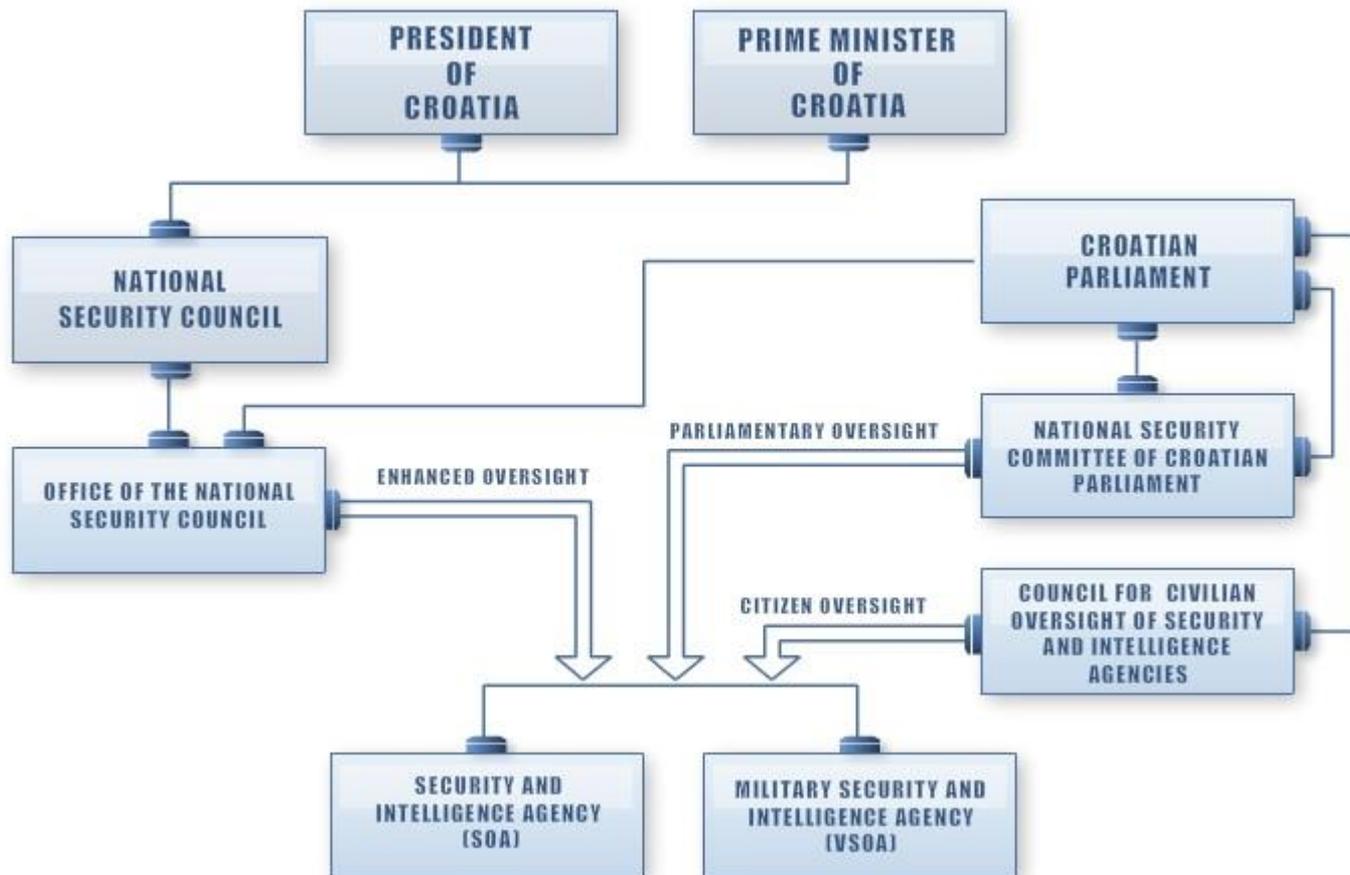
The Security and Intelligence Agency (SOA) is the central state body responsible for gathering, analyzing, processing and evaluating data which is significant for national security

## Goal of SOA:

detecting and preventing the activities of individuals or groups, which are directed against the integrity, independence, indivisibility and sovereignty of the Republic of Croatia

# National security system of the Republic of Croatia

## OVERSIGHT OF SOA ACTIVITY



# National security system of the Republic of Croatia

## Strategic planning documents:

National Security Strategy

Defence Strategy

Military Strategy

Strategic Defence Review

National Strategy for the Prevention and Suppression  
of Terrorism (2008)

# National security system of the Republic of Croatia

Three special security goals:

- 1) establishment, development and enforcement of adequate policies, measures, activities and institutions in the security area;
- 2) development of convenient security environment at the regional and global level through the incorporation in international security integration and cooperation with other states and
- 3) through the development of a stable and economically advanced society that would be capable of building and maintaining long-term effective security mechanisms and resources and able to effectively react to security challenges, risks and threats

# Latest developments as threats to national security

- ❖ **Ukraine** crisis affects NATO, surrounding countries, contemporary security environment
- Regional security: Croatian volunteers fighting alongside Ukrainian army; Serb counterparts helping pro-Russian rebels

# Latest developments as threats to national security

**July 2015** – pro-ISIS video published on YouTube calls for Balkan Caliphate

*(\*unknown author – video and YouTube account have been terminated)*

Video refers to Western Balkan countries, including Croatia

Video calls for holy war and radical Islam

# Latest developments as threats to national security



\*Youtube printscreen

# Latest developments as threats to national security

*"People from the Balkans be happy, better days are approaching, Muslims are coming, we are the Islamic caliphate,"* the first stanza said.

Messages in the video were promising that the democracy in these countries would be destroyed and *sharia law* established in its place

# Latest developments as threats to national security

## Question:

Could ISIS video have encouraged Muslims in the Balkan countries to take up arms wishing to establish Sharia Law in the region?

# Latest developments as threats to national security

Croatian experts claim that the video was produced in the region, not in Arab countries →  
sign for regional disputes?

# Latest developments as threats to national security

## *Facts:*

Between 200 and 600 fighters from various Balkan nations, including Bosnia, Serbia and Kosovo, have travelled to Syria since 2012

*\*according to a June study by the Combating Terrorism Center, a research institution at West Point.*

# Latest developments as threats to national security

*Facts:*

According to last SOA information, there are 6 Croatian citizens fighting in ISIS

# Latest developments as threats to national security

Kidnapping innocent people

Croatian citizen Tomislav Salopek was kidnapped close to Cairo, Egypt, while driving to work in a company car (French geoscience company)

Armed men stopped the car and made the driver leave the vehicle

# Latest developments as threats to national security



# Latest developments as threats to national security

A video showing him reading out the militant group's demands was published online last Wednesday

After a deadline ISIS set for 30-year-old Salopek expired, Salopek was beheaded by militants in Sinai province, since Egyptian authorities had not fulfilled the group's demand to release certain prisoners

His death, ISIS says, was due to Croatia's role in the war against the Islamic State

# Latest developments as threats to national security

Demands: release of certain Muslim women prisoners in Egypt

However, ISIS did not specify which imprisoned Muslim women should be released, which made the demand impossible to fulfill

February 2015 CNN reported that Croatia was considered a part of the coalition to battle ISIS. Also in the coalition are Croatia's neighbors Serbia and the predominately Muslim country of Bosnia and Herzegovina. In July 2015, an ISIS video encouraged Muslims in the Balkan countries to take up arms and establish Sharia Law in the region.

# Possible new threats to national security?

- Economy crisis as a security threat?
- Greek crisis → EU cohesion shaken?
- Can the current financial crisis cause the global crisis, as the one in 2008, but now with China involved?

The economic crisis could be the source of a threat to global security

# Possible new threats?

Refugee crisis –

refugees mostly from:

Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan

Refugees flee their country to save their lives and want to enter the rich EU countries

# Possible new threats?



Refugees in the park near the main bus station in Belgrade / photo by Filip Avramovic

# Possible new threats?

Croatia can take up to 500 refugees, mostly from Syria, the authorities say

# Possible new threats?

Important:

Border control - existing threats (proliferation of the weapons of mass destruction and migrations)

Schengen area and readiness of the Republic of Croatia to join – what specific capabilities need to be developed?

# Importance of regional cooperation

Current and potential role of Croatia in the cooperative security within NATO (open door policy – regional security and stability)

# Importance of regional cooperation

Croatia puts efforts in strengthening regional cooperation, especially through A5 initiative

The US-Adriatic Charter, that still represents a strategic partnership between the member states, recognizes the importance of strengthening of regional relations, with a view to ensure safety and total integration into European and transatlantic political, economic, security and defense institutions

# Importance of regional cooperation

„The best security is shared security“

\*NATO Secretary General Rasmussen, 2011

# Message

“Everyone is potentially targeted by terrorists and therefore it is important to oppose it. We can't be at the forefront of this battle but we won't hide 'under the table'. We are part of the coalition. Against such a global terrorism we must fight”,

Croatian Foreign Ministry Pusic said.

# Message

We can't hope or think that only someone else will be struck by terrorists, crisis or any other threats that exist today

Thank you.