

## **Bosnian Serbs Had 'MUP Link'**

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Mystery witness gives first-hand account of Milosevic's police at work in Bosnia.

The public wasn't told much about the witness whom the prosecution called to testify against former Serbian president Slobodan Milosevic - his voice was distorted, he was referred to as B-1244, he came from Bosnian "region number three", and he allegedly had extensive contacts with officials referred to as "numbers 1 to 24".

His testimony was also confusing and difficult to follow - like a bad spy novel - but in the end it did provide a clear picture of how both police and military from Serbia aided the Bosnian Serbs in their war.

Essentially, B-1244 said, it went like this - the Bosnian Serbs and opposition parties from Serbia provided the men, the Serbian Interior Ministry, MUP, trained them and the Yugoslav army provided the weapons.

His description has added more weight to the prosecution's effort to show that the armed forces of Serbia and the Bosnian Serb Republic were not separate entities, as Milosevic alleges, but actually one force that ultimately answered to Belgrade.

From what could be deduced in court, B-1244 was a Bosnian Serb official of some rank from a northern Bosnian town not far from the Croatian border.

In late February 1992, before the war in Bosnia began, the witness went to Belgrade on a social call, and somehow ended up meeting officials from the Serbian and Yugoslav secret services. He later found out that they were involved in training and arming Serbs from his home town.

On the way back home, he was accompanied by official "Number 13", who informed him that 20 young men from their town would be sent to a training camp in Ilok, a town in eastern Slavonija, Croatia, which Serb forces had recently captured.

A month later, B-1244 went to Belgrade again. This time, "Number 13" asked him to go up to Ilok to visit the men being trained there. He was instructed to go to Serbian police headquarters in Belgrade and get in touch with Milan Prodanic, a secret service officer who was involved in the recruitment and training process.

B-1244 did as he was told and met Prodanic at the police headquarters reception desk. He asked how he could get to the camp, and Prodanic told him to follow a police vehicle which was going there.

As it turned out, the man in the car which witness B-1244 was asked to follow was Franko Simatovic, the head of the intelligence branch of Milosevic's secret service and commander of the feared "Red Beret" special forces. Simatovic was visiting the training camp that day to check on how Serb volunteers from Bosnia were being trained.

"He was wearing civilian clothes, but the men with him had camouflage uniforms, with red berets stuck in their shoulder straps," B-1244 said.

B-1244 followed the other car to the Ilok camp. When they reached the entrance, their cars were halted, and Simatovic got out and spoke to the guards. He ordered them to find an escort for B-1244 and take him to where the 20 men from his home town were training.

"I stayed there for an hour or so," B-1244 said.

On April 11, 1992, the trainees returned from Ilok to B-1244's town, accompanied by another 30 men from Serbia. They were transported there in Yugoslav army helicopters, the witness said. All 50 set up camp in a village outside the town, and were incorporated into an existing Yugoslav army brigade based locally. The local Serb authorities provided them with food and lodging.

According to B-1244, these volunteers, some of whom had fought in eastern Slavonija, were not taking part purely for patriotic reasons, but also because they were rewarded with the fruits of war. For example, the men were given Mercedes and Volkswagens that had belonged to Muslims and Croats in the town.

"They were given war booty. The local crisis staff [wartime administration] knew about it, and actually approved giving vehicles to them," B-1244 said.

He said that groups of men who had recently been trained - together with police from Serbia - then took over the town and detained the non-Serbs who lived there. Muslims and Croats, he said, were held at the police station and in the gymnasiums of local primary and secondary schools. Some of them were members of armed Muslim and Croat groups, but others were just civilians.

"Some of the people being held there were mistreated - they were beaten up, sexually abused, and some of them were even killed. And the local authorities were informed about what was happening," the witness said.

In late April or early May, B-1244 said he went to Belgrade with the Yugoslav army unit commander, named only as "Number 16", to tell Simatovic what was happening in the town's detention centres. Simatovic asked "Number 16" to write a report about it, but the man had literacy problems.

"He said he couldn't write a report because he wasn't very good at writing," B-1244 recalled. "I don't know if he ever wrote the report, but I don't think he did."

At some point that spring, the witness says, a young Serb who was reportedly part of a Yugoslav army unit, got drunk and opened fire on Muslim and Croat detainees with a rifle, killing 20 of them.

B-1244 later went as part of a delegation to Belgrade to discuss their concerns about commander "Number 16" with Simatovic.

"What fool appointed him commander of the unit?" Simatovic reportedly asked.

B-1244 and his associates said they did not have the authority to replace "Number 16" and asked Simatovic to intervene on their behalf by calling General Ratko Mladic, the commander of the newly-formed Bosnian Serb Army.

Mladic ordered the group to go back home - but the commander in question was eventually removed from office and imprisoned.

"Number 16" was not happy about being in jail, and asked B-1244 to go back to Belgrade to seek his release. B-1244 agreed to do so, but was unable to track Simatovic down. By chance, he came across Jovica Stanisic, the overall head of Milosevic's police force. Stanisic made a phone call and "Number 16" was released.

B-1244's story of his interaction with Simatovic and Stanisic - both of whom answered to Milosevic - appears to show a clear connection between Serbia's MUP and the Bosnian Serb forces.

During cross-examination, Milosevic was able to punch some holes in the witness's evidence.

For example, he asked B-1244 whether the men from Serbia who came to fight in his town were part of Serbian MUP, or whether they were volunteers from the Serbian Radical Party. B-1244 appeared to change tack and answered that they were in fact from the radical party.

When Milosevic suggested that this meant that the men were acting on their own initiative rather than as part of a formal effort organised by MUP, the witness answered, "That's right."

Milosevic then pointed out that Simatovic had traveled to the training camp in Ilok in civilian clothes and asked whether it was not possible he had gone there as a private citizen, not in his official role. B-1244 again conceded that this was a possibility.

However, when the prosecution was given an opportunity to ask a few more questions after the cross-examination was over, there seemed little room for doubt that Milosevic's police were involved in what happened in this part of Bosnia in an official capacity.

When asked whether Simatovic's men played a role in the takeover of the town, B-1244 replied, "Yes, they played a very significant role."

Finally, the witness was asked whether the training camp at Ilok was run by "patriotic volunteers".

"Well, they told us it was a MUP camp," he said.

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