

## **Logistics of Srebrenica Massacre Documented**

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Prosecution unveils large archive of Bosnian Serb military documents showing how deportations and burials were managed.

Bosnian Serb documents seized in NATO raids over the months and years were revealed this week to show details of the operation to kill and bury thousands of Muslims at Srebrenica in 1995.

Among revelations from the documents which appeared this week was that Franko Simatovic, a senior Serbian State Security Service official, visited Vlasenica, the headquarters of the Bosnian Serb army's Drina corps, on July 7, just a few days before the massacres.

Former military analyst Richard Butler, was giving evidence for the prosecution in the trial of Bratunac brigade commander Vidoje Blagojevic and Dragan Jokic, who was chief engineering officer of the Zvornik brigade. Both men are charged with helping organise and cover up the massacre of men and boys from the town, at the time a UN Safe Area.

Butler told the court that the July 1995 operation to murder and bury up to eight thousand men and boys was highly coordinated, involving all units of the Drina corps. The bulk of his testimony was set out in a written report presented to the court.

Using Bosnian Serb documentation, Butler mapped out the corps' activities at Srebrenica and showed how its various units were linked with massacre and burial sites.

On the morning of July 12, officers of the Drina corps were given orders in a meeting held in Bratunac brigade headquarters, chaired by Bosnian Serb commander General Ratko Mladic and attended by General Radislav Krstic, chief of staff of the Drina corps, who was promoted to corps commander the next day. That meeting was documented by Zvornik police chief Colonel Dragomir Vasic, who informed his superiors that "Mladic and Krstic issued orders to all participants".

The decision to deport the Muslim refugees from Potocari was made at another meeting that morning.

As part of the preparations, Drina corps headquarters issued an order to all units to "mobilise" all buses and minivans. Bus drivers were ordered to report to Bratunac football stadium by late afternoon the same day.

The Bosnian Serb defence ministry followed suit, and issued its own order requisitioning some 20 buses from Pale, Sokolac and Han Pijesak. Another 30 buses were brought from Zvornik, Visegrad, Vlasenica, Milici and Bratunac. General Krstic, who was running the Srebrenica operation, issued another order requisitioning 50 more buses from nine municipalities in eastern Bosnia. He then put Colonel Krsmanovic, chief of traffic management in Drina corps, in charge of requisitioning and deploying buses.

Police chief Vasic informed his superiors that "over 100 trucks" had been already requisitioned.

According to documents that the prosecution obtained from NATO raids on Bosnian Serb military facilities, the Bratunac brigade was in charge of logistics. On July 12 alone, the brigade provided 4,700 litres of diesel

fuel for buses deporting civilians from Potocari.

On 13 July, 50 more buses were ordered from Bijeljina to Bratunac to take part in the deportations, Butler told the court. There were now 150 buses in use.

On July 13, as the Bosnian Serb army continued its operations in Zepa, the interior ministry units were put in charge of deportation. This is clear from a report that Colonel Vasic sent to the ministry on July 13, in which he says he needed another 10,000 litres of diesel.

By the evening of July 13, the deportation of civilians was over, and thousands of Muslim prisoners were sent to Bratunac. Most of them spent between one and three nights there before being taken to execution sites some 30 kilometres away, in the Zvornik area.

In the meantime, a column of Bosnian Muslim men and boys continued its attempted break-out from encirclement. Heading for Tuzla, it reached the road between Konjevic Polje and Bratunac.

Bosnian Serb police units guarding the road captured thousands of them on July 13.

Documentation held by the prosecution makes it clear that the units which took part in the capture included a company of police that included men from Serbia itself, as well as from Serb Krajina in Croatia. The company was under the command of Colonel Ljubisa Borovcanin, deputy commander of Bosnian Serb special police forces.

A few hours after the massacre of over 1,000 Muslims in a warehouse in Kravica, the Bosnian government army intercepted a conversation between Zvornik brigade headquarters and Colonel Milanovic, chief of air defence in the Drina corps. In that conversation, Milanovic requests a bulldozer to be sent to nearby Konjevic Polje. Two hours later, when the bulldozer did not arrive, Milanovic called the brigade again, asking to talk to either the commander or the deputy commander of the Drina corps's fifth engineering battalion. He repeated his request, and was told that all bulldozers were in the field.

Survivors of the massacre at the Kravica warehouse have testified that hours after the killings, trucks and bulldozers arrived on the scene.

The documentation suggests that the process of mass execution and burial was closely monitored between July 13 and 18. A vehicle belonging to the Zvornik brigade made several trips to execution sites, according to the brigade logbook that was found in one of the NATO raids.

The Opel vehicle visited Orahovac - an execution site - twice on July 13, then two more times the following day. On 15 July, the vehicle was seen in Kozluk, Pilica and Rocevic, all the scenes of executions.

The engineering company of Zvornik brigade, which was under Major Dragan Jokic at the time, was busy in Orahovac on July 14, according to its log. A truck and three diggers were used. That same day, Zvornik brigade provided its engineering company with some 2,000 litres of diesel fuel.

The logbook shows that a bulldozer from the brigade worked eight and a half hours in Branjevo on July 17, one day after a mass execution there.

In spite of the threat posed by the Bosnian Muslim column, Butler wrote in his report, significant military resources of the Drina corps were used throughout this period to guard, execute and bury thousands of Muslim prisoners.

Concluding his report, Butler wrote that Jokic, as chief of engineering in the Zvornik brigade, was fully involved in the burial operation. It was he, said Butler, who made it possible to use heavy machinery to bury the bodies.

Colonel Blagojevic was fully aware of what was going on, Butler wrote, partly because his headquarters was close to the Kravica warehouse, site of a mass execution, and also to a grave site in Glogova.

Furthermore, said Butler, the police units deployed along the road between Bratunac and Konjevic Polje were under the overall command of Blagojevic, the highest-ranking military officer in the area at the time.

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