

## **REGIONAL REPORT: Serb Police Accused of Cover-Up**

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Police official tells Hague that law enforcement chiefs conspired with government ministers to conceal mass graves.

A Serb law enforcement official has told the tribunal that former police chiefs closely associated with Slobodan Milosevic were responsible for the mass graves of Kosovo Albanians that have been found across Serbia.

Despite the revelation, there is still no sign that Belgrade is about to raise the issue of police responsibility for crimes committed in Kosovo.

Caslav Borovic told the court on September 4 that senior police officials ordered him to find a suitable location to bury around 80 men, women and children killed in the 1999 conflict.

Borovic's statement is the first to confirm suspicions about the involvement of former Serbian law enforcement chiefs in war crimes and the subsequent attempts to cover them up.

So far, no criminal proceedings have been launched against any current or former police officials, nor is there any sign of a change in policy.

On the contrary, some policemen from the Milosevic era appear to enjoy the protection of the new Serbian authorities, some still occupying senior posts.

During the war in Kosovo in April 1999, local fishermen near the town of Kladovo, eastern Serbia, discovered a freezer truck, containing the bodies of about 80 Kosovo Albanians, in the Danube.

According to Borovic, the then police chief of Bor ordered the truck to be destroyed while the bodies were taken to a police training ground in Batajnica, near Belgrade, for burial. The orders for this came from the late interior minister Vljako Stojiljkovic, and the ex-head of public security, Vlastimir Djordjevic, he said.

The mass grave was discovered in May 2001, several months after the fall of the Milosevic regime. So far 439 bodies - all believed to be Kosovo Albanians killed by Serbian troops during the 1999 war - have been exhumed from Batajnica and from a number of other locations such as Petrovo Selo and Perucac lake.

According to sources in the Serbian judiciary, new exhumations are underway in Batajnica. Another 30 bodies have been exhumed since the first graves were disinterred in June.

Earlier testimony from another police official, Dragan Karleusa, said the mass graves were the result of "clearing-up" operations in Kosovo.

Karleusa said the orders followed a meeting in March 1999 between Milosevic, Stojiljkovic and Rade Markovic, the then chief of Serbian State Security, RDB. Djordjevic was given responsibility to implement this plan.

Only a small number of the exhumed bodies have been identified so far. According to Belgrade daily Politika, nine of the bodies are of Kosovo Albanians from Suva Reka. The same sources in the Serbian judiciary say the main reason for this is that the courts cannot afford the expensive DNA analysis that is the only reliable method for identifying victims.

Last year, the Serbian government earmarked 75,000 euro for unearthing and identifying bodies. But the money only covered the cost of the actual exhumations and the workers' wages. A single DNA analysis is estimated to cost approximately 3,500 euro.

New modern DNA analysis laboratory was opened in Belgrade on Tuesday, September 10 specifically for this purpose. The donations for the laboratory came from the UK and USA governments as well as from the The International Commission on Missing Persons in the former Yugoslavia (ICMP).

Unlike the identification process, which had been slowed by a lack of funds, the business of catching and prosecuting those who committed these crimes has not even begun.

Belgrade's deputy district prosecutor, Milan Sarajlic, told IWPR a few months ago that they have not prosecuted the men responsible for the killings because the police have so far failed to provide them with the suspects' names. Serbian judicial sources say this is tantamount to "deliberate obstruction".

Belgrade analysts believe the authorities protect senior police officers who participated in the Kosovo conflict because they sided with them during the overthrow of Milosevic.

The list of Kosovo veterans still occupying high office is headed by Sreten Lukic, chief of public security - second in command in the police hierarchy - who commanded all police forces in the 1999 war. Lukic's assistant, the recently murdered Bosko Buha, commanded the Belgrade police brigade, which was involved in the conflict.

Some former law enforcement chiefs - those who remained loyal to Milosevic during the coup - have been pursued, but not for what they did in Kosovo.

Rade Markovic, for example, is in prison for abuse of authority and organising an attempted assassination of members of the Serbian opposition.

Borovic's statement may have confirmed many suspicions, but the behaviour of the Serb authorities leaves little hope that the matter will ever be laid to rest.

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