

'Serb Adolf' in the Hands of the Tribunal

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Their target was Goran Jelasic, alias the 'Serb Adolf'. He is accused of the gravest of war crimes (including genocide) against Muslim and Croat inmates of Camp Luka in Brcko (in the north east of Bosnia), in early summer 1992.

Unlike the first two, the third arrest was carried out without shooting, which indicates that both the hunters and the hunted have learnt something from the incidents in Prijedor (where Simo Drljaca was killed) and Vitez (where Vlatko Kupreskic was wounded). What they have learnt is that the hunted should not be given a chance to resist, and that, indeed, resistance is not only futile, but also bad for one's health. Jelasic had challenged NATO in an interview with the Dutch daily NRC in November last year to 'come to get me, if they dare', claiming that he was prepared for them and had 20 kilograms of dynamite in his car. When NATO really did come, however, he did not even try to resist arrest.

Like all previous operations, this was multi-national, with the participation of troops from a number of member-countries of NATO. The main role in the Prijedor operation went to the British SAS, and in the Vitez operation to the Dutch marines. Last week in Bijeljina the honorary role went to the American commandos. Since such operations are becoming an issue of national prestige, one might predict that the French, Italians, Spaniards, and Canadians will alternate in the leading role on future occasions.

Jelasic was transferred to The Hague immediately. His initial appearance has already been scheduled for January 26, when he will be asked to enter a plea of guilty or not guilty to each count he is charged with. These total 56 in all: one count of genocide, 18 counts of crimes against humanity, 18 grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions and 19 counts of violations of the law and customs of war.

According to the indictment issued against him and Ranko Cesic (who is still at large) on July 21, 1995, Jelasic committed all these crimes in May and June 1992 when acting as commander of Camp Luka, after Serbian forces seized Brcko. At the time, the indictment alleges, Serb forces confined hundreds of Muslim and Croat men, and a few women, at Luka in inhumane conditions. Detainees were systematically killed, usually being shot at close range in the head or back.

Often, the indictment continues, 'the accused and the camp guards forced the detainees who were to be shot to put their heads on a metal grate that drained into the Sava river, so that there would be minimal clean-up after the shootings'. The corpses were then thrown into the river, or, on the orders of the accused, the detainees took them to one of two disposal areas where the bodies were piled, later to be loaded on trucks and taken to mass graves.

Investigators and forensic experts from the Tribunal exhumed the mass grave in the vicinity of Brcko last year. The results of this exhumation will be used in the course of Jelasic's trial.

Qualifying the systematic killings of detainees as the ultimate crime of genocide, the indictment charges Jelasic with the intention of 'destroying a substantial or significant part of the Bosnian Muslim people as a national, ethnic or religious group'.

According to the indictment, Jelasic introduced himself to the detainees as the 'Serb Adolf' (a name he used again five and a half years later in his interview with NRC). He often boasted to the detainees and others about his 'statistics', i.e. the number of Muslims he had killed. Isak Gasi, one of the detainees in the camp who testified in the Dusko Tadic trial in May 1996, stated before the court that Jelasic boasted in June 1992 that he had already killed 97 Muslims, and that he would kill as many again.

In addition to killing 'countless detainees whose identities are unknown', the indictment charges Jelasic with the killing of 16 known victims, four cases of torture of detainees, as well as participation in the plunder of private property belonging to the detainees at Luka.

In his NRC interview Jelasic also claimed that he and his guards were told not to leave any witnesses alive, and that he believed that Biljana Plavsic, current president of Republika Srpska, was in charge of ethnic cleansing in the area. It will be interesting to hear whether he repeats this before the court.

Location: [Bosnia and Herzegovina](#)

Focus: [International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia](#)

