



Transitional Justice Bulletin

Belgrade, June 4, 2007

Former JNA members in War Crime Investigation

On Wednesday 30 May 2007, the Belgrade War Crime Chamber brought a decision to conduct a criminal investigation after questioning 12 persons suspected of war crimes in Lovas, eastern Croatia, in 1991. All twelve suspects were taken into custody.

Significantly, four of the 12 suspects being held are former members of the Yugoslav Peoples Army (JNA). They are Miodrag Dimitrijević, Darko Perić, Radovan Vlajković and Radisav Josipović.

To date, the War Crimes Prosecutor in Serbia has desisted from investigating former members of the JNA in relation to war crimes committed during the break-up of the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s.

The remaining persons being held are Ljuban Devetak, Milan Devičić, Milan Radojičić and Željko Krnjajić, who lived in Lovas and Petronije Stevanović, Aleksandar Nikolaidis, Dragan Bačić and Zoran Kosijer who were members of the "Dušan Silni" paramilitary group.

On 17 October 2005, HLC submitted the statement of Ljuban Devetak, previously taken by HLC, to the War Crimes Prosecutor, requesting that the prosecutor open an investigation. In its request, HLC demanded that the then-JNA officers that were in command of Lovas and Tovarnik be included in the investigation. A day later, prosecutor Vladimir Vukčević said that the Republic of Serbia War Crimes Prosecutor's office had initiated a preliminary criminal procedure to establish accountability for the war crime of killing Croat civilians in the village of Lovas in 1991.

In late 1991, Croatian Serbs backed by the JNA and Serb paramilitaries seized large areas of eastern Slavonia from Croatia, which had declared independence a few months before. On 10 October 1991 local units of the Territorial Defence, the paramilitary unit Dušan silni, supported by the Novi Sad Corps of the JNA attacked and captured Lovas killing 21 civilians. Serbian forces occupied a building in the village and used it as an improvised jail. There, the non-Serb population was mistreated – men and women were arrested, beaten, and tortured. Women were raped. Those Croats who remained were forced to wear white arm bands as a sign of their nationality. Countless buildings were torched and destroyed including the Catholic church and chapel, the municipal building and numerous private barns and warehouses.

On 18 October 1991 a group of 51 Croats was forced to enter a minefield just outside Lovas in order to "clear" it. 21 were killed and 14 injured. A further 19 people were killed in the village on that day. More killings in the days that followed brought the total number of victims to 70.

In 2003, Vukovar's District Court opened a procedure against Ljuban Devetak and 16 other suspects, mostly ethnic Serbs for killing, torturing and expelling civilians in Lovas during the war. Only one of them is in the dock while the rest are being tried in absentia.

"The investigation into the war crime against Croatian civilians in Lovas is the result of cooperation between the Serbian and Croatian War Crimes Prosecutors which is based on an agreement on the exchange of evidence signed in October 2006. For more than two years one Serb has been standing trial for war crimes committed in Lovas before the Vukovar District court, while 16 other indictees who appear on the indictment are at large in Serbia. The fact that these indictees are not available to the court in Croatia has encouraged prosecutors in Serbia and Croatia to find a way to move the Lovas case and other cases forward. It's obvious that the Croatian Prosecutor has assisted the Serbian War Crimes Prosecutor with evidence, just as the Serbian Prosecutor helped Croatia in the Glavaš case. It's encouraging that we have come to this point and it's clear that this kind of cooperation is vital for all concerned."

Nataša Kandić

What Ljuban Devetak told HLC

On 21 November 2003 Ljuban Devetak contacted HLC, denying the charges that he had participated in war crimes brought against him in Croatia. "I was the director of a local association and I helped the village council and the villagers as much as I could. That day when the people were taken to the mine field I was not in the village. I had already gone to work with 30 other people. The night before, a soldier had been killed. In the morning men from the village were shut in the village's mechanical workshop, and, after that, as far as I know, a special unit of the regular army which was stationed in Mikluševci forced them into the mine field. At that time the commander in the village was Lieutenant Colonel Dimitrijević, and his superior based in Tovarnik was Colonel Dušan Lončar who was later promoted to General." Ljuban Devetak believes that it was Lieutenant Colonel Dimitrijević who gave the order to force the Croats of Lovas into the mine field.





CITIZENS OF LOVAS – KILLED 1991-1995¹

Milan (Teodor) Latas	02.09.1906 – 10.10.1991
Danijel (Petar) Badanjak	19.11.1926 – 10.10.1991
Cecilija (Mato) Badanjak	19.03.1928 – 10.10.1991
Vid (Juraj) Krizmanić	15.05.1937 – 10.10.1991
Ivan (Tomo) Ostrun	24.05.1933 – 10.10.1991
Antun (Antun) Jovanović	01.01.1932 – 10.10.1991
Anka (Jure) Jovanović	25.12.1928 – 10.10.1991
Alojz (Jure) Polić	04.06.1951 – 10.10.1991
Petar (Ivan) Rendulić	01.08.1934 – 10.10.1991
Juraj (Josip) Poljak	15.04.1952 – 10.10.1991
Katarina (Anton) Pavličević	30.11.1927 – 10.10.1991
Josip (Đuro) Poljak	10.07.1944 – 10.10.1991
Josip (Stjepan) Kraljević	09.08.1926 – 10.10.1991
Tomo (Mile) Sabljak	29.05.1938 – 10.10.1991
Pavo (Martin) Đaković	08.12.1936 – 10.10.1991
Stjepan (Ilija) Mađarević	08.03.1924 – 10.10.1991
Mato (Drago) Keser	17.12.1959 – 10.10.1991
Dragutin (Dragutin) Peić	06.05.1926 – 10.10.1991
Mijo (Mato) Božić	22.07.1943 – 10.10.1991
Živko (Pavo) Antolović	18.01.1925 – 10.10.1991
Stjepan (Andrija) Pejić	10.01.1933 – 10.10.1991

Rudolf (Nikola) Jonak 29.07.1937 – 15.10.1991

Marin (Jakob) Balić 07.01.1928 – 16.10.1991
Katarina (Đuro) Balić 24.11.1936 – 16.10.1991

Slavica (Đuro) Pavošević 10.11.1930 – 18.10.1991
Jozefina (Mato) Pavošević 05.10.1948 – 18.10.1991
Marija (Antun) Pavošević 14.12.1973 – 18.10.1991
Alojz (Đuro) Krizmanić 04.09.1961 – 18.10.1991
Đuro (Nikola) Krizmanić 20.10.1960 – 18.10.1991
Ivan (Stevan) Vidić 26.06.1956 – 18.10.1991
Darko (Juraj) Pavlić 11.12.1966 – 18.10.1991
Željko (Juraj) Pavlić 24.12.1962 – 18.10.1991
Franjo (Josip) Pando 27.06.1942 – 18.10.1991
Marko (Ilija) Damjanović 31.08.1940 – 18.10.1991
Andrija (Pavo) Devčić 30.11.1914 – 18.10.1991
Đuka (Petar) Luketić 06.07.1960 – 18.10.1991
Stjepan (Petar) Luketić 27.04.1940 – 18.10.1991
Petar (Juraj) Luketić 25.09.1929 – 18.10.1991
Marija (Marko) Fišer 23.05.1939 – 18.10.1991
Stipo (Stjepan) Dolački 13.09.1958 – 18.10.1991
Ana (Martin) Lemunović 12.05.1933 – 18.10.1991
Josip (Mihovil) Rendulić 21.05.1916 – 18.10.1991
Zoran (Vid) Krizmanić 7.02.1966 – 18.10.1991

Killed in the minefield

Petar (Danijel) Badanjak 22.10.1956 – 18.10.1991
Darko (Ivan) Solaković 03.12.1957 – 18.10.1991
Marijan (Jozo) Marković 03.02.1953 – 18.10.1991
Josip (Đuro) Turkalj 17.10.1962 – 18.10.1991
Zlatko (Marin) Panjik 07.11.1966 – 18.10.1991
Antun (Marin) Panjik 01.01.1953 – 18.10.1991
Mato (Nikola) Hodak 05.02.1957 – 18.10.1991
Slavko (Martin) Štrangarević 15.03.1957 – 18.10.1991
Marko (Božo) Vidić 24.10.1943 – 18.10.1991
Boško (Mijo) Bođanac 19.08.1954 – 18.10.1991
Ivan (Juraj) Conjar 12.06.1966 – 18.10.1991
Zlatko (Janko) Božić 14.03.1959 – 18.10.1991

Ivan (Petar) Sabljak	24.08.1960 – 18.10.1991
Marko (Petar) Sabljak	11.07.1950 – 18.10.1991
Tomislav (Josip) Sabljak	22.02.1949 – 18.10.1991
Slavko (Pero) Kuzmić	17.09.1961 – 18.10.1991
Ivica (Imbro) Kraljević	05.12.1955 – 18.10.1991
Ivan (Jure) Palijan	30.08.1949 – 18.10.1991
Mijo (Ivan) Šalaj	02.12.1940 – 18.10.1991
Luka (Pavo) Balić	15.11.1950 – 18.10.1991
Nikola (Josip) Badanjak	12.01.1934 – 18.10.1991

In the period 24 October – 23 December 1991, six people were killed.

Božo (Božo) Vidić	20.12.1932 – 23.10.1991
Josip (Antun) Jovanović	19.09.1957 – 24.10.1991
Zvonimir (Pavao) Martinović	13.03.1934 – 11.11.1991
Franjo (Fabijan) Đumić	04.10.1911 – 21.10.1991
Đuka (Manda) Došen	15.04.1957 – 05.10.1991
Antun (Josip) Kovačević	27.08.1949 – 23.12.1991

During 1993 during the UNPROFOR mandate, three people were killed:

Pavica (Antun) Kovačević	16.12.1952 – 25.01.1993
Elvira (Antun) Kovačević	30.11.1973 – 25.01.1993
Ana (Antun) Pavličić	09.12.1940 – jan.1993



Lovas Memorial

¹ Željko Cirba, *Krvava Istina – In memorium*, Lovas, 2004

