

Srebrenica Propaganda Challenged by Independent Research

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TWO FORMER SENIOR UN officials, and a group of journalists and academic researchers, on July 12, 2005, cast serious doubt on what they said were “highly inflated casualty figures and a misleading portrayal of events by governments, non-governmental organizations and major news organizations” with regard to the 1995 capture of Srebrenica, in Bosnia, by Bosnian Serb forces.

The Srebrenica Research Group, joined by former UN officials Philip Corwin and Carlos Martins Branco, released conclusions from their 200-page report “Srebrenica and the Politics of War Crimes” which said that US policy undermined UN and European brokered peace settlements, which could have ended the war in 1992 or 1993, in order to pursue a military solution which inevitably endangered safe zones. By facilitating shipments of illegal weapons to Muslim forces, the US helped turn safe zones into staging areas for conflict and tripwires for NATO intervention. The group, which will soon release the full report, announced the following conclusions:

The premise that Serbian forces executed 7,000 to 8,000 people “was never a possibility,” according to former BBC journalist Jonathan Rooper, who investigated on site and through official records over many years the events which followed the capture of Srebrenica, and whose findings are presented in the upcoming report of the Srebrenica Research Group. He noted that by the first week of August 1995, 35,632 people had registered with the World Health Organization and Bosnian Government as displaced persons, survivors of Srebrenica, a figure which was later referred to [in] an Amnesty International report and the report of the Dutch Government.

Rooper noted that the International Committee of the Red Cross and The New York Times reported that about 3,000 Muslim soldiers who fought their way across Serb held territory to Muslim lines near Tuzla, were also survivors. The ICRC confirmed that these soldiers were redeployed by the Bosnian Army “without their families being informed.” The figure of 3,000 soldiers who survived was also confirmed by Muslim Gen. Enver Hadzihanovic, who testified at The Hague. These figures made it clear that at least 38,000 Srebrenica residents survived out of a population of 40,000 before the capture of the enclave. Around 2,000 Muslims who fled with the 28th Division were killed, most by fighting, but also hundreds executed by paramilitary units and a mercenary group.

US policy in Bosnia endangered safe zones by opposing UN requests to provide enough personnel to demilitarize these endaves and by facilitating illegal arms shipments to Muslim forces through C-130 Hercules night time deliveries to the Tuzla airport. The US Defense

Intelligence Agency (DIA) led this operation which also welcomed mujahedin fighters allied with al-Qaida, according to Prof. Cees Wiebes, who wrote the intelligence section of the Dutch Government report on Srebrenica.

Despite signing the demilitarization agreement, Bosnian Muslim forces in Srebrenica were well armed and under orders to engage in provocations ("sabotage operations") against Serbian forces. Muslim Gen. Sefer Halilovic confirmed in his testimony at the Hague Tribunal that there were at least 5,500 members of the Muslim 28th Div. in Srebrenica and that he had arranged at least eight helicopter loads of sophisticated weapons. He also testified that "In those days [immediately before the capture of Srebrenica], there were a large number of orders for sabotage operations from the safe areas." This included a militarily meaningless attack on a strategically unimportant nearby Serb village of Visnica.

The final operation was an attack on Serbian VRS units on the road south of Srebrenica, just days before the Serbs captured the nearly undefended town.

Instead of defending the town with a force of 5,500 well armed soldiers, the Bosnian Army 28th Div. was ordered to evacuate Srebrenica two days before a small force of 200 Bosnian Serb forces (according to Muslim Gen. Halilovic and The Times, London) entered the nearly empty town on July 11, 1995. By provoking the Serbs to enter Srebrenica unopposed, Bosnian Pres. Alija Izetbegovic hoped to trigger NATO intervention. British military analyst Tim Ripley writes that prior to its capture, Dutch troops "saw Bosnian troops escaping from Srebrenica move past their observation points, carrying brand new anti-tank weapons. This, and other similar reports made many UN officers and international journalists suspicious."

Former UN Deputy Director of UN Monitors, Carlos Martins Branco, said: "Muslim forces did not even try to take advantage of their heavy artillery, under control of the United Nations (UN) forces at a time in which they had every reason to do so. Military resistance would jeopardize the image of 'victim,' which had been so carefully constructed, and which the Muslims considered vital to maintain."

The International Criminal Tribunal on Yugoslavia (ICTY), whose staff had been largely appointed by Madeleine Albright, then US Ambassador to the United Nations, acknowledged political considerations when it issued indictments for genocide against Bosnian Serb leaders on July 27, 1995, only three days after its chief investigator Hubert Wieland told The Daily Telegraph (London) that in five days of interviews with scores among the 20,000 refugees gathered at the Tuzla airport: "We have not found anyone who saw with their own eyes an atrocity taking place." Richard Holbrooke candidly told the BBC: "I realized that the War Crimes Tribunal was a very valuable tool. We used it to keep the two most wanted war criminals in Europe out of the Dayton process and we used it to justify everything that followed." What followed were trial proceedings in which witnesses received leniency if they agreed to provide testimony sought by The Hague prosecution to justify indictments made for political rea

"The singular focus on Srebrenica by US officials in particular, serves to divert attention from the fact that both before, and after its capture, the US provided logistical support for large Croatian military attacks on ethnic Serbian civilians living in UN Protected Zones in Western Slavonia and the Krajina regions," said Prof. Ed Herman of the University of Pennsylvania, who has analyzed media coverage of wartime events as co-editor with Phil Hammond of *Degraded Capability: the Media and the Kosovo Crisis* and as co-author with Noam Chomsky of *Manufacturing Consent*.

The report of the Srebrenica Research Group quotes former NATO Deputy Commander Gen. Charles Boyd, who said that the Croatian attack on the Serbian enclave of Western Slavonia “appears to differ from Serbian actions around the UN safe areas of Srebrenica and Zepa only in the degree of Western hand-wringing and CNN footage the latter have elicited. Ethnic cleansing evokes condemnation only when it is committed by Serbs, not against them.”

Former UN Civilian Affairs Coordinator Philip Corwin, the senior UN civilian official in Bosnia at the time of the capture of Srebrenica, read a statement at the July 12, 2005, briefing, noting the killing of non-combatants in the region “is a terrible crime and that perpetrators must be condemned” of such crimes regardless of the size of the crime and whether it is done by Serbs, Croats, or Muslims. Corwin, who authored a book, *Dubious Mandate*, about his experience in Bosnia, and wrote a foreword to the report of the Srebrenica Research Group, added: “What happened in Srebrenica was not a single large massacre of Muslims by Serbs, but rather a series of very bloody attacks and counterattacks over a three-year period. Which reached a crescendo in July 1995. Moreover it is likely that the number of Muslim dead was probably no more than the number of Serbs who had been killed in Srebrenica and its environs in the three preceding years by Naser Oric and his predatory gangs. But my point

“Because human rights are, by definition, universal, inflating the abuses by one side and minimizing such abuses by other factions in a brutal war serves neither truth nor reconciliation,” said filmmaker George Bogdanich, a member of the Srebrenica Research Group.

Over a three-year period, the Srebrenica Research Group did extensive research to prepare its report, interviewing forensic experts, UN officials, military intelligence analysts, experts in international law, and reviewed all major official reports on Srebrenica, including those by the UN, ICTY, Dutch Government, Human Rights Watch, and writings by all major participants in the Bosnian war.

In addition to University of Pennsylvania Professor Ed Herman, the group included former BBC journalist Jonathan Rooper, columnist George Szamuely, writer and filmmaker George Bogdanich, Dr Philip Hammond, Dr Milan Bulajic, Director of the Fund for Genocide Research, and researchers David Peterson and Tim Fenton.

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