

PARTICIPATION OF ALLAH'S WARRIORS IN THE WAR IN FORMER YUGOSLAVIA (1992-1995)

Danuta GIBAS-KRZAK*

The main aim of this paper is to show the participation of mercenaries in the war in former Yugoslavia who fought on the Muslim side. The author presents the thesis that they were recruited to participate in the defense of Muslim community, which they believed was threatened by Serbs. However, their goal soon became to conduct jihad. Muslim mercenaries, also known as warriors of Allah (warriors of God) or Garibi, often proved to be cruel and committed war crimes. Among them were veterans of the war in Afghanistan, the Mujahideen. After the end of hostilities, many of God's warriors remained in the Balkans, and their settlement brought a lot of negative changes to the social and political life of the region. The Garibi contributed greatly to the strengthening of influence of Islamic states and institutions in the Balkans, as well as to the development of Wahhabi sects supporting terrorism.

Keywords: Yugoslavia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Serbia, Balkans, war crimes, jihad, Muslims, Mujahideen, soldiers of fortune

Introduction

The participation of mercenaries in the civil war on the territory of Yugoslavia at the end of the 20th century is an issue that has not been fully studied,

* Prof. Danuta Gibas-Krzak, MD, PhD, University of Opole, Opole, Poland. Conducts research in scientific centers in Croatia, Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0768-1227>. Her research interests include war and conflict, geopolitics, terrorism, especially in relation to the Balkans. Author of several dozen papers and 9 books, including *Terrorism in the Balkans in the 20th and 21st century* (Toruń, 2018), *Balkan geopolitics* (Warsaw: State Scientific Publishing House, 2021).

although there is an increasing number of publications on this issue. Among them a large part is occupied by memoirs of the participants of these events and press publications. Mercenaries fought in the ranks of all sides of the conflict, and they were motivated not only by the desire for financial gain, but also to experience the adventure of a lifetime and to help their "brothers in faith." According to various data, foreign mercenaries accounted for about 5% of the soldiers fighting in this war¹. During this conflict, Muslims from Bosnia and Herzegovina received support from radical Islamic groups, and mercenaries, especially Mujahideen from Afghanistan (veterans of the Afghan war) and other Muslim countries². Fanatical jihadists also made their way to Yugoslavia, with extensive military experience, formed on various fronts around the world, who intended to continue the "holy war" in the Balkans.

Muslims in Yugoslavia

In communist Yugoslavia, the majority of native Muslims were Sunnis who represented the moderate Hanafite school of interpreting Koranic law. It is considered the most open and liberal of the Sunni schools³. On the other hand, radical Islamic trends were not popular in communist Yugoslavia⁴. Muslims played an important role in Josip Broz-Tito's politics because Yugoslavia was one of the leaders of the Non-Aligned Movement⁵, which also included Muslim countries.

However, not all Muslims in Yugoslavia were Sunnis. Exceptions included the activists of the organization "Young Muslims," which functioned between

¹ Evan F. Kohlmann, *Al-Qaida's Jihad in Europe: The Afghan-Bosnian Network* (Oxford/New York: Berg Publishers, 2004), pp. 18-19.

² Ibid.

³ This trend is popular especially in Turkey, India, Pakistan and it gathers about 35-40% of Muslims.

⁴ Ljubomir Borovčanin, *Bosanske ratne simulacije: Uzroci, karakteristike i posljedice rata u Bosni i Hercegovini 1992-1995* (Belgrade: 2001), pp. 42. 141; Nikola Muslim, *Obrana Alije Izetbegovića* (Zagreb: Hrvatsko društvo za zaštitu i promicanje ljudskih prava, 1993), pp. 19, 50-51 *et passim*.

⁵ Izet Šabotić, „Nacionalno pitanje Bošnjaka – Muslimana u projekcijama Komunističke Partije/Saveza Komunističke Jugoslavije”, in: *Identitet Bosne i Hercegovine kroz historiju: Zbornik Radova*, Husnija Kamberović, ed., Vol. 2, (Sarajevo: Institut za istoriju, 2011), p. 133; Enver Redžić, *Sto godina muslimanske politike: U tezama i kontraverzama istorijske nauke: Geneza ideje bosanske, bošnjačke nacije* (Sarajevo: Akademija nauka i umjetnosti BiH and Institut za istoriju, 2000), p. 166; P. Dodik, *Pravo na samoopredjeljenje*, Oslobođenje, October 18, 1988, Hrvatski Državni Arhiv (HDA), Vjesnikova Novinska Dokumentacija (VND), Hemeroteca, HRV 439.

1939 and 1949.⁶ In 1983, thirteen of its former members, e.g.: Alija Izetbegović, Husejn Živalj, Hasan Čengić, Omer Behmen and Džemaludin Latić were put on trial. They were accused of Pan-Islamism, anti-communism, terrorism, links to the Islamic world and the Iranian revolution, as well as calling for the construction of an ethnically pure Bosnia and Herzegovina⁷. During the trial of this group, the importance of the Islamic Declaration, written thirteen years earlier by Izetbegović, which was considered the ideological program of Muslim nationalism, was highlighted.⁸ The defendants were sentenced to long prison terms. However, in the late 1980s they were granted early release and returned to their political activities. A significant number of them became successful members of the Sarajevo establishment. In addition, many became involved with the Sudanese humanitarian organization Third World Relief Agency (TWRA), which in fact engaged in criminal activities, including illegal arms trafficking. It rooted in the Balkans during the war in the former Yugoslavia, where it carried out criminal activities, including supplying arms to Bosnia in defiance of the UN embargo.⁹

During the Cold War, some attempts were made by Arab states to distribute radical strains of Islam to the Balkans (Yugoslavia) by funding special scholarships and trips to the Middle East for young Muslims. However, the influence of fundamentalist trends in Islam did not become apparent until after the victory of Khomeini's revolution (1979). Many believers from Bosnia and Herzegovina and other Yugoslav republics studied in Arab countries, where they became familiar with the ideas of Wahhabism, which preaches a return to the original purity of religion.¹⁰ The first Wahhabis appeared in communist Yugoslavia as early as in early 1980s. After the death of Josip Broz-Tito, the Arab organizations, promoting their activities as charity, used the opportunity to smuggle the radical ideology into the Balkan Peninsula.¹¹ This was also

⁶ Vide: Sead Trhulj, *Mladi Muslimani* (Sarajevo: Oko, 1995).

⁷ Ivan Aralica, *Što sam rekao o Bosni* (Zagreb: Naklada P.I.P. Pavičić, 1995), p. 88.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Jürgen Elsässer, *Jak džihad przybył do Europy: Wojownicy Boga i tajne służby na Bałkanach* (Warsaw: Muza, 2007), p. 54 *et passim*.

¹⁰ Wahhabism is an extremely dogmatic form of Islam that originated in Saudi Arabia in the 18th century. The name comes from the theologian Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab (1703-1792). Wahhabis teach that Muslims must return to the pure Islam practiced centuries ago, before "false" teaching and influence from the West brought corruption. According to this teaching, it is the duty of a Muslim to fight Christians, Jews and other Muslims who are not pious enough. It is the duty of every Muslim, first of all, to fight for the establishment of a Muslim state with strict Islamic law, Yves Thoraval, *Słownik cywilizacji muzułmańskiej* (Katowice: "Książnica", 2002), pp. 306-307.

¹¹ Vladimira Janková, *Wahhabism in the Balkans: The case study of Bosnia and Herzegovina*.

when Saudi Arabia funded the Islamic Center in Zagreb.¹² Despite the many initiatives taken by Arab states, the fundamentalist tendencies did not find acceptance in the moderate Muslim environment in Yugoslavia. Indeed, the Cold War period encouraged a reinterpretation of the meaning of Islam in contact with the practice of everyday life. This created a symbiosis of secularism, socialism, and traditional lifestyles with its foundation in religion. This gave rise to a unique type of Balkan Islam in Yugoslavia that combined liberal views of Sharia law with a sense of national identity.

Garibi as missionaries of holy war

It is believed that between 1.500 and 3.500 Mujahideen, also known as Allah's warriors, fought in Bosnia and Herzegovina¹³. Many of them were veterans of the war in Afghanistan and belonged to terrorist organizations: Al-Qaida, the Armed Islamic Group (GIA), Hezbollah, Hamas, and Gama El-Islamiya.¹⁴ Their main goal was to lead a "holy war" and spread the idea of Pan-Islamism on the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Undoubtedly, some of them were idealists, but there were also those who collected significant salaries as mercenaries.¹⁵

Esad Hećimović distinguished two waves during which the Mujahideen arrived in the Balkans. The first occurred in the summer and fall of 1992, when primarily Arab mercenaries from Afghanistan and Pakistan arrived. The sec-

Diploma thesis (Prague: Univerzita Karlova, Fakulta sociálních věd, 2014), p. 65-66; Nora Beloff, *Tito's flawed legacy: Yugoslavia and the West: 1939-84* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1985), p. 216. Vide: Dževad Galijašević, *Era terorizma u BiH* (Beograd: "Filip Višnjić", 2007).

¹² Daniel Wilk, "Bałkański džihad", *Znak*, September 2016, <https://www.miesiecznik.znak.com.pl/balkanski-dzihad/> [access: March 3, 2020].

¹³ Statistics on the number of Allah's warriors in the Balkan area vary depending on the sources cited. According to the U.S. Working Group on Terrorism and Unconventional Warfare, there were approximately 4.000-6.000 jihadist warriors fighting on the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Dragan Džamić, *Psi rata na Balkanu. Strani plaćenici u ratnim sukobima na prostorima bivše Jugoslavije* (Beograd: Target, 2001), p. 247; Stephen Schwartz, *Dva lica islama* (Sarajevo: Tugra, 2005), p. 238; Carl K. Savich, *Al-Qaeda on Trial: The Hague and Bosnian Muslim War Crimes (Part 1)*, March 16, 2005 <http://www.balkananalysis.com/blog/2005/03/17/al-qaeda-on-trial-the-hague-and-bosnian-muslim-war-crimes-part-1/>, [access: February 17, 2021].

¹⁴ Esad Hećimović, *Garibi: Mudžahedini u BiH 1992-1999* (Belgrade, 2009), p. 35; Milovan Drecun, *Alahovi ratnici* (Belgrade, 2008), pp. 116-118 *et passim*; Ivo Lučić, "Bosnia and Herzegovina and terrorism", *National security and the future* (2001), No. 3-4: 124.

¹⁵ Ibid. Danuta Gibas-Krzak, "Terrorism and radical Islam as a threat to multi-ethnic Bosnia and Herzegovina", in: *To know the Balkans: History-politics-culture-languages*, Vol. IV, ed. K. Taczynskiej and A. Twardowskiej, (Toruń, 2012).

ond occurred after the end of the pilgrimage to Mecca in 1994. Then came well-organized, fanatical groups of volunteers prepared by radical imams who hailed from well-known Koranic schools in the Arabian Peninsula.¹⁶

The main channel for the transfer of mercenaries and financial assistance to them was in Zagreb.¹⁷ Another was opened in Italy and led through the Islamic Cultural Center in Milan. Data obtained by the Polish counterintelligence service prove that volunteers were coming from all over the world, even from Poland.¹⁸

Bin Laden was interested in conducting jihad on the territory of Yugoslavia. He instructed his collaborators to establish contacts with the Bosnian government. The leader of Al-Qaida considered that it was the duty of Mujahideen to fight in Bosnia, Chechnya, Tajikistan and in those countries that were part of the Islamic world.¹⁹ In August 1992, Abdul Rahman Al-Dosari, known primarily as Abu Abdel Aziz, alias "Red Beard",²⁰ arrived in Central Bosnia and was the first Mujahideen commander, as he confirmed in an interview published on the website²¹. Along with him, four more fighters from Afghanistan arrived in Bosnia. "Red Beard" was supported by sheikhs from Saudi Arabia, who sponsored the conduct of jihad in the former Yugoslavia²². Aziz's main headquarters was established in the city of Travnik.²³

Press reports from 1992 indicated that the first Mujahideen arrived from Libya, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Syria, Turkey, Algeria, and Sudan. According to unconfirmed data, in the first phase of recruitment there were up to approx.

¹⁶ Esad Hećimović, *Garibi*, p. 34.

¹⁷ Danuta Gibas-Krzak, *Bosnia and Herzegovina: Determinants of history: between Serbs, Croats and the supremacy of Muslims* (Częstochowa, 2016), p. 178; Ivo Lučić, "Bosnia and Herzegovina and terrorism", p. 124.

¹⁸ The main responsible for their recruitment was supposed to be the deputy prime minister of the Bosnian government, Muhamed Čengić, who was sent to Turkey with the task of obtaining: weapons, ammunition and mercenaries, Danuta Gibas-Krzak, *Bosnia and Herzegovina: Determinants of history*, pp. 177-178.

¹⁹ Esad Hećimović, *Garibi*, p. 34.

²⁰ Red-Beard fought the Russians in Afghanistan, recruited terrorists for Al-Qaida and mercenaries for the frontlines of the world to cause a global war against the infidels (global jihad), Tam Hussein, "The Bosnian Jihad: An interview with Abu Abdel Aziz Barbaros", July 31, 2018, <https://www.tamhussein.co.uk/2018/07/the-bosnian-jihad-an-interview-with-a>, [access: March 2, 2021].

²¹ Ibid.

²² Esad Hećimović, *Garibi*, s. 35.

²³ Tam Hussein, "The Bosnian Jihad: An interview with Abu Abdel Aziz Barbaros", July 31, 2018, <https://www.tamhussein.co.uk/2018/07/the-bosnian-jihad-an-interview-with-a>, [access: March 2, 2021].

7.000-8.000 volunteers.²⁴ Gathered in the village of Orašac (now the Unsko-sanski canton in Bosnia and Herzegovina), they acclimatized relatively quickly, gaining considerable sympathy from the local population.²⁵ Other bases for Islamic mercenaries were located in the villages of: Željezno Polje, Bočinja and Guča Gora. After several weeks, they moved to Travnik and the vicinity of Sarajevo.²⁶

Journalists who managed to reach their bases, the Garibi explained that they had come to the front, drawn by news of Serbian atrocities against Muslims. They were willing to suffer death to help their brothers in faith. They boasted that thanks to their participation, the civil war would end within a week. They criticized Western leaders who, in their view, had not taken sufficient steps to support the Muslims. The Mujahideen, in the first phase of war, were joined in small numbers by former Foreign Legion soldiers, as well as mercenaries from France, Germany and Hungary. Some of them came to the Bosnian front to avenge real and alleged injustices caused to them by the Serbs.²⁷

In 1992, the Mujahideen became part of an elite unit of the 104th Brigade of the HOS (Croatian Defense Force), which operated on Bosnian and Herzegovinian territory.²⁸

On August 1, 1992, the Law on Service in the Army of Bosnia and Herzegovina came into effect, allowing people who did not have Bosnian citizenship to join the army during the war. Mujahideen took advantage of this right. They served in brigades and corps of the Army of Bosnia and Herzegovina, where they generally formed the core of the assault subdivisions of the armed forces: "El Jihad," "El Mudžahedin" (numbered about 4.500 mercenaries, deployed in Zenica, Travnik and the village of Bočinja²⁹), "Muderiz" (teacher of Islam),³⁰ "Zelena legija," "Crni labudovi".³¹ In addition to participating in combat, they were involved in the training of Bosnian units and religious indoctrination.

²⁴ „Mi smo Allahovi Ratnici”, *Globus*, October 9, 1992, p. 33.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Vlado Azinović, *Al-Kaida u Bosni i Hercegovini: Mit ili stvarna opasnost?* (Sarajevo, 2007), https://docs.rferl.org/sh-SH/specials/al_kaida/10_bosna_strani_mudzahedini_i_svijet_nakon_11092001.htm, [access: 02.03.2021].

²⁷ Elias, a Hungarian professional soldier who claimed that Serbs from Vojvodina had raped his fiancée, joined the first Mujahideen camp. Thus, the motive of his struggle was personal revenge, "Mi smo Allahovi Ratnici", p. 33.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Dragan Džamić, *Psi rata na Balkanu*, p. 247.

³⁰ The "Muderiz" unit operated in the village of Konjic, Ibid., p. 215.

³¹ This Mujahideen unit operated in the village of Kakanj and was later moved to the town of Vlašić, Ibid.

The Mujahideen participated in the first phase of the civil war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which was characterized by ethnic cleansing conducted on a massive scale. Information about their baptism of fire first appeared in June 1992, when, in the town of Vitez, several Mujahideen were taken prisoner by Croats who were engaged in fierce fighting with Bosnian forces during the period described.³² Another case was reported in early October of the same year in Maglaj.³³

Among the mercenaries were mainly followers of Wahhabism, who maintained contacts with terrorist organizations in Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia and Iraq, which encouraged the radicalization of attitudes and actions of Bosnians.³⁴ The Mujahideen were followed to the Balkans by Islamic charity and humanitarian organizations.³⁵ Thus began the process of Islamization of moderate Bosnian society according to the rules of radical Islamic trends. Over time and with the strengthening of their position among policymakers and the Bosnian community, the Mujahideen changed their tactics. They tried to introduce strict moral rules that were in line with the fundamentalist interpretation of their religion. Girls were banned on pain of punishment from wearing short dresses, and older women were ordered to wear the hijab. Moreover, the Garibi did not tolerate too free behavior by young people. Thus, couples were forbidden to hold hands in public places. The Mujahideen began to force the local population to observe Muslim holidays and customs. In the occupied areas, they made it obligatory to teach Arabic in schools and to follow the Hanabalite interpretation of Islam. The sale of alcohol and pork was impeded. The Mujahideen, who had their base in the city of Tešanj, announced that all women between the ages of 17 and 40 would have to marry and bear children.³⁶ A specific strategy of the Islamic organizations was to pay a special fund in exchange for religious observance (including the wearing of headscarves by women) and to send children to Koran lessons.³⁷

³² Ibid., p. 207.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Darko Trifunović, Ioannis Michaletos, "Nexus between terrorism and organized criminal group from Balkan as threats to EU Security", in: *Asymetryczne Bałkany: działania asymetryczne, militarne i polityka bezpieczeństwa na Półwyspie Bałkańskim w XX i XXI wieku: materiały i studia*, ed. Danuta Gibas-Krzak (Częstochowa: Wydawnictwo im. Stanisława Podobińskiego Akademii im. Jana Długosza, 2015), p. 277-279; Vladimira Janková, *Wahhabism in the Balkans*, p. 19.

³⁵ Christopher Deliso, *The Coming Balkan Caliphate: The Threat of Radical Islam to Europe and the West*, (Westport, Connecticut-London: Praeger Security International, 2007), p. 8.

³⁶ Dragan Džamić, *Psi rata na Balkanu*, p. 215.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 208; "Bałkański džihad", *Znak*, September 2016, <https://www.miesiecznik.znak.com.pl/balkanski-dzihad/> [access: March 3, 2020].

The most fanatical warriors of Allah served in the 7th Muslim Brigade of the 3rd Corps, which was commanded by General Sakib Mahmuljin. He was introduced to the Mujahideen as an envoy of President Izetbegovic.³⁸ The Muslim Brigade was formed on November 19, 1992. It consisted of three battalions: the first was located in Travnik, the second in Zenica, and the third in the city of Kakanj. It was used as an "infantry maneuver unit" in the Bosnian Muslim Army.³⁹ Within this brigade a unit called "El Mujahedin" was formed, the mobilization point of which became the village of Mehurić located near Travnik.⁴⁰ The brigade was an all-Muslim unit,⁴¹ and the recruits took an oath according to the rules outlined in a pamphlet entitled "Instructions for the Muslim Warrior," which was published in 1993 in 20.000 copies.⁴²

War crimes as a result of conducting jihad

In the course of military operations, Bosnian army officers assessed that allowing the Mujahideen into Bosnia and Herzegovina was a mistake because the Garibi were committing most of the atrocities and acting against the interests of Bosnian Muslims.⁴³ Of course, it would be difficult to conclude that all warriors of Allah acted in this way. Nevertheless, the worst reputation among them was gained by members of the "El Mudžahedin" ("El Mujahed"). Press reports claimed that the commander of this unit sent 28 severed Christian heads to President Izetbegovic as a gift, and sent another 28 to Iran. However, there is no clear evidence to confirm this thesis.⁴⁴

³⁸ Esad Hećimović, *Garibi*, p. 43.

³⁹ Carl K. Savich, *Al-Qaeda on Trial: The Hague and Bosnian Muslim War Crimes (Part 1)*, March 16, 2005 <http://www.balkananalysis.com/blog/2005/03/17/al-qaeda-on-trial-the-hague-and-bosnian-muslim-war-crimes-part-1/>, [access: February 17, 2021].

⁴⁰ Esad Hećimović, *Garibi*, p. 43-44.

⁴¹ Evan F. Kohlmann, *Al-Qaida's Jihad in Europe*, p. 85. General Rasim Delić, Commander of the Armed Forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina, ordered the 3rd Corps command to form a unit called "El Mujahedin" in which only Garibi fought, Esad Hećimović, *Garibi*, p. 41, p. 43.

⁴² The International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia case no: it-01-47, The Prosecutor of The Tribunal against Enver Hadzihasanovic, Mehmed Alagic and Amir Kubura, https://www.icty.org/x/cases/hadzihasanovic_kubura/ind/en/had-ii010713e.pdf, [access: 17.02. 2021].

⁴³ "Sunday Times," 27.06. 1993 r. "The Bosnian Jihad: An interview with Abu Abdel Aziz Barbaros", July 31, 2018, <https://www.tamhussein.co.uk/2018/07/the-bosnian-jihad-an-interview-with-a/>, [access: March 2, 2021]; Carl K. Savich, *Al-Qaeda on Trial: The Hague and Bosnian Muslim War Crimes (Part 1)*, March 16, 2005 <http://www.balkananalysis.com/blog/2005/03/17/al-qaeda-on-trial-the-hague-and-bosnian-muslim-war-crimes-part-1/>, [access: February 17, 2021].

⁴⁴ Andrzej Krzak, "Niebezpieczeństwo terroryzmu dla państw narodowych na Bałkanach", in: *Problemy bezpieczeństwa wewnętrznego i bezpieczeństwa międzynarodowego*, ed. Krzysztof M. Księżopolski (Warsaw: Wyższa Szkoła Administracyjno-Społeczna, 2009), p. 436.

However, the fact of cutting off heads of killed Serbs was included in the documents of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia. The indictment against the Chief of the General Staff of the Army of Bosnia and Herzegovina, General Rasim Delić, reads:

“On July 21, 1995, the ‘El Mujahed’ unit of the 3rd Army Corps of Bosnia and Herzegovina launched an attack on Krčevine in the municipality of Zavidovići. Soldiers from the Bosnian Serb Army (VRS⁴⁵ were captured and taken to the village of Livade. Two captured VRS soldiers were killed and beheaded by Bosnia and Herzegovina Army soldiers. In Livade, the prisoners were beaten daily and on July 23, 1995, they were taken to the Kamenica camp in the Gostović valley. Within the camp there was a building that was used as a detention center for captured VRS soldiers. This detention center was operated by soldiers from the ‘El Mujahed’ unit. On July 24, 1995, one VRS prisoner was beheaded in the Kamenica camp, and the other prisoners were forced to kiss the severed head, after which the head was placed on a hook on the wall in a room where prisoners were held. The VRS prisoners held in Kamenica camp were tortured and beaten (...). General Delić was warned that soldiers from the ‘El Mujahed’ unit were prone to commit crimes, especially crimes against captured enemy combatants and civilians, and that this unit managed Kamenica camp. Nevertheless, it failed to take necessary and reasonable measures to prevent or punish these crimes.”⁴⁶

The Commanders of the 3rd Corps, Enver Hadžihasanović, Mehmed Alagić and Amir Kubura, also had to stand trial before the same court.⁴⁷ They were accused of violating the laws and customs of war, cruel treatment of prisoners of war, wanton destruction of towns, settlements and villages, unjustified military necessity, looting of public or private property, deliberate destruction of religious sites, intentional causing great suffering or serious injury to body or health, inhumane treatment, illegal detention of civilians and extensive use of non-military coercive measures against Serbs, Croats and other ethnic groups. Alagić died in 2003, Hadžihasanović was sentenced to five years in prison (he was released on appeal in 2007),⁴⁸ while Amir Kubura

⁴⁵ Vojska Republike Srpske (VRS).

⁴⁶ The Tribunal held General Delić responsible for failing to prevent the cruel treatment of twelve Serbian prisoners of war in Livade and Zavidovići. On September 15, 2008, General Delić was sentenced to three years in prison, International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, (IT-04-83), https://www.icty.org/x/cases/delic/cis/en/cis_delic_en.pdf, [access: March 7, 2021].

⁴⁷ Stephen Schwartz, *Dva lica islama*, p. 238.

⁴⁸ The International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia case no: it-01-47..., https://www.icty.org/x/cases/hadzihasanovic_kubura/ind/en/had-ii010713e.pdf, [access: 07.03.2021].

was sentenced to two years in prison, as he was only proven to have looted and destroyed property.⁴⁹

The Court's prosecution further proved that more than 50 Serbian prisoners of war who were captured during the Battle of Vozuća were killed by the Mujahideen in the Kamenica camp. The Garibi also executed 24 Croatian prisoners of war and 19-year-old Croatian woman, Ana Pranješ.⁵⁰ Many analysts hold Bosnian politicians responsible for the crimes committed by the Mujahideen also in the isolation camp at Čelebići, 60 km from Sarajevo, where about a thousand Serb prisoners were taken.⁵¹

The press wrote that the Mujahideen were particularly cruel and committed crimes against civilians in the areas of: Kakanj, Travnik and Zenica. The villages that suffered the most were also mentioned: Dusina, Maline, Miletići and Bikoši.⁵² Numerous attacks occurred there between January 1993 and January 1994. In addition to civilians, HVO soldiers were also killed. It is estimated that at least 200 civilians were killed. The attacks culminated on June 7 and 13, 1993.⁵³

In the detention centers in Bugojno, 3rd Corps soldiers abused prisoners. Detainees were forced to hit their heads against metal bars. The physical attacks resulted in prisoners losing consciousness and having their legs broken. In several cases, detainees had their teeth smashed. Detainees were also forced to donate blood. The Military Police of the 3rd Army Corps of Bosnia and Herzegovina OG "Zapad" regularly intimidated and psychologically abused the detainees. In addition, the detainees were held in conditions that were an affront to human dignity. They stayed in overcrowded cells, where they were not provided with proper hygiene. The nutritional conditions were very poor.⁵⁴

⁴⁹ The Prosecutor v. Enver Hadžihasanović and Amir Kubura (IT-01-47) https://www.icty.org/x/cases/hadzihasanovic_kubura/cis/en/cis_hadzihasanovic_kubura_en.pdf, [access: 07.03.2021].

⁵⁰ Judgement Summary for Rasim Delić, The Hague, August 15, 2008, https://www.icty.org/x/cases/delic/tjug/en/080915_Delic_summary_en.pdf, [access: 07.03.2021].

⁵¹ *Raporty Tadeusza Mazowieckiego z byłej Jugosławii*, ed. Renata S. Hliwa and Roman Wieruszewski (Poznań–Warsaw: Fundacja „Promocja Praw Człowieka – Badania i Nauczanie” and “Scholar”, 1993), p. 215.

⁵² In a report of 1993, the UN Special Observer Tadeusz Mazowiecki stated that the Mujahideen in the vicinity of Miletići village (north of the town of Vitez) tortured and murdered Croatian civilians, *Ibid.*, p. 215.

⁵³ „Mudžahedini su bili osobito okrutni”, *Večernji list*, August 2001, p. 13.

⁵⁴ The International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia case no: it-01-47..., https://www.icty.org/x/cases/hadzihasanovic_kubura/ind/en/had-ii010713e.pdf, [access: 07.03.2021].

A significant number of further incidents were reported which were related to inhuman practices of mental and physical abuse by the Mujahideen of the 3rd Corps. In the city of Zenica, in a music school, 3rd Corps soldiers and Mujahideen abused prisoners by beating them with rifle butts, wooden sticks, handles and knuckles, causing various injuries. They also forced the prisoners to dig “their own graves”.⁵⁵

Significant support was provided to the Mujahideen by Islamic states, which supplied weapons and equipment for them and for the army of Bosnia and Herzegovina, in violation of the UN embargo⁵⁶. The authorities of Iran and Saudi Arabia in particular played an important role in providing war aid. Between 1992 and 1995, Iran provided substantial financial and logistical assistance to the Bosnian government and 2.000 Revolutionary Guards were deployed to Bosnia and Herzegovina and became part of the Bosnia and Herzegovina Army units.⁵⁷ They formed an independent unit that had the task of training recruits as well as conducting special operations. According to CIA intelligence, between 1994 and 1996, the Iranian government transferred 14.000 tons of weapons to Bosnia and Herzegovina worth about \$200 million. The U.S. service also had data that at least one cabinet member of the Bosnian government was an agent of Iranian intelligence⁵⁸. According to a report by the U.S. Congress in January 1997, it was emphasized that Iranian Revolutionary Guards were rapidly integrating into all Bosnian military spheres. Iranian intelligence VEVAK (Vezerat-e Ettela’at va Amniat-e Keshvar) organized numerous agency networks on Bosnian territory, and Iranian advisors controlled parts of the Bosnian security apparatus.⁵⁹

⁵⁵ Judgement Summary for Rasim Delić, [access: 07.03.2021].

⁵⁶ Between 1992 and 1995, the TWRA organization already cited in this paper delivered \$2.5 billion worth of weapons and military equipment to Bosnia and Herzegovina. In 1993, the Commission for Assistance in Bosnia and Herzegovina was established under the chairmanship of the current King of Saudi Arabia. Similar Saudi organizations were also established in Albania and Kosovo. The commission was involved in close ties with Al-Qaida in funding and recruiting jihadists. In 2001, NATO forces searched the Commission’s office in Sarajevo and confiscated numerous documents proving the close ties between the Commission and Al-Qaida. Materials found indicated that twenty Saudi billionaires were funding terrorist activities around the world. Wahhabi influence and financial involvement in the Balkans continues to this day and is a key factor in the increasing radicalization of parts of Muslim society, Alex Alexiev, “Saudi Funding of Radical Islam,” *Bulgaria Analytica*, July 29, 2016, <http://bulgariaanalytica.org>, [access: 20. 01. 2021], p. 8 et passim.

⁵⁷ “Washington zabrinut jačanjem veza Sarajeva s Teheranom”, *Novosti*, March 5, 1996. HDA, VND, Hemeroteka, HRV 337.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

After the military action ended, NATO soldiers managed to discover training camps near Sarajevo that were run by Iranian instructors. There they taught not only military crafts but also the Persian language and indoctrinated future fighters in the rules of radical Islam⁶⁰. Training was also conducted at centers in Iran. Hundreds of young Bosnian Muslims were sent to these schools, and upon their return they were recruited into sub-units operating around Tuzla and in the Bužim area.⁶¹

President Izetbegović publicly paid tribute to the Mujahideen, thanking them for their bravery, although at the same time U.S. soldiers were forcibly forcing them to leave Bosnian territory. Izetbegović probably had something to thank them for. There are hypotheses that Islamic volunteers, together with criminals from Sarajevo,⁶² constituted the main support of the politician's rule. The Armed Forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Bosnian politicians benefited from the help of radical Muslim groups, Mujahideen and ordinary gangsters.⁶³

After the Dayton Accords were signed, President Izetbegović guaranteed the complete removal of Mujahideen from the country, but he did not fulfill these commitments, giving them a kind of "protective shield". They found employment, primarily in the police and army, and by marrying Bosnian women they became citizens of that country. According to Kohlmann, many of them left Bosnia and Herzegovina after the fighting ended, including many British citizens, but there were also a number of fanatics who wanted to continue the jihad.⁶⁴ These included members of the "El Mudžahid" unit, who captured the village of Bočinja near Maglaj, where they organized a Wahhabi sect, described as the "heart of Islamism".⁶⁵ Of course, it would be untrue to claim

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ R. Báchora, "Bosnia and Herzegovina a failed state?: The issue of Muslim extremism", in: *European protectorate?: Bosnia and Herzegovina in Central European perspective*, ed. Mateusz Gniazdowski (Warsaw, 2008), p. 81.

⁶² Sarajevo criminals: Jusuf Juka Prazina, Mušan Topalović Caco (commander of the 10th Brigade) participated in the fighting in Sarajevo from the first days of the civil war. It was not until late 1993 that the Bosnian government dealt with commanders who came from organized crime circles, Rasim Deliđ, *Armija Republike Bosne i Hercegovine – nastanak, razvoj i odbrana zemlje*, knjiga prva (Sarajevo: Vijeće Kongresa Bošnjakih Intelektualaca, 2007), pp. 298-301, 304.

⁶³ Charles R. Shrader, *The Muslim-Croat Civil War in Central Bosnia: A Military History, 1992–1994* (College Station: Texas A&M, University Press, 2003), p. 162; Andrzej Krzak, "Niebezpieczeństwo terroryzmu dla państw narodowych na Bałkanach", p. 438.

⁶⁴ Evan F. Kohlmann, *Al-Qaida's Jihad in Europe*, p. 165.

⁶⁵ Ali Hamad, *U mreži zla: međunarodni terorizam i Al Kaida* (Banja Luka: Glas Srpske 2007), p. 259.

that the authorities have remained indifferent to the threats posed by radical Islam. Bosnian special services have undertaken a number of operations aimed at eliminating Wahhabi sects. One of the largest operations was carried out from February 1 to 2, 2010, in the village of Gornja Maoča, between Tuzla and Brčko, where an Islamic extraterritorial community based on Sharia law was operating.⁶⁶ Members of the sect were proven to be terrorists and involved in preparing attacks on targets located in Western Europe and the Balkans.⁶⁷

Conclusions

During the war in former Yugoslavia, Muslims received significant financial assistance from Arab states and Islamic organizations, and possibly terrorist organizations, which had a significant impact on the development of Islamic fundamentalism in the Peninsula. The Wahhabi sects that were formed after the war had a destructive effect on the lives of non-Orthodox Muslims and communities of other ethnic groups. It is believed that the number of Wahhabis in Bosnia and Herzegovina may be around 3000, and the number of their sympathizers may reach around 50.000, although there is no complete data on this issue⁶⁸. Despite the small number of followers, their movement continues to expand, as they are well organized, persistent and aggressive. Existing and forming new Wahhabi groups in post-Yugoslavian countries become a base for terrorist cells, including those that train volunteers prepared for terrorist actions in Western Europe. Many analysts point out that the Balkans may be used as a training base for terrorist organizations associated with radical Islam. The civil war created the right conditions for the growth of Islam and its penetration into Western Europe, while fundamentalists were able to build their operational and logistical infrastructure in the Balkans. The documents of one of the German Interpol units and the counterterrorism unit of the Austrian Ministry of the Interior can be presented as evidence. Investigations into this case were carried out between 1995 and 1996 but were

⁶⁶ Dženana Halimović, „Vehabije u BiH: Od Bočinje do Maoče”, Radio Slobodna Evropa (Radio Free Europe) Bosna i Hercegovina/ Srbija/ Crna Gora, February 6, 2010, https://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/maoca_vehabije_selefije_akcija_svjetlost/1950070.html [access: March 3, 2020].

⁶⁷ The Wahhabis living in the village were linked to terrorist networks that prepared attacks on targets in Western Europe and intended to carry out a bomb attack during the funeral of Pope John Paul II, Ibid.

⁶⁸ Krzysztof Izak, “Radykalny islam na Bałkanach źródłem konfliktów społecznych i terrorystycznego zagrożenia dla Europy”, *Przegląd Bezpieczeństwa Wewnętrzznego (Internal Security Review)* 5 (2013), No. 2: 53.

interrupted and the documents were classified at the request of a senior German intelligence official of the BND.⁶⁹ According to Interpol, Izetbegović was supposed to establish a logistical network of terrorist infrastructure in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which operated mainly in Europe. It consisted of 34 people who were involved in supplying weapons and relocating terrorists.⁷⁰

It should not be forgotten that the terrorists who strike the World Trade Center received their training in the Balkans, especially in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It was only after September 11, 2001, that the American and Western European media began to reveal the links of Islamic terrorist organizations to the Balkans.⁷¹ The plane that hit the Pentagon in September 2001 was piloted by hijackers, Nawaf Al-Hazmi and Khalid Al-Mihdar, veterans of the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Two of the organizers of the March 11, 2003 Madrid subway attack, Saud Al-Otaibi and Abdel Karim al Meyati, also fought on the side of the Bosnia and Herzegovina Army in the Zenica, Sarajevo and Tuzla areas. A Balkan footprint is also present in the London Underground attack of July 7 and 21, 2005.⁷²

In 2012, the July attack at Burgas airport was carried out through the Global Jihad network, which has cells in the Balkans.

Another high-profile act of terror, the January 2015 attack on the editorial board of Charlie Hebdo, includes another Balkan footprint, as the weapons and ammunition used by the terrorists came from Bosnia and Herzegovina. The bullets had the symbols "IK 86" engraved on them. The number indicates the year of production, and IK refers to Igman Konjic, a factory in Bosnia and Herzegovina that has been producing ammunition since the 1950s, and today is the fifth largest supplier of ammunition in the world⁷³.

Automatic weapons and ammunition from Bulgarian and Yugoslav arsenals (AK-47 and M-70 rifles) were used during the November 13, 2015 terrorist attacks in Paris that killed 130 people. It was in widespread use during the civil war in Yugoslavia and in Kosovo in the 1990s.⁷⁴

⁶⁹ Jürgen Elsässer, *Jak džihad przybył do Europy*, p. 229-247 et passim.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Andrzej Krzak, "Niebezpieczeństwo terroryzmu dla państw narodowych na Bałkanach", p. 438.

⁷² Daniel Wilk, "Bałkański džihad", *Znak*, September 2016, <https://www miesiecznik.znak.com.pl/balkanski-dzihad/> [access: March 3, 2020].

⁷³ "Kto pomagał zamachowcom z Paryża?" ("Who helped the Paris bombers"), January 23, 2015, *Wyborcza.pl*, <https://www.pozzukiwanimagazyn.pl/t/redakcje>, [access: 8.03.2020].

⁷⁴ Daniel Wilk, "Bałkański džihad", *Znak*, September 2016, <https://www miesiecznik.znak.com.pl/balkanski-dzihad/> [access: March 3, 2020].

However, it is still often ignored that Muslims from the Balkans are involved in the organization of terrorist attacks in Western European countries, although it is no longer a secret to anyone that volunteers from Arab countries and Mujahideen from Afghanistan took part in the fights in the former Yugoslavia.⁷⁵ Many of them still live in the Balkans. It can be assumed that among them are terrorists active in Islamic organizations, including Al-Qaida and others that fight for the Islamic State (ISIS). The Balkan region has been used by terrorist groups to organize a well-functioning training and acclimatization center, and Middle Eastern Islamic leaders for a long time have regarded Bosnia and Herzegovina as a tool for Islamic expansion in Europe.

Bibliography

Archival sources:

Hrvatski Državni Arhiv – HDA [Croatian State Archives], Vjesnikova Novinska Dokumentacija (VND)

The International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia

Literature:

Alexiev, Alex. “Saudi Funding of Radical Islam”, *Bulgaria Analytica*, July 29, 2016, <https://bulgariaanalytica.org/en/2016/07/29/saudi-funding-of-radical-islam/> [access: March 3, 2020]

Aralica, Ivan. *Što sam rekao o Bosni*. Zagreb: Naklada P.I.P Pavičić, 1995.

Báchora, Rastislav, „Bośnia i Hercegowina państwem upadłym? Kwestia ekstremizmu muzułmańskiego”, in: *Europejski protektorat? Bośnia i Hercegowina w perspektywie*, ed. Mateusz Gniazdowski. Warsaw, 2008.

Beloff, Nora. *Tito's flawed legacy: Yugoslavia and the West: 1939-84*. London: Victor Gollancz, 1985.

Borovčanin, Ljubomir. *Bosanske ratne simulacije. Uzroci, karakteristike i posljedice rata u Bosni i Hercegovini 1992-1995*. Beograd: Knjiga komerc, 2001.

Delić, Rasim. *Armija Republike Bosne i Hercegovine – nastanak, razvoj i odbrana zemlje*, knjiga prva. Sarajevo: Vijeće Kongresa Bošnjčkih Intelektualaca, 2007.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

Deliso, Christopher. *The Coming Balkan Caliphate: The Threat of Radical Islam to Europe and the West*. Westport, Connecticut-London: Praeger Security International, 2007.

Dodik, P. *Pravo na samoopredjeljenje*, Oslobođenje, October 18, 1988.

Drecun, Milovan. *Alahovi ratnici*, Beograd 2008.

Džamić Dragan. *Psi rata na Balkanu: Strani plaćenici u ratnim sukobima na prostorima bivše Jugoslavije*. Beograd 2001.

Elsässer, Jürgen. *Jak džihad przybył do Europy: Wojownicy Boga i tajne służby na Bałkanach*. Warsaw: Muza, 2007 [originally published in German under the title *Wie der Dschihad nach Europa kam: Gotteskrieger und Geheimdienste auf dem Balkan*. St. Pölten – Vienna – Linz: Niederoesterr. Pressehaus, 2005]

Galijašević, Dževad. *Era terorizma u BiH*. Beograd: "Filip Višnjić", 2007.

Gibas-Krzak, Danuta, "Terrorism and radical Islam as a threat to multi-ethnic Bosnia and Herzegovina", in: *Poznać Bałkany: Historia-Polityka-Kultura-Języki*, Vol. IV, ed. Katarzyna Taczyńska and Aleksandra Twardowska. Toruń: Instytut Filologii Słowiańskiej Uniwersytetu Mikołaja Kopernika, 2012.

Gibas-Krzak, Danuta. *Bośnia i Hercegowina: determinanty dziejów. Pomiędzy Serbami, Chorwatami a supremacją Muzułmanów*. Częstochowa: Wydawnictwo im. Stanisława Podobińskiego Akademii im. Jana Długosza w Częstochowie, 2016.

Halimović, Dženana. "Vehabije u BiH: Od Bočinje do Maoče", Radio Slobodna Evropa (Radio Free Europe) Bosna i Hercegovina/ Srbija/ Crna Gora, February 6, 2010, https://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/maoca_vehabije_selefije_akcija_svetlost/1950070.html [access: March 3, 2020]

Hamad, Ali. *U mreži zla: međunarodni terorizam i Al Kaida*. Banja Luka: Glas Srpske and Una Press, 2007,.

Hećimović, Esad. *Garibi: Mudžahedini u BiH 1992-1999*. Belgrade: Dan graf, 2009.

Tam Hussein, "The Bosnian Jihad: An interview with Abu Abdel Aziz Barbaros", July 31, 2018, <https://www.tamhussein.co.uk/2018/07/the-bosnian-jihad-an-interview-with-a> [access: March 2, 2021]

Izak, Krzysztof. "Radykalny islam na Bałkanach źródłem konfliktów społecznych i terrorystycznego zagrożenia dla Europy", *Przegląd Bezpieczeństwa Wewnętrzznego* (Internal Security Review) 5 (2013), No. 2: 52-74.

Janková, Vladimira. *Wahhabism in the Balkans: The case study of Bosnia and Herzegovina*. Doctoral dissertation. Prague: Univerzita Karlova, Fakulta sociálních věd, 2014.

Kohlmann, Evan F. *Al-Qaida's Jihad in Europe: The Afghan-Bosnian Network*. Oxford/New York: Berg Publishers, 2004.

Krzak, Andrzej. "Niebezpieczeństwo terroryzmu dla państw narodowych na Bałkanach", in: *Problemy bezpieczeństwa wewnętrznego i bezpieczeństwa międzynarodowego*, ed. Krzysztof M. Książkowski (Warsaw: Wyższa Szkoła Administracyjno-Społeczna, 2009), pp. 431-438.

"Kto pomagał zamachowcom z Paryża?" ("Who helped the Paris bombers"), January 23, 2015, *Wyborcza.pl*, <https://www.pozzukiwanimagazyn.pl/t/redakcje>, [access: March 8, 2020].

Lučić, Ivo. "Bosnia and Herzegovina and terrorism", *National security and the future* (2001), No. 3-4: 111-142

„Mi smo Allahovi Ratnici”, *Globus*, October 9, 1992, p. 33

"Mudžahedini su bili osobito okrutni", *Večernji list*, August 2001.

Muslim, Nikola. *Obrana Alije Izetbegovića* (Zagreb: Hrvatsko društvo za zaštitu i promicanje ljudskih prava, 1993)

Savich, Carl K. *Al-Qaeda on Trial: The Hague and Bosnian Muslim War Crimes (Part 1)*, March 16, 2005 <http://www.balkananalysis.com/blog/2005/03/17/al-qaeda-on-trial-the-hague-and-bosnian-muslim-war-crimes-part-1/>, [access: February 17, 2021]

Izet Šabotić, „Nacionalno pitanje Bošnjaka – Muslimana u projekcijama Komunističke Partije/Saveza Komunističke Jugoslavije”, in: *Identitet Bosne i Hercegovine kroz historiju: Zbornik Radova*, Husnija Kamberović, ed., Vol. 2, (Sarajevo: Institut za istoriju, 2011), pp. 127-154.

Charles R. Shrader. *The Muslim-Croat Civil War in Central Bosnia: A Military History, 1992–1994* (College Station: Texas A&M, University Press 2003).

Schwartz, Stephen. *Dva lica islama*. (Sarajevo: Tugra, 2005).

Raporty Tadeusza Mazowieckiego z byłej Jugosławii. ed. Renata S. Hliwa and Roman Wieruszewski. Poznań–Warsaw: Fundacja „Promocja Praw Człowieka – Badania i Nauczanie” ; Warszawa and “Scholar”, 1993.

Redžić, Enver. *Sto godina muslimanske politike: U tezama i kontraverzama istorijske nauke: Geneza ideje bosanske, bošnjačke nacije* (Sarajevo: Akademija nauka i umjetnosti

BiH and Institut za istoriju, 2000)

Thoraval, Yves. *Słownik cywilizacji muzułmańskiej*. Katowice: “Książnica”, 2002.

Trifunović, Darko, Michaletos, Ioannis. „Nexus between terrorism and organized criminal group from Balkan as threats to EU Security”. in:

Asymetryczne Bałkany: działania asymetryczne, militarne i polityka bezpieczeństwa na Półwyspie Bałkańskim w XX i XXI wieku: materiały i studia, ed. Danuta Gibas-Krzak (Częstochowa: Wydawnictwo im. Stanisława Podobińskiego Akademii im. Jana Długosza, 2015, pp. 275-294.

„Washington zabrinut jačanjem veza Sarajeva s Teheranom”, *Novosti*, March 5, 1996. HDA, VND, Hemeroteka, HRV 337

Wilk, Daniel. “Bałkański džihad”, *Znak*, September 2016, <https://www.miesiecznik.znak.com.pl/balkanski-dzihad/> [access: March 3, 2020].