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Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina
MINISTRY OF THE INTERIOR
STATE SECURITY SERVICE
TUZLA SDB¹ SECTOR

No. [handwritten: 14-1514]

Date: 18 August 1995

R E C O R D

CITIZEN: ILIJAZ PILAV, son of Edhem, born on 13 December 1964 in Gladovići in Srebrenica municipality, not married, doctor of medicine by occupation, surgical resident, currently residing at the Tehnograd hotel in Slavinovići, gave authorised officials the following:

S T A T E M E N T

From the beginning of war operations I was the Chief of TO Staff for resisting the aggressor in the area of Kragljivode in Srebrenica municipality. Sometime at the end of July 1992, I moved to the hospital in Srebrenica and there I remained until the end, i.e. until I left the city, and was working there as the Chief of the surgical unit, but I was also performing the duties of the Chief of Medical Service within the 282nd Brigade.

As for the military and political situation in Srebrenica during the previous period, it could be described as a power struggle between two groups. One group was made of Ibran Mustafić, who was the President of the IO² before the war, Hamed Efendić, who was the president of the SDA³ before the war, Hamed Salihović, who was a secretary of SDA before the war and was also the Chief of SJB⁴ in Srebrenica, and their followers, while on the other side was Naser Orić, the commandant of the division, and his followers, i.e. the new administration. In the winter of 1992, Naser appointed Hamed Salihović the President of the Sub-Region, and during that same period he was the Officer for Security in the Staff, only to replace him at the beginning of 1993 right before the demilitarisation of Srebrenica, and appoint Fahrudin Salihović, known as Adem, to his post. After that, Hamed was appointed the commandant of an armoured platoon and he retained that post until weapons were placed under the control of the international forces, and after that, considering that he was not engaged anywhere, he attempted to revive the work of the SDA, but the War Presidency led by Hajrudin Avdić issued a decision banning the work of the party.

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¹ Translator's note: State Security Service

² t/n: Executive Committee

³ t/n: Party of Democratic Action

⁴ t/n: Public Security Station

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In April 1994 when another decision was issued to start the work of the SDA party, the entire pre-war administration was replaced, after which a number of the party's IO members left the work [of the party] on their own initiative. Then and in that period, Commandant Naser joined the IO and the acting President of the SDA IO was Zulfo Salihović, so with Naser joining [the IO], the division became even stronger and more clear, and with it began the creating of groups within the RBiH⁵ Army ranks. We explained the replacement to the pre-war administration by mentioning weapon smuggling and putting responsibility for the entire situation in Srebrenica from the beginning of war operations on them. Even though, from where I see it, we cannot generalise things like that, because, if we look at it from another perspective, Hamed Salihović, as the Chief of SJB, had gotten all police members and weapons out before the Chetniks⁶ took the station. And when talking about those groups within the RBiH ranks, that means that, like in the political life, there too were some sort of two options - I already mentioned one, and that is the one with the newly-appointed administration on which side stood Naser and his followers, and on the other side were Huso, whose last name I believe is Salihović, the Commandant of the 283rd Brigade, who was constantly protecting the pre-war administration, members of which were not engaged anywhere particular after their replacements. At the beginning of spring in 1995, some new circulations and events happened. I, personally, was offered to take the post of the President of SDA in Srebrenica, which I declined, or better said, I accepted it but under the condition that a party meeting is held in order to submit a report and analyse the previous work and activity of the party. However, when I stated that condition, I never heard from them again. Sometime around 28 April, I left for Žepa and remained there until mid-May to try to set up the war hospital together with Dr. Benjamin Kulovac. And while I was there - I think on 7 May 1995 - one of our helicopters crashed, and we, the medical staff, were expecting that helicopter the most. We did not know what was inside it, but we assumed that it was those who had left previously and were then going back, because a number of officers had left for Zenica earlier, and after that so did Naser and his men. On one occasion before that, Naser went to the heliport in Žepa, intending to travel to Tuzla, but at that time an incident happened in Srebrenica so he had to go back. Ejub Golić, the Commandant of an Independent Mountain Battalion, while intoxicated, forcibly entered a prison and liberated

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⁵ t/n: Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina

⁶ t/n: derogatory term for Serbs - members of Yugoslav royalist and Serbian nationalist movement in World War II in Yugoslavia

one of "his men". When Naser returned to Srebrenica he managed to persuade Golić to return that person to prison, only for us to hear the news later that Golić was going to Tuzla with Naser as well. At the time there was talk in Srebrenica concerning the reasons for their departure, even though I personally believe - and I also heard it - that Naser left on call, but I cannot guarantee it, and that Golić allegedly had to go and report to the Corps, but I personally doubt that.

It is interesting that during his absence there was some sort of calm in Srebrenica, some kind of odd peace - there was no shooting at night, no one was causing problems, and that can only be explained by one thing. All those that were playing the local sheriffs and those inclined to causing trouble were left unprotected, so they were afraid of sanctions. In March 1995, the pre-war administration, while still fighting for power, tried to organise a central committee of the SDA with their followers in Domavija on Guber, but they could not do that because a tear-gas grenade was thrown and the people dispersed. And sometime during that same period, the Commandant of the 283rd [Brigade], Huso, openly confronted Naser by stating some facts at a staff meeting. He accused Naser and his close collaborators of smuggling humanitarian goods, and it's a fact that only Huso and Ibro Dudić, of all the commandants, did not have their own dealers of goods, and all the others had them and did that. Huso then tried to send a letter to President Izetbegović, but that letter was intercepted and was publically read out loud at the Municipal Assembly after which they started a campaign for his replacement, which was soon after that done, thus he was not deployed or engaged anywhere.

As for the UNPROFOR, before this last offensive was started, we had, one could say, a good relationship - I, for example, while working with their doctors and their medical staff, learned my trade, so after that I did a lot of surgical procedures on my own. However, it is strange that when the last Chetnik offensive started, the UNPROFOR cut off all cooperation with us, even medical cooperation. A particularly interesting person was their communications officer in Srebrenica, Buring⁷, who, since the helicopter crash, came to the hospital and asked about the crash, who was inside [the helicopter], who survived, who was injured, what was inside the helicopter, and so on. Given that he could not get any information, at one extended meeting

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of all international organisations present in the Srebrenica area, he stated that there was a storage of the RBiH Army's weapons in the hospital. He was a man who apparently worked for the Chetniks - many people used to see him go on a horse to the Žuti most⁸ [sic] where the Chetniks had a post,

⁷ t/n: spelling of the name or surname may be wrong

⁸ t/n: Žuti Most - Yellow Bridge

and while Srebrenica was under complete blockade, he went in a car to Bratunac to get beer.

From the very beginning of the Chetniks' action, Buring constantly had contact with the Army and was very often present at meetings of municipal leadership and the command of the division held at the post office in Srebrenica where decisions were made on what would be done next. During the night of 9 July, Buring came to the post office and brought a map with him on which he showed us the Chetniks' locations at the time, and as early as then, the Dutch had already withdrawn from all checkpoints around the town. Buring asked us to refrain ourselves, to not do anything, because they were allegedly expecting a NATO airstrike any moment then. On 10 July, we carried out one counter-attack and we pushed the Chetniks back to their initial positions by 10 o'clock that morning, with losses of 10 killed and a larger number of wounded Army members. During the afternoon, the UN forces withdrew to the very town centre, which was followed by another strong Chetnik attack after which they had gotten to the town itself. That same night we had another meeting at the post office and we made the decision to go for an all-or-nothing counter-attack in the morning. When the meeting ended, at about 2400 hours, Buring entered through the door and he was again carrying a map. His reactions were such as if he knew what we had been talking about and what we agreed on. He asked us not to do anything because NATO would carry out an attack on Chetniks by next morning at the latest. And all that time during the offensive until the moment we left town, he constantly had contact with President Izetbegović, who also directed us to maintain good relationships with the UNPROFOR, and [told us] that the help would arrive very soon. That same night of 10 July, Remiz Bećirović read aloud a letter that we had received from the 2nd Corps in Tuzla, which contained a preposterous tale. Osman Suljić was the one who mainly contacted President Izetbegović, and the last time he was contacted was at 11 o'clock in the morning of 11 July, but we were told on that occasion that the President was asleep and that "it would be inappropriate to wake him up", and at that moment the Chetniks were already entering the town along the south axis. A brief conversation was

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done then with Prime Minister Silajdžić who told us to assess for ourselves what to do next. At 1200 hours, I asked the UN to take over the wounded casualties whom I had already placed on a truck, but they refused to do it. But after threatening that the wounded would come inside the circle no matter what, they agreed to take them into the circle in which there were already about 20000 people.

After that - and I do not remember the exact time but I know that it was right before we set off - I personally called Sarajevo, and I do not know what I was told but, all in all, we again could not speak to the President, so I told the person who answered that "we were leaving town that instance" to what Osman Suljić added that "a mass of people were moving towards Tuzla". It is interesting that the same night, we heard on Radio BiH on a

radio transistor that someone in the column had that a large column of army [members] and civilians were moving from Srebrenica towards Tuzla. That same day, on 1 July, when a large column of mainly able-bodied men headed towards the forest, the women and children headed towards Potočari, i.e. to the UNPROFOR base, but there was such confusion, panic, and shooting that a significant part of able-bodied men returned to the town and also headed towards the UNPROFOR. When we were on a nearby hill above Srebrenica, at around 1400 hours, NATO airplanes flew over and [?shelled] one tank located on Pribićevac hill which was visible to the naked eye from where we were, and after the explosion when the smoke cleared, that same tank was again firing at Srebrenica, which is a clear example of how NATO operated and how it wanted to help the people of Srebrenica. I later talked to a group of our fighters who were in a different area of the town periphery, and they told me that one hour before the NATO airstrike, one UNPROFOR personnel carrier had come out of the market in town and went to a hill called Bojna above the town where the Chetniks had an artillery, and it remained there for about half an hour. I think that it could not have been the Chetniks in that personnel carrier because they had not yet entered town at that that moment. When we were leaving town we had no movement plan but we agreed that we would meet in a place called Bacuta above Potočari, where we would organise for further movement. I personally proposed going to Žepa because it was much closer and we would have probably broken through with less losses, and that was accepted.

However, when we got to the village of Slatina, we met with Hakija Mehuljić, the Chief of SJB in Srebrenica, and one part of the army from the 282nd Brigade, suddenly news spread out through the column - I don't know by whom and how it was started - that Žepa had already fallen, so we

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automatically changed our plan and headed towards Tuzla. From that place between 10 and 12 thousand people headed towards the village of Šušnjari, where we were joined by the fighters from Sućeska and Potočari. That same night in one house in Šušnjari, a plan of movement towards Tuzla was made, the route was determined, and the layout for brigade movement was made. At 1 o'clock after midnight, the front part of the column headed towards Tuzla. The first occasion when people from the column were killed was near the village of Kamenica, not far from Kravica and Konjević Polje, and just from the shelling about 10 people died and there more were wounded, and in the afternoon at about 1800 hours, when the last part of the column that consisted of the 282nd Brigade led by Ibro Dudić and of one part of the 281st Brigade had not yet even set off, the Chetniks cut off that part of the column and - from what I recently found out from one survivor, Bekrija Osmanović from Potševar in Srebrenica municipality, who is currently residing in Podorašje in Srebrenik and he arrived [?there] on 6 August 1995 - that is where a massacre happened in which about 500-600 people were killed and about 1000 fighters surrendered by dropping their weapons. About 2 km

away from that place, we were again ambushed, and on that occasion another part of the column was cut off during which mainly civilians were killed, i.e. unarmed people. My part of the column which consisted of about 4-5 thousand people crossed the asphalt [road] in Konjević polje⁹ [sic] around 3 in the morning on 13 July 1995 and we arrived to Udrč mountain without bigger problems and without being ambushed. We stayed that entire day on Udrč, waiting for the remaining part of the column, and at around 1800 hours we headed further across Drinjača and entered the territory of Kamenica, which was in Zvornik municipality. In the morning of 14 July of this year, we arrived close to Snagovo and decided to rest there for the day and wait again for the others to arrive. Throughout the day, the remaining parts of the column were arriving and they were telling us about many deaths that happened while crossing the road that led to Konjević Polje. When we headed further in the evening, immediately after crossing the old road that leads to Zvornik, we were ambushed and intense combats were we ongoing for about half an hour. Our fighters dispersed that ambush within half an hour, killed several Chetniks and captured several of them alive, and none of our men were killed and one or two were wounded. When we crossed the asphalt [road] that leads to Zvornik and climbed some nearby hill, mass hallucinations and panic started. Then we agreed to wait there while out reconnaissance party goes to the Chetnik line - the last line for us - and see whether we can negotiate with the Chetniks to let the mass [of people] go through the line. However, the Chetniks requested, as we were told by

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Ibrahim Mandžić, the Commandant of the 280th Brigade, that we wait for a response from Pale. Ejub Golić and Vejz Šabić decided not to wait for anything and to go straight forward and break the line. On 15 July, Ejub Golić and his men entered the first trenches and captured 2 tanks in working order. A crew immediately entered one [tank] and fired at the Chetniks. During those combats, our fighters destroyed another 3 tanks and one praga¹⁰ that belonged to the Chetniks, and on that occasion I personally received 60 wounded fighters, and Ejub Golić was killed. Soon after that we crossed over to the free territory where we were awaited by our fighters from the 2nd Corps as well as Naser with a number of our fighters from Srebrenica.

I have nothing else to state; the statement was read out loud to me and I participated in the making of it which I confirm by appending my personal signature.

CITIZEN:
Pilav ilijaz

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AUTHORISED OFFICIALS:
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⁹ t/n: Konjević Polje

¹⁰ t/n: Czechoslovakian self-propelled anti-aircraft gun

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