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MUP /Ministry of the Interior/ OF THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA
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The “refrigerator truck” case

I N F O R M A T I O N

After publication of an article in the local Zaječar magazine *Timočka krimi revija /Timok Crime Review/*, number 100 of 1 May 2001, stating that on 6 April 1999 a refrigerator truck full of unidentified bodies had been pulled out of the Danube river near the village of Tekija, Kladovo SO /municipality/, a Working Group was set up by order of Interior Minister Dušan MIHAJLOVIĆ with the task of establishing the relevant facts regarding this case.

Between 7 May 2001 and today, the **Working Group** has carried out interviews with over 30 persons in Belgrade, Bor, Negotin, Kladovo and other places regarding the circumstances of the “refrigerator truck” case and compiled the appropriate official documentation.

As part of the measures and activities taken so far, the scene of the event was directly inspected and the places where the refrigerator truck most probably ended up in the Danube were established.

It was thus established that on the afternoon of 5 April 1999 it was reported to the Kladovo OUP /Department of the Interior/ that fishermen near Tekija on the Danube had noticed a floating object similar to a white box. On the assumption that it was a vehicle, that is, that a traffic accident had happened, an on-site investigation team from the Kladovo OUP was sent to the scene of the event and the services of the professional diver Živadin ĐORĐEVIĆ from Kladovo were engaged.

The diver established that the object was a Mercedes refrigerator truck without license plates, that it was floating, and that the enterprise name *Progres – Prizren* was emblazoned on the cab doors. The box of the refrigerator truck was not visibly deformed, the box doors were closed and secured in the middle with a lock and chain.

A self-propelled crane was engaged to pull the refrigerator truck out of the Danube. It was pulled to within approximately 1.5 metres of the shore. Then an unpleasant stench was felt from the refrigerator truck. It was then noticed that “two human legs” were protruding from a tear in the refrigerator truck’s box.

The lock was broken and the chain removed. In addition to the organs of the interior, the following representatives of the judicial organs were also present at the scene: Tomislav MILOJKOVIĆ, investigating judge of the Kladovo Municipal Court, and Mirko PETKOVIĆ, Kladovo Deputy Municipal Prosecutor.

After the doors were opened, a large number of human bodies were seen in the refrigerator truck box. As this case fell under the jurisdiction of the Negotin District Public Prosecutor's Office, the attending investigating judge and Deputy Municipal Prosecutor declared themselves incompetent. After that, the doors of the refrigerator truck box were closed.

The Bor SUP /Secretariat of the Interior/ was informed of the event by dispatch from the scene.

On 7 April, a large self-propelled crane was engaged to pull out the refrigerator truck. The Bor SUP was asked for instructions regarding further action. In the meantime, the extraction of the refrigerator truck was put on hold by order of the then Chief of the Bor SUP, Colonel Časlav GOLUBOVIĆ, so that consultations could be carried out.

That same day in the evening, a meeting which had been scheduled was held and on that occasion the Chief of the Bor SUP was informed of the details and told that an on-site investigation had been started, but then stopped.

The Chief of the Bor SUP reported by telephone to the then Chief of the Public Security Sector /RJB/, General Vlastimir ĐORĐEVIĆ, who ordered him to wait until the necessary consultations had been carried out.

The Chief of the Bor SUP, Colonel Časlav GOLUBOVIĆ informed General ĐORĐEVIĆ that it was impossible to perform autopsies of the bodies or to bury them in the Kladovo area. General ĐORĐEVIĆ then issued an order to secure the scene of the event, impose a media blackout and pull out the refrigerator truck.

After carrying out consultations, General ĐORĐEVIĆ ordered the Chief of the Bor SUP, Časlav GOLUBOVIĆ, to pull out the bodies and prepare them for transport, saying that the autopsies and burials would be carried out elsewhere. He also ordered that this "job" had to be done at night. Employees of the *Komunalac* enterprise from Kladovo and policemen took the bodies out of the refrigerator truck and loaded them onto a truck.

About twenty bodies were taken out on that same night. The operation was stopped at dawn due to the general exhaustion of the workers, the very difficult conditions and the inaccessible terrain.

An order was received from the MUP that the first truck with bodies should go from Tekija in the direction of Belgrade, up to the Bubanj Potok toll gate, and that the driver would receive additional instructions en route, over the mobile telephone.

The truck was driven by Ljubinko URSULJANOVIĆ, an official driver of the Bor SUP, escorted by a traffic police patrol.

At Bubanj Potok, the truck driver received instructions "from the MUP" over the mobile telephone to continue along the highway, by the *Zmaj JP /?Jugopetroll* petrol station, in the direction of Novi Sad. On the Novi Sad road, the truck was stopped and handed over to officials who have so far remained unidentified at their request.

On 7 April 1999, the refrigerator truck was pulled out of the Danube and placed on a vehicle transporter. During the night, the remaining bodies had been transferred to a second truck, which had been sent to the scene of the event from the MUP. After they were transferred, the bodies were taken in the truck in the direction of Belgrade, while the empty refrigerator truck was taken by tank transporter to the Petrovo Selo firing range near Kladovo, set on fire and blown up.

Based on information gathered in interviews with eyewitnesses, it is concluded that there were about 50 (fifty) bodies and it is assumed that they are from the area of Kosovo and Metohija.

The Minister of the Interior, Vljako STOJILJKOVIĆ, and the Chief of the Public Security Sector, General Vlastimir ĐORĐEVIĆ, declared the whole case to be a state secret and launched operation *Dubina 2 /Depth 2/* to deal with it. Bearing this in mind, the Negotin District Public Prosecutor, Krstimir NESTOROVIĆ, halted further work on clearing up the case. There is no other information on this operation, except that the workers who took out and transferred the bodies from the refrigerator truck and the diver were paid from the MUP's special expenses fund.

After the MUP Working Group carried out the appropriate checks, the Negotin District Public Prosecutor's Office submitted to the Bor SUP request number KTR 37/2001 of 9 May 2001 asking that the necessary information be gathered regarding the *Timočka krimi revija* article on the "refrigerator truck case".

The Working Group also investigated the cause of the above-described event. Operative information acquired by the Working Group indicates that in March 1999 a working meeting was held in the office of Slobodan MILOŠEVIĆ, then President of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. This meeting was attended by: Vljako STOJILJKOVIĆ, then Minister of the Interior, General Vlastimir ĐORĐEVIĆ, then Chief of the RJB, General Radomir MARKOVIĆ, then Chief of the RDB /State Security Sector/, and others. On that occasion, General ĐORĐEVIĆ raised the issue of clearing up the terrain in the Kosovo and Metohija area. In this regard, Slobodan MILOŠEVIĆ ordered Vljako STOJILJKOVIĆ to take measures to remove all traces which could indicate the existence of evidence /as printed/ of the crimes committed.

In order to carry out the task received at a collegium of the MUP of the Republic of Serbia, in March of the same year, the problem was discussed of clearing up the terrain in Kosovo and Metohija where there had been combat operations with the aim of removing civilian victims who could potentially become the subject of investigations by the Hague Tribunal. Minister Vljako STOJILJKOVIĆ issued an order to generals Vlastimir ĐORĐEVIĆ and Dragan ILIĆ to carry out the task received.

The Working Group has no information about similar cases in other locations. The Užice SUP carried out checks, but was unable to confirm the Humanitarian Law Fund's report of a similar refrigerator truck in the lake of the Kokin Brod hydroelectric power plant.

In order to establish all the facts and clear up this case, as well as any possible similar ones, as well as to establish the criminal and other responsibility of individuals, the Working Group continues to take intensive measures.

The MUP of the Republic of Serbia will soon inform the public about the results.

MUP /MINISTRY OF THE INTERIOR/ THE REFRIGERATOR TRUCK CASE
OF THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA
UKP /Criminal Investigation Police Department/
26 June 2001
B e l g r a d e

INFORMATION II

At the press conference held on 25 May 2001 on the premises of the MUP /Ministry of the Interior/ of the Republic of Serbia, the public was informed about the information gathered in connection with the *Refrigerator Truck* case, as well as about the facts established by the Working Group. In addition to the indisputable facts, other as yet unverified information was presented.

In the course of further work on solving the case, interviews were conducted with several officials and other persons, and information gathered during the investigation was checked.

Boško RADOJKOVIĆ, the forensic technician of the Kladovo OUP /Department of the Interior/ handed over to the Working Group 10 black-and-white photographs and the film negative, which he had made at the location. The photographs showing the refrigerator truck from various angles have been published in the media. Based on the photographs, the type of the vehicle was identified, and confirmed that it was a Mercedes refrigerator truck with visible damage to the door at the rear end of the container, through which two human legs were protruding.

The door of the refrigerator truck bore the inscription *PIK PROGRES, eksportna klanica /exporting slaughter house/ Prizren*, including the telephone and fax numbers.

RADOJKOVIĆ firmly stated that there were 86 bodies in total, and that 83 of them were intact; however, he concluded that there were another three bodies because three human heads were found, together with parts of human bodies. Also, by being directly present on the spot while the bodies were carried out, RADOJKOVIĆ came to believe that nearly all the bodies had skull fractures inflicted by either blunt or sharp objects. Only on one male body, whose hands were tied with wire behind his back, he did see an entry-and-exit wound in the chest. According to RADOJKOVIĆ, among the bodies of adult men and women there were two children – a girl and a boy – aged between 6 and 7. Several male bodies wore UČK /Kosovo Liberation Army/ uniforms.

Meanwhile, additional checks have proven that the place from which it was possible for the refrigerator truck to get into the River Danube was located before the second tunnel on the Danube main road, from the direction of Donji Milanovac towards Kladovo.

No identification has been made so far either of the persons who pushed the refrigerator truck into the Danube, or possible eyewitnesses. Work on establishing

their identity is in progress, and the information that they were most probably officials is being verified.

Previous information indicated that there were more than 50 bodies, but the latest says that there were 86 bodies in the refrigerator truck. The bodies were loaded into two trucks. The first one – a *FAP* dump truck - in which 30 bodies were loaded, belonged to the JP /Public Enterprise/ *Komunalac*. It was driven to Belgrade, more precisely to the training centre compound of the MUP's SAJ /Special Anti-Terrorist Units/ in Batajnica.

Measures are being undertaken to identify the officials who took over this truck on the Novi Sad – Belgrade road, and drove it to the said MUP sports centre.

The second truck was driven from Belgrade to the scene near Tekija by the MUP driver Božidar PROTIĆ, accompanied by Major Duško PERIĆ from the MUP Police Administration. On the order of his superior NENADIĆ, chief of the Section for Vehicle Use and Maintenance within the MUP Administration for Joint Affairs, the driver used a truck which was the private property of a person from Belgrade.

The remaining 56 bodies from the refrigerator truck were loaded into this truck on the spot. The above-named officials drove the truck with the bodies to the same location as the previous one (the SAJ centre in Batajnica).

It has been established that the bodies from both trucks were buried in two graves dug with an excavator.

When the location of one of the graves was discovered, a forensic investigation was carried out, and the location identified where the bodies were buried. One grave was situated in close proximity of the MUP centre. A partial excavation confirmed that there were human bodies in the grave, and appropriate documents were drawn up about it.

On 31 May 2001, we informed Mr. Rade TERZIĆ, the Belgrade District Public Prosecutor, of the above stated facts.

Consequently, Goran ČAVLINA, the investigating judge of the Belgrade District Court, ordered the exhumation and autopsy of the bodies. For this purpose, the Belgrade-based Forensic Institute was engaged, and the MUP of the Republic of Serbia was ordered to secure the scene.

On 1 June 2001, the scene was visited by the investigating judge of the Belgrade District Court, the District Public Prosecutor, representatives of the Forensic Institute, members of the Working Group, and staff members of the MUP Forensic Centre.

On 4 June 2001, the investigating judge of the Belgrade District Court ordered temporary suspension of the preparatory works for exhumation, and the MUP of the Republic of Serbia ordered the securing of the scene to continue around the clock. Explaining his order, he said that, apart from the fact that the investigating judge and

the representatives of the ISM /Forensic Institute/ were too busy, representatives of the Hague Tribunal had requested to be present during the exhumation.

The findings of Working Group indicate that dead bodies were also buried in pits in the vicinity of the MUP training centre in Petrovo Selo near Kladovo, and that they had most probably been transported from the area of KM /Kosovo and Metohija/.

There is also information that dead bodies are buried at an undetermined location next to the Vranje – Leskovac section of the highway, or more precisely beneath the highway.

This information is currently being verified.

The Working Group has not yet established the circumstances, the place and the manner in which the victims died. In that regard, measures are being undertaken to shed light on these and other circumstances.

Working Group