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## CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS IN THE VILLAGE OF RAČAK

In order to arrest the terrorist group which carried out an armed attack near the village of Slivovo on the Štimlje-Uroševac road on 10 January 1999 at 0830 hours on the official vehicle of the Uroševac SUP/Secretariat of the Interior/, registration number M 616-424, carrying the Štimlje Police Station Deputy Commander Nenad MITROVIĆ, Štimlje Police Station officer Svetislav PRŽIĆ and Štimlje Police Station reserve force member Miroslav ŽIVIC during which the policeman Svetislav PRŽIĆ was mortally wounded (criminal report against person unknown KU no.5/99 was filed with the District Public Prosecutor's Office in Priština), and due to frequent armed attacks on police force members and the Štimlje Police Station and abductions of a large number of citizens loyal to the Republic of Serbia in the area of Štimlje municipality (KP /criminal reports/ Ku no. 1/99, 3/99, 4/99, 6/99 filed with District Public Prosecutor's Office in Priština), and based on the intelligence collected and the information that the *Šiptar* /derogatory for Albanians/ terrorists' base and staff for the area of Štimlje municipality is in the village of Račak, the operation of catching and arresting the terrorist group in the village of Račak was launched on the morning of 15 January 1999 according to a previously made plan.

One Uroševac SUP company of 110 policemen was assigned to carry out the operation in the village of Račak. Before they were sent on the mission they were warned the service had information indicating that the village of Račak is a tough stronghold and the main base of the *Šiptar* terrorists. They brought a large quantity of weapons to the village which they distributed among the locals who placed themselves at their service, and those who refused to accept the weapons, and also women and children, left the village.

They also had the information that the Main Staff of the so-called KLA /Kosovo Liberation Army/, led by the notorious /?Mujota/ SADIK, who has killed a number of MUP /Ministry of the Interior/ members and abducted a large number of citizens, was at Mustafa MEHMETI's house in the village of Račak.

The Uroševac SUP police force members started the operation at 0300 hours, when measures were taken to block the village of Račak. This was done and by 0630 hours the village of Račak was completely surrounded.

When the police force members advanced and were just entering the village of Račak, from the direction of Štimlje on the road passing by the Special Institute, members of the *Šiptar* terrorist gangs opened fire at the police force members from hand-held rocket launchers, machine-guns and infantry weapons. They fired back, so the terrorist group retreated from the edge of the village into the village itself, constantly firing at the advancing police force members.

When the police were entering the village and throughout their search of the village, heavy fire from mortars, hand-held rocket launchers, Browning 12.7 mm light-machine guns and infantry weapons was opened at the police force members. On this occasion a police member was seriously wounded in the left arm and immediately transported to the Priština KBC /Clinical Hospital Centre/ for treatment.

Also, at around 1510 hours the *Šiptar* terrorists fired their sniper rifles at the policeman Bojan TRAJKOVIĆ. The bullet hit his automatic rifle, ricocheted and hit a spare AP /automatic rifle/ magazine which he had in a bag on his chest.

In the operation the Uroševac SUP policemen were equipped and armed with automatic rifles, official pistols, armoured combat vehicles with PKT 7.62 mm machine-guns, sniper rifles and hand grenades. Armoured vehicles were used for safe transport of the police force members and to overcome obstacles on the roads.

The police used the stated weapons and equipment to repulse attacks and protect lives, but exclusively against the terrorists who opened fire at the police, and also those who were armed and wearing civilian clothes.

When the police force members were approaching the village of Račak and attempting to capture members of the terrorist gang and inviting them to surrender, the armed terrorist groups refused to surrender and firing heavily, retreated from the village of Račak toward Kršina hill, the village of Lužnica, the village of Rance and the village of Petrovo in Štimlje municipality.

Despite the pursuit and appeals to surrender, the terrorist group refused to surrender and kept opening heavy fire at the police force members from all the stated types of weapons. The terrorists fiercely attacked the approaching police from the previously prepared trenches and bunkers. Forty *Šiptar* terrorists, most of them wearing uniforms of the so-called KLA, were liquidated in the said exchange of fire.

By capturing the trenches and bunkers used by the *Šiptar* terrorists, apart from the said bodies, the police force members also found and seized 36 automatic rifles of Chinese make, one Browning 12.7 mm light machine-gun, two machine-guns, 1802 bullets of different calibres, six hand grenades of Chinese make, two hand grenade bags, one *Fisher Price* hand-held radio transmitter, one pair of binoculars, one rifle-cleaning kit, two automatic-rifle magazines, an army rucksack and other military equipment. Apart from the bodies, a large number of cartridge cases of different calibres, which the terrorists fired at the police, was also observed and seized. The battle with the terrorists lasted until 1530 hours.

Meanwhile, an on-site investigation team was formed at the Štimlje Police Station, made up of the District Investigating Judge Danica MARINKOVIĆ, Deputy District Public Prosecutor Ismet SHUFTA and a team of OSL /authorised officials/ from the Uroševac SUP with forensic technical equipment, which set out to conduct an on-site investigation.

Due to the development of events on field, the on-site investigation could not be conducted because large groups of terrorists came from the direction of the village of Petrovo and the village of Malopoljce to assist the terrorists from the village of Račak, and they started continually and kept opening heavy fire from the surrounding hilltops at the police force members and the on-site investigation team. Because of the heavy fire by the *Šiptar* terrorists the police force members retreated from the place where the group of terrorists was liquidated to the centre of Račak and from there, due to heavy fire, they had to pull out fighting and return to the Štimlje Police Station.

During the operation itself and the police withdrawal to the Štimlje Police Station, several armoured police vehicles were hit by bullets fired from infantry weapons by *Šiptar* terrorists.

At around 1830 hours on the same day, while a part of the police unit that was securing the communication on the Uroševac-Štimlje road was returning, near the village of Slivovo, *Šiptar* terrorists threw a hand grenade at a UAZ /Czech vehicle manufacturer/ official vehicle with four policemen in it and started firing their infantry weapons at them, but fortunately the police force members did not suffer consequences.

Because it was impossible to conduct a comprehensive and thorough inspection of the site and on-site investigation in the Račak village sector, and because it was impossible to secure the site where the terrorists were liquidated, during the night of 15 and 16 January 1999 terrorist groups from the village of Petrovo and Malopoljce gained access to the terrorists' bodies. It is therefore possible that the terrorists manipulated the situation and dressed the liquidated terrorists in civilian clothes, removed personal documents and the bodies of persons who were not from the area of Štimlje municipality or the Republic of Serbia, or in other ways manipulated with the bodies.

On 16 January 1999 an on-site investigation team was formed again, consisting of the same members that started for the village of Račak that morning with the task of conducting an on-site investigation and collecting the *Šiptar* terrorists' bodies for a post-mortem examination. The on-site investigation team was secured by the Uroševac SUP police force members.

When the on-site investigation team and police force members were entering the village of Račak, the terrorists opened heavy fire at them. Firing back, they retreated to the Štimlje Police Station, and so no on-site investigation was conducted that day for safety reasons.

On 17 January 1999 an on-site investigation team was formed again, consisting of the same members. They were joined by Saša DOBRIČANIN, Chief of the Priština ISM /Institute for Forensic Medicine/, and accompanied by the Uroševac SUP police force members, and in the morning they started for the village of Račak with the same task.

However, when the on-site investigation team and police security were entering the village of Račak the *Šiptar* terrorists again opened heavy fire at them. For safety reasons the on-site investigation team retreated to the Štimlje Police Station with the police force members.

We would like to point out that, apart from the on-site investigation team, throughout the development of these events on field around the village of Račak a large number of members of the OSCE Verification Mission were also actively present. On 17 January 1999 they proposed to the leader of the on-site investigation team, the Investigating Judge Danica MARINKOVIĆ, that she conduct an on-site investigation in the village of Račak on her own under their escort and guard, accompanied by the minimum number of technicians who, the Deputy Head of the OSCE Mission John DRENKIJEVIC insisted, should be unarmed and in civilian clothes. Danica MARINKOVIĆ rejected this proposal for safety reasons.

The on site-investigation could not be conducted that day either for safety reasons, so the on-site investigation team retreated to the Štimlje Police Station. From 1500 to 1700 hours the *Šiptar* terrorists were opening heavy fire at it from infantry weapons, and five or six shots hit the Štimlje Police Station building. Their projectiles caused even greater damage to two Štimlje Police Station official vehicles which were in the station perimeter. For this attack on the Štimlje Police Station a criminal report against person unknown Ku no. 9/99 was filed with the District Public Prosecutor's Office in Priština. On this occasion a number of projectiles also hit the buildings of the Special Institute and the Health Centre in Štimlje which are located in the immediate vicinity of Štimlje Police Station.

On 18 January 1999 an on-site investigation team was formed again, made up of the Investigating Judge Danica MARINKOVIĆ, Deputy District Public Prosecutor Dragomir ŽIVIC, the ISM Chief Saša DOBRIČANIN with authorised officials of the

Uroševac SUP and forensic equipment. Accompanied and guarded by the Uroševac SUP police force members and the OSCE Mission members, they started for the village of Račak to conduct an on-site investigation and collect the bodies.

The *Šiptar* terrorists again opened heavy fire at the on-site investigation team from mortars, machine guns and infantry weapons, and on this occasion a piece of shrapnel from a shell fired by the *Šiptar* terrorists hit the Lada Niva vehicle containing the on-site investigation team.

The police force members responded to the attack with heavy fire from infantry weapons and after a long battle the terrorists were pushed back towards Kršina hill and the village of Petrovo. From the nearby hilltops they were opening fire from infantry and sniper weapons toward the village of Račak which the on-site investigation team and the OSCE Mission members entered at around 1400 hours, when the on-site investigation began.

Upon entering the mosque in the village of Račak the on-site investigation team found 40 bodies, including one female.

After that an on-site investigation was conducted in Mustafa MEHMETI's house where the KLA Staff was based and where the following was found: three hand grenades of Chinese make, 130 7.62 mm-calibre bullets of Chinese make, one hand-made unassembled rifle, records regarding the deployment of troops of the so-called KLA and one typewriter and Order of the Staff Commander of the so-called KLA.

The on-site investigation team then visited the trenches in the village of Račak, some 2 km long, with machine-gun nests and one bunker, 4x7 m in size. Parts of army uniforms with KLA insignia, ammunition of different calibres of Chinese make and cartridge cases of different calibres of Chinese make, a machine-gun mount and one hand-held rocket launcher grenade were all found in the trenches.

The on-site investigation team also conducted an on-site investigation at the depot and the kitchen where the *Šiptar* terrorists had their meals and where a large amount of food from the humanitarian aid programme was found.

Throughout the on-site investigation the *Šiptar* terrorists were opening fire at the police force members who were securing the site, and the police returned the fire.

On 18 January 1999 the bodies from the mosque were transported to the ISM in Priština and the performed post-mortem examination confirmed that their deaths were the result of injuries in battle, caused by firearms, from a distance, and that they had not been mutilated or damaged in other ways. It was confirmed that these people were known to the police as members of the terrorist so-called KLA who had launched armed attacks on members of the MUP, the VJ /Yugoslav Army/ and citizens.

Around 1230 hours on 18 January 1999, while securing the transport of the bodies, in the village of Lužak sector of the Štimlje SO, in the direction of the Kršina hill, the Uroševac Police Station Assistant Commander Miro MEKIĆ was killed by heavy fire from *Šiptar* terrorists. While they were recovering MEKIĆ's body, the policemen Jovica STAMENKOVIĆ and Radojica NIKČEVIĆ were slightly wounded when they were hit by pieces of shrapnel from a rifle-launched grenade fired by the *Šiptar* terrorists and they were immediately transported to the Priština Clinical Hospital Centre for further treatment. Regarding this incident, criminal report against person unknown Ku no. 7/99 was filed with the Priština District Public Prosecutor's Office.

Based on the above analysis of events and the conduct of the police, we can draw the following conclusions regarding the period from 15 to 19 January 1999 in the village of Račak sector:

- there were a number of terrorist attacks on the police force members who were performing their regular duty, stipulated by the law and the Constitution, of catching and arresting a terrorist group that had committed a large number of criminal acts of terrorism, murder, abduction and conspiracy to commit subversive activity.
- the result of these terrorist actions is one police force member killed and three wounded.
- the police intervened and used weapons for personal safety, to repulse the attacks and help the dead man and the wounded colleagues whose lives were in danger, and to evacuate the wounded and dead policemen.
- while they were performing their official duty the police force members were constantly under heavy fire, attacked from different weapons at several locations and from different buildings, and were therefore forced to crush the terrorists' resistance by using official firearms.
- in their use of firearms the police force members did not overstep their authority.
- the police intervened and used firearms in accordance with the law, gradually, selectively and correctly.