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Colonel Vlatko VUKOVIĆ, Retired
Boška Petrovića Street 7/1
Belgrade
10 January 2002

Statement on unit's activities
between 27 and 28 April 1999

**TO THE COMMISSION FOR
COOPERATION WITH THE ICTY**
– To the Expert Team –

On 28 April 1999 (the second day of the operation), part of the unit was on the seal-off line of Čabrat–Korenica.

During the night, at around 0200 hours, the ŠTS /Šiptar /Albanian/ terrorist forces/ tried to withdraw through the positions of the military police platoon in the Kodra e Kikes sector towards Đakovica, but they were stopped from doing so. One person was probably killed, although the body was not found in the morning. A large quantity of ammunition and rockets for hand-held launchers was also captured.

On this day, too, civilians were passing along the road towards Đakovica. We did not stop or check civilians.

At around 1430 hours in the Kodra e Kikes sector, private Branimir LETIĆ of the military police platoon was wounded in the head.

At around 1600 hours, MUP /Ministry of the Interior/ units completed the terrain search, and I was given the task of returning the unit to the battalion's defence sector. I left a reinforced platoon in the area for two more days to control the villages of Ramoc and Racaj, but no ŠTS were observed.

During this operation one of my soldiers was seriously wounded and two sustained light wounds.

I first heard about the alleged atrocities committed in the sectors of Korenica and Meja in late 2001, and read about them in further detail in the book "Kosovo as Seen, as Told" published by the Humanitarian Law Fund. After learning about the alleged atrocities I spoke with the officers and some of the soldiers who participated in this operation, and I hereby state categorically that neither I nor the soldiers under my command in that operation committed any kind of atrocities in those sectors. Neither do I have any knowledge that such a thing was done by any other unit.

Retired Colonel
Vlatko VUKOVIĆ
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**TO THE COMMISSION FOR
COOPERATION WITH THE ICTY**
– To the Expert Team –

At the request of the Commission for Cooperation with the ICTY, I hereby give the following statement:

Between 3 August 1998 and 16 June 1999, I held the post of commander of the 2nd mtb /Motorised Battalion/ in the 549th mtbr /Motorised Brigade/ in Đakovica.

Between 27 and 30 April 1999, I participated with part of my unit in an operation to seal off the villages of Korenica and Meja.

Due to intensified activity by the terrorists in the Racaj – Ramac area, on 26 April 1999 I was given the following task to carry out with part of my unit: to take the seal-off line of Cabrat (Kodra /e/ Kikes) – River Erenik, with the aim of preventing the ŠTS /Šiptar Albanian terrorist forces/ from withdrawing across the River Erenik and continuing towards Albania. The search of the terrain and neutralisation of any ŠTS found was carried out by MUP /Ministry of the Interior/ units from the Đakovica – Peć road. To accomplish the task I engaged three rifle platoons, a military police platoon, a communications section, and a medical section.

At around 0330 hours on 27 April 1999 (the first day of the operation), the unit conducted a movement, and by 0600 hours the seal-off line was taken. The command post was in an abandoned house between the villages of Meja and Korenica on the Đakovica – Korenica road. The unit had its first clash with the ŠTS at around 0830 hours in the sector of the cemetery in Korenica village. From the report of platoon commander Dragan MITIĆ I learned the following: at around 0830 hours in the sector of the cemetery in Korenica village, he noticed a group of men (around 50-strong). He sent a patrol to check where they were from and to tell them to return to their houses. When the patrol reached the cemetery, fire was opened on them from among the group of civilians and a grenade was thrown, seriously wounding private Dobrica VUČKOVIĆ and lightly wounding private Miroslav LAPADATOVIĆ. When the commander arrived with reinforcements, the terrorists fled into nearby houses, and he allowed the civilians to pass through towards Đakovica, i.e. outside the zone of combat activities.

I ordered him to stay on the seal-off line, to administer first aid, and to evacuate those who were wounded to the asphalt road for transportation to hospital. I sent Staff Sergeant VUKADINOVIĆ with an ambulance to take the wounded to the military

hospital in Đakovica. While the wounded were being evacuated, the terrorists opened fire from houses in Korenica on the soldiers and the ambulance. After the terrorists had been neutralised, the wounded soldiers were taken to the military hospital in Đakovica. The ŠTS probably fled towards the village of Ramoc.

Throughout the afternoon, civilians – mostly women with children, in groups of 20 to 50 – passed along the road from Korenica towards Đakovica. We did not stop and check the civilians, nor did we have any contact with them, except for some of the soldiers giving them food and water.

I hereby declare that my unit opened fire only on armed terrorists, and in no way coerced the population to leave their houses. There were some cases of entire *Šiptar* /Albanian/ families taking shelter with their Serbian neighbours. There were around ten families just in VUKADINOVIĆ's house in the hamlet of Cufodolj. Since the terrorists had been driven out of the area, the civilians returned to their houses early that evening and did not abandon them throughout the war.

NATO aircraft were flying throughout the day and struck a number of times in the general Đakovica sector. They carried out particularly intensive strikes on the Košare sector.

Since the MUP units had finished searching the village of Korenica, the seal-off line was moved from the River Erenik to the Đakovica – Korenica road, where we spent the night.

Retired Colonel
Vlatko VUKOVIĆ
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