

Data on Balkan Wars Found in Home of Suspect

By [Marlise Simons](#)

New York Times July 10, 2010

THE HAGUE For their latest raid on the Belgrade home of Gen. Ratko Mladic, the police had studied architectural plans and brought a new device provided by a foreign government: a camera capable of looking through wood, bricks, even reinforced concrete.

This time, investigators found a false wall, missed by earlier searches, hiding a cache so rich that it is still resonating in the Balkans and in the United Nations war crimes tribunal in The Hague that wants to prosecute the fugitive Bosnian Serb commander for genocide.

The find 18 notebooks of General Mladic's wartime military diaries, 120 sound recordings, cellphone cards, computer memory sticks and a pile of documents provides some of the most compelling evidence yet of the close, top-level coordination of the Bosnian Serb Army and Serbia, a connection both parties always denied.

Although the thousands of pages of notes handwritten in bold Cyrillic script describe no crimes and show no evidence of General Mladic's hand in the infamous Srebrenica massacre, they are expected to have wide repercussions, most immediately on six trials now going on at the tribunal, particularly that of Radovan Karadzic, the Bosnian Serb political leader and General Mladic's boss.

"It's one of the most important sets of documents we ever received at the tribunal," said Serge Brammertz, the chief prosecutor. "You very seldom get so much information coming from such a central figure."

The cache was discovered by the Serbian police in February and turned over to the Hague tribunal two months ago. Since then, specialists, including General Mladic's deputy commander, have verified his handwriting, and translators have been working overtime to make the material accessible to prosecutors.

The extraordinary paper trail consists of close to 3,500 pages, recording dates and minutiae about supplies of weapons and fuel, as well as troop orders and strategy discussions during the Balkan wars of 1991 to 1995. It also lists people General Mladic met, including foreign envoys and Slobodan Milosevic, then the Serbian president, and what they discussed. There were also numerous audio recordings, Mr. Brammertz said, of General Mladic's meetings and telephone conversations with military officials and politicians during the war.



Gen. Ratko Mladic in Belgrade in 1993.

Credit...

Petar Kujundzic/Reuters

Lawyers familiar with portions of the material, not all of which has been translated and parts of which are still under seal, say that some of it will be used in the genocide trial of Mr. Karadzic. Mr. Karadzic requested an immediate break in his trial to review the diaries, but the judges refused.

The diaries' sober, day-by-day accounts have already provoked debate in Serbia and Croatia, where nationalists still deny their governments' wartime

role.

Specialists said that the notes and recordings would link Serbia more explicitly to the war. They cite numerous meetings with Mr. Milosevic, who always insisted that the actions of the Bosnian Serb Army and of Serbian rebels in Croatia were spontaneous local events. (Mr. Milosevic died during his war crimes trial in 2006.)

Although the relationships have been widely documented in other trials and a plethora of books on the war, the Mladic diaries provide a firsthand account that connects the dots with the kind of proof lawyers say they need in a criminal trial.

Inevitably, they would also serve the trial of General Mladic, if there is one. On the run for more than a decade, he is reported to be in Serbia, moving among different hiding places, protected by loyal followers.

But the diaries offer no details of Srebrenica, according to Frederick Swinnen, an adviser to the prosecutor. Fifteen years ago Sunday, Bosnian Serb troops under General Mladic's command, assisted by Serbian Special Forces, overran a small contingent of United Nations peacekeepers there and seized the Muslim enclave. Over the following days, they deported women and children and executed close to 8,000 Bosnian Muslim men and boys.

Mr. Swinnen said there were succinct entries about meetings just before and after the massacre, including one in Belgrade on July 15, 1995, with Mr. Milosevic and high-level NATO and United Nations officials to "discuss the Srebrenica population." That day, excavators were still digging mass graves in Bosnia.

"We found nothing on the dates of the attack, or on the operation itself," Mr. Swinnen said.

General Mladic, for all his diligent note-taking, appears to have proceeded with caution, at least in the diaries given to the tribunal, which date from June 1991 to November 1996.

96 В. Ма:

- * Агелум # Ваще и Хаце Гете -
жале др #е#у зорукте шорсе.-
- * Најважнија је заграда сушности
летити и летети Бих.-
- * Ли као да што говори као
превратити јан - црквица сава
врем. постоји Муслиманска јан
депуте је икоб камиц невоља.-
- * Све што што је намају нас јан
јан или последња јан
јановања у аелва јановања
јан - Хрвајске.-

Поркит Јасратно:

Треча 2-3 сивоји гачас зорубојан:

- М су заједнички кедрубањет.
- Треча је 2-3 пошма др ик
сувојемо (Прво-бојно, пошма
или Магму.) - Треча је бојно
заједнички до зорубојан
и др Брзност и јане.ii.
- Зубо: Једна јану # легија -
иовка Бих, јан авел

96 Б. М.:

- * Атентат на Раши и Раши Гете -
јале су нешто због те постоје.
- * Најважнија је заједна суштина
наш и ми смо Бих.
- * Ми смо са њом говорили како
превратице јуи - црквишта саваши
у м. постоје Муслиманцима, јуи
депуте је икоје партије невојска.
- * Све што што је намају нас јуи
јуи или постојеца јуи
јуи у акају јуи
јуи - Хрватске.

Трети Јасрати:

Трети 2-3 савоји гачас због јуи:

- Ми су заједнички негујаше.
Третије 2-3 постоје да ик
су јуи (Прво-бојно, постоје
или партија). - Третије, бојно
заједнички то јуи
и постоје и јуи.
- Јуи: Јуи јуи на јуи
јуи Бих, јуи авио

A page from a diary General Mladic kept that was discovered behind a false wall in his home in Belgrade, one of 18 notebooks found there.

"The diaries do not speak about the commission of any crimes, and they do not cover every period of the wars," Mr. Brammertz said. But they do provide valuable confirmation about the chain of command and the movement of troops before killings, he said.

The tribunal has so far released a few dozen pages that may be used as evidence in current trials. These include what prosecutors describe as details of secret deals between Serbs and Croats to divide Bosnia and drive the Muslims out of many areas. General Mladic recorded a meeting on Feb. 3, 1994, also including Mr. Karadzic, in which the Bosnian Croat leader Jadranko Prlic is quoted as saying: "We need to agree on 2-3 things today. Muslims are

the common enemy. There are 2-3 ways to keep them down (first, militarily, by breaking their backbone)."

At another planning session, General Mladic notes that Slobodan Praljak, a Croatian leader now on trial for war crimes, says: "If you kill 50,000 Muslims more, you will not achieve anything. Their population will quickly recover. The population should be exchanged."

Mr. Brammertz said he intended to make all the material public eventually.

For all these pages, secrets about General Mladic will undoubtedly remain. According to "Twilight of Impunity," a new book by Judith Armatta, a lawyer and human rights advocate, when Serbia turned over General Mladic's personnel file to the tribunal, after years of requests, his performance assessment was missing for 1995, the year of the Srebrenica massacre. Serbian officials, from the president on down, continue to pledge that General Mladic will be arrested if they can find him, but many within the government are known to oppose this. General Mladic himself has let it be known he will not be taken alive.

The government has willingly handed over the cache from the Belgrade apartment, which is still occupied by General Mladic's wife. But the spokesman for the office of the war crimes prosecutor in Belgrade declined to answer questions about why it was only recently discovered. Asked for photographs of the secret wall, the spokesman, Bruno Vekaric, said that this and all other documents had "the status of official secret."

Some Balkan publications have said the diaries are fakes, intended to serve unexplained dark purposes.

A senior Western official dismissed such a notion. "We know they are authentic, and we consider them self-proving," said the official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity. "There's so much only Mladic would know; it's very extensive."

A version of this article appears in print on July 11, 2010, Section A, Page 14 of the New York edition with the headline: Trove of Data on Balkan Wars Found in Genocide Suspect's Home.

