

BOSNIAN WAR & SIEGE OF SARAJEVO

Almost four years of a brutal war followed until the Dayton Accord was signed on 14th December 1995.

Over the course of just three years, torn by civil conflict and war, the Kingdom of Yugoslavia disintegrated into five successor states: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Slovenia, and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (later known as Serbia and Montenegro).

Initially the war was between the Army of the Republic of Bosnia Herzegovina and the Army of Republika Srpska. Republika Srpska is an area within Bosnia and Herzegovina where the majority of the Bosnian Serb population live. The motivation behind this war was to maintain Serbian territory within Bosnia as well as rid it of a people: Muslims. Look at the map below, the star represents Srebrenica.

Why do you think the genocide took place here?



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The motivation behind this war was to maintain Serbian territory within Bosnia as well as rid it of a people: Muslims.

Radovan Karadzic was the leader of the Serb Bosnian army and head of the Republika Srpska. After the war he fled. Eventually captured, he was found guilty of genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity, and sentenced to 40 years imprisonment.

He was found guilty of genocide for the Srebrenica massacre, which aimed to kill "every able-bodied male" in the town and systematically exterminate the Bosnian Muslim community. He was also convicted of persecution, extermination, deportation and forcible transfer (ethnic cleansing). During the war, 2 million people were forced to flee their homes and 100,000 people were killed.

Siege of Sarajevo

During the war, Sarajevo was seized by Serb forces from April 5th 1992 until February 29th 1996. It is the longest siege of a capital city in the history of modern warfare.

The Serbian forces encircled Sarajevo with 18,000 troops. They were equipped with artillery, mortars, tanks, anti-aircraft guns, heavy machine-guns, rocket launchers, and sniper rifles. They blockaded the city and the Bosnian government were not able to break the siege.

During the siege, 11,541 people lost their lives.

The image to the right shows areas established as United Nations safe zones.



SREBRENICA GENOCIDE

On the 16th April, 1993, Srebrenica was declared a safe area; meaning it was to be demilitarised.

However, both sides (the Republic Srpska and the Army of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina) broke this rule and continued to militarise within and around Srebrenica.

The reason for this was the disparity on weaponry. Whilst the Serbs had access to modern warfare, and lots of it, the Muslim Bosniaks were unorganised and had access to little weaponry.



Attempts by the UN to demilitarise this area failed, with the Serbs hiding their weaponry and refusing to withdraw their heavy weaponry.

In the summer of 1995, two years after being designated a United Nations Safe Area, the Bosnian town of Srebrenica became the scene of the worst massacre in the Bosnian war. The Massacre of Srebrenica (where 75% of the population was Muslim) was the systematic murder of 8,000 Bosnian Muslim boys and men and the systematic rape of Muslim women.

Bosnian Serb forces had laid siege to the Srebrenica enclave, where tens of thousands of civilians had taken refuge from earlier Serb offensives in north-eastern Bosnia.

They were under the protection of about 600 lightly armed Dutch infantry forces. Fuel was running out and no fresh food had been brought into the enclave since May. Serb forces began shelling Srebrenica. Bosnian Muslim fighters in the town asked for the return of weapons they had surrendered to the peacekeepers but their request was refused.

SREBRENICA GENOCIDE

By the 11th July 1995 the Serb forces had not withdrawn, but at 09:00 Col Karremans received word from Sarajevo that his request for close air support had been submitted on the wrong form. At 10:30, the resubmitted request reached Gen Janvier, but NATO planes had to return to base in Italy to refuel after being airborne since 06:00. By midday, more than 20,000 refugees - mostly women, children and the infirm - fled to the main Dutch base at Potocari.

At 14:30, two Dutch F-16 fighters dropped two bombs on Serb positions surrounding Srebrenica. The Serbs responded with a threat to kill their Dutch hostages and shell refugees, causing the suspension of further strikes. The Bosnian Serb commander Ratko Mladic entered Srebrenica two hours later, accompanied by Serb camera crews. In the evening, Gen Mladic summoned Col Karremans to a meeting at which he delivered an ultimatum that the Muslims must hand over their weapons to guarantee their lives.

The Dutch commander called UN Headquarters in Sarajevo asking for "close air support" after shells and rockets landed close to refugee centres and observation posts manned by peacekeepers. Serb troops advance on Srebrenica. The Massacre of Srebrenica was the systematic murder of 8,000 Bosnian Muslim boys and men and the systematic rape of Muslim women.

On the 12th July 1995 buses had arrived to take women and children to Muslim territory, while the Serbs begin separating out all males from age 12 to 77 for "interrogation for suspected war crimes".

It is estimated that 23,000 women and children were deported in the next 30 hours. Hundreds of men were held in trucks and warehouses.

About 15,000 Bosnian Muslim fighters had attempted to escape from Srebrenica overnight and were shelled as they fled through the mountains.

Fears for 'missing' refugees

The first killings of unarmed Muslims took place on the 13th July 1995 in a warehouse in the nearby village of Kravica. Peacekeepers handed over about 5,000 Muslims who had been sheltering at the Dutch base at Potocari. In return, the Bosnian Serbs released 14 Dutch peacekeepers who had been held at the Nova Kasaba base.

SREBRENICA GENOCIDE

On the 16th July 1995 early reports of massacres emerged as the first survivors of the long march from Srebrenica began to arrive in Muslim-held territory.

Film reveals scale of Srebrenica atrocity. Following negotiations between the UN and the Bosnian Serbs, the Dutch were at last permitted to leave Srebrenica, leaving behind weapons, food and medical supplies. In the five days after Bosnian Serb forces overran Srebrenica, more than 7,000 Muslim men are thought to have been killed.

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