

The CIA's Racak 'Massacre' Hoax



KIT KLARENBERG

MAR 05, 2024



189



45



32

S

All my investigations are free to read, thanks to the generosity of my readers. Independent journalism nonetheless requires investment, so if you value this article or any others, please consider sharing, or even becoming a paid subscriber. Your support is always gratefully received, and will never be forgotten. To buy me a coffee or two, please click this link.

January 15th marked the 25th anniversary of an alleged slaughter in Racak Kosovo, then a core component of what remained of Yugoslavia. The purported mass, ethnically-motivated killing of innocent Albanian civilians; local security forces was a decisive trigger for NATO's illegal 78-day-long bombing of Belgrade March - May 1999, and subsequent occupation of the province, which endures today. As The Washington Post **contemporaneously observed**, this incident "transformed the West's Balkan policy as singular events seldom do."

Central to Racak's potency was a publicity stunt staged January 16th by veteran US **deep state operative** William Walker, then-chief of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe's (OSCE) Kosovo Verification Mission (KVM). First, he led Western journalists and European officials up a hill near the village to a site where Kosovo Albanians dressed civilian clothes **lay dead**, apparently torn apart unarmed in cold blood by Yugoslav police and military gunfire. At a subsequent press conference, Walker **explosively declared**:

“From what I personally saw, I do not hesitate to describe the event as a massacre, a crime against humanity, nor do I hesitate to accuse the government security forces of responsibility. The [Yugoslav] government must produce names of all involved in the police and [military] operations [in Racak]...who gave the orders, who executed those orders.”

He warned if Yugoslavia didn't allow international observers to visit the site and “investigate this atrocity” in the next 24 hours, dire consequences would be forthcoming. Immediately, images of KVM's grisly apparent discovery, and Walker's personal account of what took place, spread round the globe over and over again courtesy of mainstream media outlets. Resultantly, hitherto reluctant Western citizens and governments demanded US-led action be taken against Belgrade, laying the foundations for NATO's criminal aerial assault two-and-a-half months later.



William Walker visits Racak

As we shall see, almost everything Western politicians, pundits and journalists said about the Racak “massacre” at the time was a brazen lie. Largely forgotten today, this episode remains hugely significant. It is a palpable, shocking example of how distorted, manipulated if not outright fabricated atrocity propaganda can be weaponised by imperial powers in service of war. Racak’s relevance to every NATO-instigated conflict past, present and like future could neither be more obvious, nor urgent.

‘Having Serb Friends’

By January 1999, Yugoslav authorities had been fighting an ever-brutal counterinsurgency against the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) for several years. An **Al Qaeda-connected** extremist group armed, funded and trained by the **CIA and MI6**, it sought to construct “Greater Albania” – a Nazi-inspired irredentist project, uniting Tirana with territory in Greece, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia – via insurrectionary violence.

The key was maximising civilian casualties, so Belgrade’s war with the KLA could be misrepresented to Western audiences as an indiscriminate **ethnonationalist genocide** of innocent civilians. As a Kosovo Albanian independence campaigner, unconnected to the KLA, explained to the BBC March 2000:

“The more civilians were killed, the chances of international intervention became bigger, and the KLA of course realised that. There was this foreign diplomat who once told me, ‘Look, unless you pass the quota of five thousand deaths you’ll never have anybody permanently present in Kosovo from foreign diplomacy.”

The KLA also kidnapped and killed Serb civilians, and pro-Yugoslav Albanians, often **harvesting their organs** to fund its terror campaign. This meant, as then-British Defence Secretary Geoffrey Robertson **admitted to parliament** in March 1999, “up until Racak...the KLA were responsible for more deaths in Kosovo than Yugoslav authorities.” KLA chief Hashim Thaci, **now indicted** for war crimes, remarked **two years later** that “a stone fell from our hearts” when Walker “without hesitation” branded Racak “a massacre of civilians.”

Thaci's relief is understandable. In addition to justifying NATO's impending “intervention” on the KLA's side, Walker also fundamentally misrepresented the scenes in Racak to remove any suggestion victims were KLA insurgents killed in bitter fighting with Yugoslav forces, or perhaps even Kosovo Albanian civilians murdered by Thaci and his fighters themselves, for propaganda purposes. Yet, as KVM chief, he was well-placed to know the actual truth.

KVM **was founded** in November 1998, to monitor Yugoslavia's adherence to a **UN-negotiated ceasefire** with the KLA. Under its terms, Belgrade withdrew its military forces from Kosovo. Yet, no concomitant obligations were imposed upon the KLA, which exploited the army's absence to continue rampaging across the province. KVM had no remit to ensure the terror group didn't attack or provoke violent responses from local authorities. Its only role was to monitor whether Yugoslavia fought back, and how.

Racak was a strategically vital vantage point from which the KLA could attack its targets, situated on a mountain range at the terminus of a major highway, linking Kosovo's capital Pristina with other cities and towns throughout the province. Shooting nests were accordingly set up to strike Yugoslav government vehicles driving through the area from on-high, as they often did. It was hoped successful attacks would draw police and security services into direct battle.

The KLA preemptively dug extensive trenches around the village for this precise purpose. In the months leading up to January 1999 too, a **KVM rep**

notes the militia carried out numerous provocative acts around Racak, to elicit attention from Yugoslav authorities. This included a shooting ambush a police convoy, which wounded several Albanian civilians in a taxi nearby, kidnapping “a number of Kosovo Serbs”, and “arresting” Albanians for “crimes such as “friendly relations with Serbs.”



Funeral of Racak 'massacre' victims

Shockingly, per KVM's report, the KLA even exploited the funeral of Racak victims - coincidentally attended by Walker - on February 11th 1999 to “arrest” nine Albanian attendees. Their “crimes” included “having a brother working with the police; drinking with Serbs; having Serb friends; having a Serb police officer as a friend.” What befell them is unclear. Yet, the **2005 indictment** of Kosovo's then-Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj and his deputy Idriz Balaj describes the KLA brutally torturing, mutilating and murdering Albanian p

'Rigged Scene'

So, what happened in Racak? English-language media wasn't interested in details, dutifully taking Walker's word as unchallengeable gospel. An International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) indictment of Yugoslav leader Slobodan Milosevic, issued May 1999, **referred to** "45 unarmed Kosovo Albanians" murdered in the village. Two months earlier, US President Bill Clinton had **outlined his grounds** for unleashing hell upon Belgrade from the skies without UN authorisation, at an international press conference:

"We should remember what happened in the village of Racak back in January. Innocent men, women and children taken from their homes to a gully, forced to kneel in the dirt, sprayed with gunfire. Not because of anything they had done but because of who they were...Make no mistake, if we and our allies do not have the will to act, there will be more massacres...In dealing with aggressors in the Balkans, hesitation is a licence to kill."

Foreign journalists told a **very different story**. Yugoslav authorities openly advertised they were mounting a "counter-terror" operation in Racak on January 15th, in response to the KLA killing four police officers a week earlier. They invited international media to attend. An Associated Press film crew was accepted - French reporters reviewed their footage, and interviewed them. *Figaro* duly reported five days later how police entered "an empty village... sticking close to the walls," before becoming embroiled in a pitched battle:

"Shooting was intense, as they were fired on from KLA trenches dug into the hillside. The fighting intensified sharply on the hilltops above the village..."

guerrillas, encircled, were trying desperately to break out. A score of them in succeeded, as the police themselves admitted.”



Yugoslav forces conduct the Racak “counter terror” operation

Meanwhile, *Le Monde* similarly recorded how Racak was abandoned by “virtually all” its civilian inhabitants at this time. Taken over by the KLA, “smoke came from only two chimneys” in the vicinity, during a harsh winter. When Yugoslav security forces entered the village “in the wake of a police armored vehicle,” it was “nearly deserted”:

“They advanced through the streets under the fire of [KLA] fighters lying in ambush in the woods above the village. The exchange of fire continued

throughout the operation...The main fighting took place in the woods...The [] was trapped in between. [Racak] was a stronghold of Albanian independence fighters.”

Eventually, police fled under a hail of bullets. The KLA tipped off KVM 24 hours later that dozens of dead civilians could be found in Racak. How Yugoslav authorities dragged “innocent men, women and children” from their homes in a largely deserted, enemy-occupied village, then “forced” them to kneel before execution, all while being relentlessly fired upon by the KLA, is certain. In fact, this scenario was literally impossible - not least because neither women nor children were among the dead.

Graphic images of the purported execution site, captured January 16th by Kosovo-Albanian newspaper KOHA Ditore before Walker et al arrived, exclusively depict males of fighting age. There are strong grounds to believe the scene was tampered with subsequently too. One of the pictured victims evidently shot in the head, wore a traditional Albanian white cap by the time **KVM visited**. He markedly lacked this headgear in the photos published by KOHA Ditore.

Fast forward to April 2002, and Yugoslav leader Slobodan Milosevic was on trial at the ICTY, **cross-examining** Walker's personal assistant Karol Drewienkiewicz about the “massacre” scene in Racak. He enquired, “how is it possible for somebody to be hit in the head and have his cap remain on his head?” He added, “forensic experts say that from a shot [and] wound of that kind, your eyes would pop out let alone a cap being displaced from your head.”

Asked if she considered if “this could possibly be a rigged scene for television purposes” at the time, Drewienkiewicz admitted it “certainly was one of the thoughts that went through my head as I was going up the hill.” Later, Milosevic probed whether she knew Racak “was encircled by trenches and

bunkers” constructed by the KLA. She confirmed Walker’s motley retinue traversed extensive makeshift military installations and dugouts to reach the “massacre” site. KLA territory, in other words.

‘Greatly Complicated’

On January 18th 1999, two days after Walker threatened Belgrade with grave consequences if international investigators weren’t allowed to inspect Racak, another impactful publicity stunt was staged. ICTY chief prosecutor Louis Arbour appeared at Macedonia’s border with Yugoslavia, one hour’s drive from the “massacre” site, **demanding entry**. Yugoslav authorities denied her request. International news crews, which she just so happened to have in tow, serendipitously captured this dramatic scene in real-time, for global broadcast.

Western journalists barely noticed when later on the same day, Yugoslav police arrived in Racak to collect corpses for forensic examination in Pristina, a task made extremely difficult by KLA militants shooting at them through the trees. Once retrieved, Belgrade invited Belarusian and EU specialists to conduct concurrent autopsies on the bodies. Brussels dispatched a team from Finland led by dentist Helen Ranta, of Helsinki University.

Yugoslav and Belarusian pathologists identified **gunpowder residue** on almost every body examined, amply suggesting they were KLA fighters, killed in combat. Finnish investigators did not make their findings available, but on March 17th 1999 – as we shall see, a highly significant date – Ranta convened a **press conference** in Pristina about what had transpired in Racak. Under Walker’s watchful gaze, she began by stressing what followed was merely her “personal view”, not the EU’s official position, or her team’s findings.



Helen Ranta attends a memorial to Racak 'massacre' victims, 2022

Ranta went on to endorse Walker's account almost wholesale, repeatedly citing dubious "information obtained" from KVM observers as fact. Straying from the desired narrative somewhat though, she admitted just 22 bodies male, no women, no children - were found in Racak. Nonetheless, she asserted the corpses "were *most likely* [emphasis added] shot where they were found." The dentist unconvincingly based her judgement in large part on no ammunition being found in their pockets. The later-released **Finnish report** found just *one* victim had been shot at close-range.

Ranta conceded her team's probe was "greatly complicated" by "investigating the bodies" at a Pristina morgue "approximately a week from the estimated time of death of the victims," without any "chain of custody." She further conceded, "what may or may not have happened to the bodies" during the intervening time was "difficult to establish...with absolute certainty." Thus, the findings could not conclusively determine "whether there was a battle or whether the victims died under some other circumstances."

Of course, Western media made no mention of these troublesome details when reporting the press conference. Subsequently, **Ranta revealed** that shortly prior, she privately met with Walker, “a very unpleasant experience indeed.” He aggressively pressured her to unequivocally blame Yugoslav authorities for the carnage, while characterising all slain as unarmed civilians. **She refused**, so he dramatically snapped several pencils, before flinging them on to the table in front of her.

No ordinary diplomat, Walker was a key US operative on the frontline of Ronald Reagan’s murderous Latin American dirty wars, during the 1980s. Formally a person of interest in official investigations into the notorious **Iran/Contra Affair**, as ambassador to El Salvador at the end of that bloody decade he **personally whitewashed** a very real slaughter of **Jesuit priests** by Washington-sponsored death squads. He stated, “in times like this, of great emotion and great anger, things like this happen.”

In **March 2000**, *The Times* exposed how the CIA penetrated KVM to “[dev]elop ties with the KLA,” and provide its proxy warriors with “military training manuals and field advice on fighting the Yugoslav army and Serbian police.” Europeans within the OSCE resultantly “questioned the motives and loyalty of Walker during this period. NATO’s criminal bombing of Belgrade completed what they were left to ponder whether they were “betrayed by an American policy that made airstrikes inevitable”:

“The American agenda consisted of their diplomatic observers, aka the CIA, operating on completely different terms to the rest of Europe and the OSCE.”

‘Final Warning’

Walker was nominated to lead KVM by then-Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, and routinely reported to her while in the post. When apprised of what he'd found in Racak, **she remarked** cheerily, "Spring has come early." Washington's long-desired bombing of Belgrade could at last be launched, to the claimed necessity of preventing further massacres of civilians by Yugoslav authorities, if not a total genocide of all Kosovo Albanians. There just one more publicity stunt to execute.

As NATO's destruction of Yugoslavia lacked UN Security Council authorisation - making the bombing completely illegal - it was necessary to create a false impression the "international community" had attempted to resolve the "crisis" in Kosovo via diplomatic means. So it was on January 30th 1999, NATO Secretary General Javier Solana dispatched a strongly worded "final warning" to Milosevic, summoning him and representatives of his government to Rambouillet, France, for a "peace conference" with the KLA's leadership the next week.

Markedly, Yugoslavia's delegation to the conference was highly diverse, with all Kosovo's major ethnic groups represented. This included Albanians, Bosniaks, Roma, Turks, and others. Serbs were a *minority*. US officials **were reportedly** flummoxed by this, publicly insisting on referring to Belgrade's contingent as "the Serbs" regardless. Meanwhile, Albright displayed a high "dismissive attitude" towards non-Serb representatives. US officials also exhibited no interest whatsoever in any of the Yugoslav's delegation's arguments or positions.

This was because, in reality, Rambouillet was always intended to be a "war conference". State Department officials drew up **wide-ranging proposals** amounting to total NATO occupation of Yugoslavia, and Kosovo's complete political and economic independence, amounting to outright secession. Under the non-negotiable terms - Belgrade had the choice of accepting or being bombed - NATO personnel and vehicles would enjoy "free and

unrestricted passage and unimpeded access” anywhere in the country, “including associated airspace and territorial waters.”

NATO would also be permitted to commandeer “any areas or facilities” it wished in Yugoslavia, “as required for support, training, and operations,” and be “granted the use of airports roads, rails, and ports without payment of duties, dues, tolls, or charges.” If the military alliance needed “to make improvements or modifications to certain infrastructure” locally, Belgrade to foot the bill. Meanwhile, NATO personnel would be immune from arrest or prosecution if they committed *any* crime.



Press photo of the Rambouillet “peace conference”

It was an agreement no government anywhere in the world could or would ever willingly accept. Which was precisely the point, as US officials **widely admitted** subsequently. Albright’s assistant James Rubin **explained** a year later “publicly, we had to make clear that we were seeking an agreement...privately we knew the chances of the Serbs agreeing were quite small.” Helen Ranta

press conference was convened as the “talks” were nearing their end. The next day, Milosevic formally rejected NATO’s derisory non-deal.

Claiming to have exhausted all diplomatic avenues, and with public focus on the Racak “massacre” renewed, NATO’s assault on Yugoslavia was announced on March 19th 1999 for five days hence, permitting OSCE observers to flee. The bombing’s first week focused exclusively on Belgrade, and areas of Yugoslavia outside Kosovo. If the military alliance was truly blitzing the country to prevent a planned, looming genocide, it’s rather odd Milosevic not only effectively handed a 12-day-long grace period to begin executing one, but also didn’t.

Nonetheless, to this day NATO’s criminal destruction of Yugoslavia is **wide touted** in the West as a righteous “humanitarian intervention”, which prevented another Holocaust. There was indeed a mass exodus of Kosovo Albanians during the bombing. Some fled the military alliance’s terror and destruction. As a KLA operative who “[filmed] the plight of displaced Albanian civilians with a video camera” for Western consumption admitted to The Guardian in **June 1999** too, “KLA advice, rather than Serbian deportations” also a major motivating factor.

Political scientist Babak Bahador **has written** a book about Racak’s propaganda value, explaining how “unexpected and emotive images” published in the media can “rapidly open policy windows of opportunity” for Western powers. Of course, the CIA and Pentagon are well-aware of that, routinely exploit such displays for this precise purpose. Given the Empire **covertly influences** content of Hollywood movies, it’s somewhat surprising NATO’s bombing of Yugoslavia has not been committed to celluloid since.

This may be because the facts of Racak are very clear, even if hidden in plain sight. To reiterate the time’s established narrative might open easily proven and admitted lies to re-exposure. That NATO destroyed an independent country on the basis of false atrocity propaganda and fraud, in which all the

West's journalists, rights groups, and politicians were intimately complicit simply cannot be countenanced. After all, that might mean they can't get a with it again.



189 Likes · 32 Restacks

Discussion about this post

Comments

Restacks



Write a comment...



TheRooster 5 Mar

♥ Liked by Kit Klarenberg

Absolutely unbelievable. Balkans are very complex good job you are the first person to write at a way that I can follow

♥ LIKE (23) 💬 REPLY ↗ SHARE

1 reply by Kit Klarenberg



Weihan Xing 5 Mar

♥ Liked by Kit Klarenberg

FABULOUS essay here! This is a must-read expose of just one of the vile propaganda ploys implemented by the US and its NATO allies to justify the rape and slaughter of Yugoslavia. Plea and PASTE the link and send to all your friends and family. This is a must-read.

♥ LIKE (15) 💬 REPLY ↗ SHARE

43 more comments...

© 2025 Kit Klarenberg · [Privacy](#) · [Terms](#) · [Collection notice](#)
[Substack](#) is the home for great culture