
SERBIA ACQUITS STATE SECURITY OFFICERS OF ARMED UPRISING

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Balkan Transnational Justice (13 July 2018)

Belgrade Higher Court on Friday acquitted the Special Operations Unit, JSOs commander Milorad Ulemek, alias Legija, and his former colleagues of staging an uprising in 2001 against the newly-elected Serbian government, when armed members of the unit blocked roads and refused to obey orders.

Ulemek, who was also sentenced in 2009 to 40 years in prison for the 2003 murder of Prime Minister Zoran Djindjic, was not present at the sentencing.

The court also acquitted former JSO officers Zvezdan Jovanovic, Veselin Lecic, Dragoslav Krsmanovic, Dragisa Radic, Vladimir Pocic and Mica Petrakovic. The court had previously separated the proceedings against an eighth officer, Dusan Maricic, from the rest.

The policemen were accused of blocking a main street in the Serbian capital and the road to the town of Vrbas in November 2001, allegedly because the newly-installed democratic government had sent two JSO members, brothers Nenad and Predrag Banovic, to stand trial for war crimes at the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, ICTY.

Two years later, Djindjic was shot dead in front of the government building in Belgrade in an operation organised by the JSO and the Zemun Clan organised crime gang.

In 2009, Ulemek was convicted of masterminding the assassination, while JSO member Zvezdan Jovanovic pulled the trigger.

Ulemek has also been convicted of the murder of 1980s Serbian President Ivan Stambolic, and the attempted murder of former opposition leader Vuk Draskovic.

The verdict on Friday was also attended by the leader of the ultranationalist Serbian Radical Party, Vojislav Seselj, who recently pledged to seek a review of Ulemek's conviction for the 2003 murder of Djindjic.

The JSO was formed in the 1990s on President Slobodan Milosevic's orders and run by Jovica Stanisic and Franko Simatovic, who are currently being retried for war crimes in the Hague Tribunal after their initial acquittal in 2013.

The unit carried out secret operations for the state and allegedly committed mass murders during the conflicts in Bosnia, Croatia and Kosovo. It was disbanded in 2003.

<http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/serbian-court-acquits-policemen-of-2001-mutiny-charges->

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