
ANNEX 44

**ICTY, *Gotovina et al.*, IT-060-90, Excerpts from the
testimony of Witness John Geoffrey William Hill, 27 &
28 May 2008, Transcripts, pp. 3736-3741, 3746-3752,
3756-3757, 3766-3768, 3771-3772, 3776, 3778-3779, 3786**

The International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY)

Case *Gotovina et al.*, IT-060-90

Transcripts of witness testimonies

Witness: John Goeffrey William Hill

(The commander of the United Nations Military Police in Sector South from June until
December 1995)

27 May 2008

[...]

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[...]

Mr. Geoff Hill was the commander of the United Nations Military Police in Sector South from June until December 1995. Prior to Operation Storm, he liaised with the RSK minister of the interior and chief of police in Knin, and worked to maintain the security of UN personnel throughout Sector South, and to prevent hijacks and theft the UN equipment.

He was present in Knin during the artillery attacks on 4 and 5 August 1995, and observed the shelling of Knin from the UNHCR compound. After Operation Storm, he managed to leave the UN HQ compound during the HV blockade and gain access to many areas in Sector South where he observed shelling damage and also witnessed HV soldiers, Special Police, and civilian police engaged in looting or acts of destruction. He also discovered several dead bodies and evidence of killings on the road used by the Serbs to flee the Krajina.

Mr. Hill also gained the trust of a HV military police commander named Ivan Juric, who indicated that he was in charge of all military

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police units in the territory of the former RSK, including their anti-terrorist unit, and who provided Mr. Hill with information regarding the conduct of Operation Storm and the fact that all Serbs in the territory of the former RSK were considered terrorists.

[...]

Q. Let's turn now to the shelling that happened on 4 August. If you could ~~please explain to the Court what you personally~~

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observed or heard of the shelling on that day.

A. On that morning at 0500 exactly, an artillery barrage started of Knin, in what I believe was from the south and the east. It was hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of artillery rounds. I immediately moved with the platoon I had on the grass to the back of the MP building, taking two MPs out of building and sending them up to their bunkers. We stayed in the bunker. It was for the escort platoon. There was two major salvos. I believe one was about 30 minutes, long followed by a pause which I had believed would be for them to reload to restock, and then another 30 minutes.

It was hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of roads. I was in the bunker with the platoon this way to me. The doors were open approximately this wide, and I could see out over the town and there was orange glows and original bursts from the air-bursts of the artillery.

That went on for approximately 90 minutes, and there was enough of a lull that I could then move up to the top of the camp where my MP platoon was to my bunker. My bunker is on the edge of the camp with the ARSK camp, and I'm looking directly into Knin.

The shelling continued. It was getting to the point where we could listen to how close the round was coming in and observe. I took some photos of the town being shelled. At that point -- or during that time, a mortar round impacted the building directly over my head on the corner. A subsequent UNMO CBA or CDA was done to say that it was an 82-millimetre mortar from the ARSK. And a rifle propelled grenade passed the entrance the bunker and detonated approximately six feet off the

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ground back to my left, and blew myself and Corporal - I don't recall his name - down the stairs. We lost helmet, and we lost our weapons. And at that point, the shelling abated to the point where it was just harassment, rather than a massive salvo of hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of rounds.

[...]

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[...]

Q. Again, Mr. Hill, I think on the same page, and I think also during the summary you just gave us, you used the term "harassment fire" which you indicated was the kind of shelling that was occurring after the initial salvos.

Can you please explain to the Court what you mean by harassment fire?

A. It's a term, I believe, first used by the Americans in World War II, and then later in Vietnam

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the enemy is aware they are being attacked. It limits movement, it limits resupply, and it basically is harassing the enemy rather than an all out offensive, like very earlier in the morning where there are hundreds and hundreds of rounds.

So, in the morning, there was that initial attack, hundreds and hundreds and hundreds. It abated to this through the day; and then later in the evens prior to 2300, it picked up again to be the second highest level of shelling for the day in Knin.

[...]

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[...]

Q. And moving now to the time that you said the shelling picked up at about 2300 hours, can you tell the Court what you were doing at about 2300 hours?

A. I was summonsed to the front gate of the camp where I met the Chief of Staff, Colonel Leslie, at the time. General Forand, our commander, had decided that he would take in the Serb refugees. They had been accumulating at the gate throughout the day, seeking refuge from the shelling. At that point, there was in excess of 300. General Forand directed they would come in. The task was given to me. Colonel Leslie left. I used my escort platoon and my MP platoon, and we brought all the refugees in, searched them, lodged them in, I believe, one of the bars on base, as well as an auditorium and a gym; then began the process of searching, taking them to meals, putting a wire compound around which later eventually rose to over 850 and half our camp.

Q. Can you tell the Court, starting at 2300 hours, how long it took you to process everyone in on that night?

A. Until approximately 0230 hours.

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Q. Mr. Hill, can you give the Court an idea of what the makeup of what this group of refugees was?

A. Women, children, old men, old ladies. There were some military-aged individuals in it. Basically, people that have come from the town. They had some bags, some personal belongs as they came in.

[...]

Q. Thank you. Now If we can move to the following day, the 5th of August, and if you could tell the Court, again, what you personally observed or heard of the shelling on that day?

A. At approximately 0510, the shelling started again, same as the 4th, in extremely large volumes, hundreds and hundreds of round, slightly less than the bombardment on the morning of the 4th, throughout the town of Knin.

[...]

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[...]

THE WITNESS: This was approximately 0930 hours. While talking to my commander, General Forand, an artillery round hit the wire at the corner of our camp. General Forand instructed me to go and check what had occurred. I left the camp with a number of soldiers. I got to the T-intersection, just outside the camp. I had also brought an OT-64 with me, and I saw six individuals who had been killed. Four were wounded, a mixture of civilian and military - I do not recall the exact mix - laying on the ground on that road from the intersection, a little up past the camp.

I went back into the camp. I requested an engineer, a Canadian engineer, to go and clear the bodies of any potential booby traps. Then at that point, I was tasked by General Forand to set up a patrol within the camp, because the Jordanian troops were not going into their fighting positions. They were staying in their bunkers. My soldiers were to go around and get them in their firing positions.

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I later learned that the bodies were all bagged by the individuals that went out with me. All the weapons, grenade, rockets were taken off the soldiers who were ARSK, and lodged in my cell area. And that's the last dealing I had with that.

[...]

Q. Mr. Hill, you indicated that the bodies at the intersection were bagged by some of the people that you had gone out with. Do you know what happened to those bodies later on?

A. They were bagged in the black body-bags that we had and put by

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the side of the road, across from the camp on a road leading upwards out of Knin. I was told that HV, when they were martialing to go into Knin for the last night, fired AKs into the bodies after opening the bags, and that urinated and defecated on the bodies.

At a later date, the bodies were there for quite some time. I recall seeing them with the bags opened, and one body in particular had been -- had feces on the body and the bodies shot, even though the bodies died or the cause of death was the artillery round.

Q. Thank you. At some point later in the day, in your statement, you indicate that the HV entered the town -- or, actually, that they had come to the UN compound.

Can you describe for the Court how they came to the compound?

A. This is the first time that they came?

Q. Yes. When was the first time you saw them?

A. It was around noon that they came in, from around to the right of camp, where the Serb or ARSK barracks were. They arrived with three tanks, T-54, 55 -- I'm sorry, six tanks, T-54, 55, and three APCs, T-80s, with troops on foot. We talked

to them. General Leslie -- they wanted to come into the camp and take the refugees, and I'm sorry, Colonel Leslie, at the time, was negotiating. He eventually negotiated that the Croats would stay out of the camp.

The Croats told us that "We must stay in the camp." I was there discussing with the soldiers. Two of them were Canadians. One was on top of a tank. I talked to him and asked him how the offensive had gone. They said they took 30 hours to take Drnis, and then it only took five

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from there to Knin.

I asked what they were going to do. He said they were going to kill all the Serb. The other individual, who was from, I believe, Montreal or Ottawa, was on the left, was infanteer. And I had asked him, because he spoke good English, what he was doing there, and he said he had come back to fight against the Serbs and that he had been waiting for this since 1945. He was approximately 22 years old.

[...]

Q. And referring to your second statement this time, that would be P292, I believe, at page 0057-7655. That is, again, beginning at line 20, where you describe trying to get into the town of Knin. Can you tell the Court about that?

A. Around supper time, I took two OT-64 and two M-113 APCs to go into town, to try to get back any refugees that we could find. We went down the road to the T-intersection, where that building was I showed with the damage; turned right and got almost down to the gas station. There was one T-54 tank in front of us. They started to move the tank, but then a commander came, either a captain or a major HV. And he got extremely agitated, and I said we were going into town. We were UN, we were trying to find refugees. He absolutely refused, he said it was

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forbidden, he put tank across the road, he was quite angry, and he ordered us back to camp.

When you looked behind, and turned around from the gas station and looked up the road, beside our camp, the entire road to the top of the hill was lined, front to back, of tanks and APCs of HV with infantry on top. And it was their assembly area before their final assault on Knin.

After talking to this major, he had talked about taking our pistols, and he had later put a tank in front of the gate to come and take our pistols and then later removed. And we were told that we could not go into Knin that night.

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[...]

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[...]

Q. Now going back to your trip through Knin with the SIS officer, can you describe for the Court what you witnessed of the behaviour of the soldiers in Knin?

A. They were shooting into the air, they were looting across the town. We spent approximately two hours driving around the town. There was various check-points run by the HV, at that point not military police, which we freely got through with the identification. The soldier were shooting in the air. At one point, we stopped at a bar. They kicked out front. They had cut a pig in half, were eating the pig, offered us some whiskey. Virtually, every area of town you went to, the soldiers were coming out the of the homes with appliances, TVs, radios,

clothes, and putting them into vehicles, that they were stealing from the town of Knin.

There was buildings that were burning, there were buildings that were either damaged or destroyed from artillery fire.

[...]

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[...]

THE WITNESS: It wasn't concentrated on one area. On any given area of the town you went to, behind the hospital, behind the parliament, below the castle, you would see cars being stolen and soldiers coming out of houses or apartments with material they were loading the cars with. Any part of town you went to, you saw this.

JUDGE ORIE: As you describe it, it sounds as a massive exercise.

THE WITNESS: Perhaps, on one area, when we went to a lady's house where he put the sign on, perhaps I only saw three in that area of three or four street, three soldiers. It is more pronounced downtown. There is a bigger concentration of soldiers, but also they were drinking and shooting, as well as looting.

When you got outside of downtown, it was purely the looting.

They weren't sitting around and drinking.

JUDGE ORIE: Yes. And no doubt as to these being HV soldiers.

THE WITNESS: Oh, no doubt at all.

JUDGE ORIE: Fully uniformed.

THE WITNESS: Absolutely. With weapons.

[...]

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[...]

Q. And, here, Mr. Hill, you discuss an incident with a United Nations Serbian interpreter which occurred in downtown Knin on that day, and I would like you to explain to the Court what happened there.

A. At approximately 19:30, I was advised there was an issue with the UN worker downtown. I took several of my police with me. I went down to the police station, and found a lieutenant HV, who came with me. At a certain point of town, in an open courtyard in between two apartment buildings, there was approximately 30 military individuals standing around.

At that point, they were agitated because of our weapons. I had to give up my long arm and my pistol to my second in command, and then I went to talk to who I believe was in charge, who I thought was the commander of 4 Brigade. There was an UN pick-up truck with the right front tire shot out, and it was flat. The back of the truck was filled with personal belongings, and there was an UN employee, a Serbian interpreter, standing there.

When I approached the individual, there was an HV civilian police there, Jan, who spoke very good English, and he acted as our interpreter.

I asked about the situation. I asked about the situation. The commander showed me a piece of paper that was in, I believe, Croatian, that showed

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that this individual had served in the ARSK army for, I believe, nine or ten months.

Through the interpreter, he said he was a Chetnik and they were going to kill him. All I understood from the commander was the word "Chetnik," and I understood what it meant. Apparently, this individual left our camp, gone to his own accommodation, and was retrieving personal items. We negotiated back and forth that he could not shoot the individual, it was not his responsibility, the individual belonged to me.

And, eventually, he agreed that the individual would go with me; however, he said that he could not guarantee the safety of the individual if his soldiers saw him, or my safety which was the first time they said that. He said that any helicopters leaving our camp with Serbs would be shot down, and any Serb men of military age, 19 to 60, who leave our camp would be shot.

At this point, we took the individual, we surrounded him, moved him back to our two vehicles, and drove him back to our camp.

[...]

Q. And at this point in your statement, Mr. Hill, you discuss a trip that you took through the town of Kistanje, and I would like to describe for the Court what you witnessed in that town?

A. That was the worse town I had seen for damage. There was no inhabitants at all. I believe there was an HV company there on the

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factory side. The majority of the homes destroyed by either artillery or fire. They had artillery impacts on the outside of the town for the first time, where we saw how they had walked the artillery into the town.

There was a massive war memorial, beautiful. It was huge made of it appeared to be granite, that had been virtually destroyed, not by artillery but it appeared as if by sledge hammers. In Canada, we would call it - I can't remember - vandalism, but it was destroyed, completely destroy. It was a massive monument. There was an extremely strong smell of dead bodies, but yet we found none. There was that single company of HV soldiers who were resting by the factory area.

[...]

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Q. Mr. Hill, here, you describe what you saw in the town of Gracac

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and I would like to you tell the Court, please, what you witnessed there.

A. We saw artillery impacts in the fields leading up to the town. There was no MP, so there was HV. I remember one check-point with HV soldiers by the impacts. The town was fairly well destroyed. Some houses were still burning. There was looting, and there were still some soldiers there. As it says in my statement, they were friendly. Again, large very strong smell of bodies. We drove everywhere with our windows open, so we could identify that. Then we continued to the Czech battalion.

Q. Can you tell the Court who was doing the looting?

A. HV soldiers.

Q. And did you see any civilians in this town at that time?

A. No. The town was empty.

[...]

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Q. Mr. Hill, is that an example of what you saw on that road?

A. Yes. We would see a group of three or four homes, no soldiers, no civilians around, and the homes would be burning. So I simply took a picture as an example.

Another point along the route, once we got to Otric for the first time, we saw all of the fields, all of the animals, cows, pigs, sheep, whatever, had been killed, shot.

[...]

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Q. Mr. Hill, here, you note that on driving back towards Otric, you saw an orange VW, which I take to mean Volkswagen, flat bed, with bodies inside. I'd like you to explain these vehicles to the Court and what you know about them.

A. As we drove north and we found the route, when we passed Otric, we noticed six bodies, four soldiers and two civilians, in a field by a tractor. I wanted to take photos but I didn't, because we had found the route. By the time we had gone up and back down, the bodies were gone and we had passed a Volkswagen flat bed, orange, with the bodies on the back. What we later discovered is this is how the HV were getting rid of the bodies. These individuals, I believe, had grey uniforms, and it was the orange, flat bed VWs that were removing the bodies whenever they

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were found.

Q. And had you seen these orange VWs elsewhere in this sector?

A. After this point in time, yes.

[...]

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Q. And during this discussion, did you ask Mr. Juric the units over which he had command?

A. Yes. I had asked what the responsibility of the military police were, specifically on the day that the Croats soldiers had come to the camp. In front of the camp, I saw an individual with a shaved head and a grey uniform, almost like an overall uniform with a black belt. But he was carrying an MP-5, which is a sub-machine gun. It was suppressed with a laser sight. He had an old man at his feet, almost like a dog.

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I had asked Ivan what he was, and he said he was counter-terrorist unit. And I asked if that was part of the military police, and he said, yes, that they had military police, the HV. But as part of the military police, they had a counter-terrorism unit. I asked Ivan, I said, "Well, who are terrorists?" And he said, "Serbs."

[...]