

MLADEN KATAVIĆ

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**The conversation is recorded; the recordings are filed
under labels**

mkatavic1

and

mkatavic2

The conversation is conducted in Split, in hotel President

I am Mladen Katavić, son of my late father Ante and late mother Marija; I was born in Vojvodina, where my parents were colonized, on 7th May 1951. I finished elementary school in my place of birth, but never lived there since that. I spent most of my life living in Croatia. Now I'm retired. I live in Split, Ruđera Boškovića 26. I was a brigadier of Croatian army, in pension since 1998. By profession I'm a flying instructor for transport helicopters. That would be it...

OK, so... One of the usual questions in the beginning of the conversation is where were you at the beginning of the war, and what were you doing during the war?

The beginning of the war... Just before the war I was already a sort of a dissident. But that's a separate story. I instituted criminal proceedings against two, so called, "greater Serbs" to the JNA (The Yugoslav People's Army) district attorney office in 1989.

That was a little early.

That was early, but that was when I found them. I knew that nothing was to happen to them back then in 1989, but through these criminal proceedings to the JNA I wanted to check how the pyramid works, and is the pyramid being oriented toward Belgrade. I was interested in the system, whether this was done by the system or if it was still being done outside the system? This is where I clarified some things for myself, for example, that the attacker Milošević already agreed on everything with the military leadership, with the Serbian military leadership.

You knew that back in 1989?

That's what I definitely knew back in 1989, and I started to play a little dumb.

In the existing ex army?

That's right. Back in 1987 I was supposed to be escadrille commander, of an elite anti-submarine helicopter escadrille, as a young and able major. I was supposed to be there in 1987. And already in 1988, due to certain events, I started showing my teeth. As the matter of fact, I wasn't completely pretending that I didn't know what's going on. There were certain events there, a certain event, I shouldn't speak too broadly now, there was an accident due to a technical malfunction, it was a total mess-up, there was an error which was commanded by the military structure in order to do something, and the technicians weren't equipped. And then they tried to blame it on the pilots. And I never gave my profession. I love my profession more than anything and I defended it. That's when I noticed that things are being set up, that the only important thing was not to accuse Serbs. So, after I saw that all the existing laws are being broken, I said: «Wait, is this JNA as it's supposed to be, or are we already becoming something else?» I knew the answer to that. To put it shortly: in 1990, I was already well on the ice. The war found me on a non-existent place, in Lora, on a ship «Vis». And I was an experienced, one of the most experienced helicopter drivers in the army.

And when did you move to...?

I wanted to definitely unhook in 1990, in the end of 1990. That was my decision. However, the guys from the navy practically begged me: «Don't do that. Everybody knows you and your family, this and that. Maybe something will open up.» But I knew it myself, thinking that politics might offer a solution of some sort. I said: «I don't see anything there...»

I took a sick-leave in 1991. And I was among the first to take of in July. I asked to be taken off. I got my papers. I signed the statement in which I obliged to leave the apartment within 15 days since the end of the active military service, and I said: «I would like to see you take it from Ruđer Bošković, I would like to see it leave for Serbia!»

So, you immediately became a part of the defense?

That's right. That's right. I made some contacts even before. I wasn't a well

known as a civilian, but in military circles, they ... that's the card that KOS played right away. For example, they knew very well that I'm dangerous for them, for the Serbs, and they started up a story that I was leaving because I wasn't a capable pilot, that something was wrong with me. That I was no expert for helicopters. I mean, they already . . .

So, you moved to? Moved to where? What happened next?

So, there was certainly a core there, rumors were spreading. By the beginning of August, there was definitely a core of pilots.

August of ninety...?

One.

1991?

That's right. By the beginning of August 1991 we formed a core of pilots.

And you already stepped out?

That's right, we already stepped out. A core was formed, and first contracts were arranged with ZNG (The Croatian National Guard), no, no, with MUP (Ministry of Inner Affairs). We couldn't even arrange with ZNG in Zagreb; some traveled there. I didn't go to Zagreb, but I signed for ZNG here in the beginning of September. Some from this group traveled for Zagreb and there, around 20th August they signed first contracts with MUP. So, this core of ours was consisted of Sead Hađić, Drago Brkić...

All of them stepped out in the same time you did?

Yes, approximately.

OK. When did you begin to fly?

We didn't take over the area of Divulje until 1992. That's when we entered the area of Divulje.

Do you have anything to do with the commandment of Imra Agotić in May 1992, when a mixed transport escadrille was formed?

No, our escadrille was formed in the beginning of November 1991. The commandment was issued by Tus, the head of the main headquarters for escadrille forming. That's when I was made commander, through that

commandment. I was also assigned a deputy, and a technical assistant. So, three people. Our task was to take the group of pilots and make a list of professional pilots who would be capable of fulfilling the demands required of a mixed flight escadrille.

Which were the people...?

Dragan Pavković was my deputy, and Antun Erceg technical assistant, in charge of flight technical devices. Dragan Pavković.

Antun?

Erceg.

And that was the beginning?

That was the beginning, but that was November. By that point, by September, we were already a flight group, a flight group with their tasks. For example, back then I was assisting in ZMIN (Air observance and guidance). I was in charge of a fight shift at ZMIN. That was to do with alarms, estimations, what and how to do, helping with...

When did you enter Divulje?

In the beginning of 1992.

The beginning of 1992?

Yes, because they left at the end of 1991. A part of them left at 22nd December 1991. We secured Divulje from outside for 15 days. We entered in somewhere around 7th, 8th January.

So, it's January 1992?

Yes, January. But nobody was crazy about Divulje the way they were back then. But we used some of our strengths, connections, donors, and in a month we managed to achieve really good conditions. Not in a flying sense – we had no aircrafts. But we created habitable conditions. We had some phones there, a sort of an operative centre. We created conditions in the hangar to take in something, to do something. We had all these services, a flight-technical

logistics, this and that. We didn't have a kitchen or something like that. So, when we made an oath in March of 1992, after first contacts from Zagreb were made, from HRZ (Croatian Air Force), some from the headquarters came – they couldn't believe how much we did ourselves, as they gave us nothing. And how important we were back then, with no technical equipment, without anybody... That's when, among other things, "Orkan" missiles were fired at Split airport and Divulje, in February 1992. We knew exactly where «Orkani» missiles stroke, but we had nothing. The enemy knew that we were assembled, and that we only lack some technical equipment – and that we will pose a massive problem for them.

When did you start posing a problem?

We started posing a problem by spring. The first helicopter was «Stara frajla» (Old maid). That was the first helicopter that came to us in 1992.

So, you started at 1992...?

We started our action flights. So, my mixed, mixed flight escadrille Split which was under my command got the task of accepting an air force group, whatever was available in the air force fleet. So it came... We accepted one MIG. Zagreb accepted one, and we took one deserter. We waited for it there. We have been following the services for three, four days... It was organized in such a way that the engine of the MIG was shut off. It's as if though... this boy never landed in Split airport. But he was very well guided, came to the place, pushed on the brakes and killed the engine. As if though he landed there 100 times before. That was the action of taking in the deserter.

That happened on 15th May

How about you? What did your first flights look like?

Our first flights... it was a little, it was basic, almost nothing. We went to Dubrovnik to pick up the wounded. One of the first tasks was Dubrovnik, then Lopud, it's the playground. We took the wounded, made it easier for the hospital, and we took the severely wounded so that they wouldn't have to suffer due to road transportation. That's when we only had one helicopter: MI-8, our «Stara frajla» (Old maid).

MI?

MI-8, the old one, originally from the ex army, the ordinary MI-8. A transport one, that's the JNA version that they had. We also had two; one was air-tractor – an agricultural plane equipped with guns, and a Cessna 172 with guns. They weren't ours, they belonged to HRZ, but we held them in Divulje. We had two MIG planes. So, the first time that MIG was in action – it was done by us, as a group. Two MIG planes were in action by Dubrovnik, I think it was 1st July, I'm not sure, I have it somewhere... They acted successfully from our escadrille and afterwards they weren't active, as they were in standby, each carrying two air bombs called «krmača», as there was a repository in the hinterland of **** which we were about to set free. So, our escadrille already took part in the freeing of the area of Dubrovnik and around Dubrovnik, as well as in bringing in the wounded. I think this took place four–five times, I went there along with other pilots. We used to bring in seven, eighth, as many of the heavily wounded as we could. We could bring up to 10 wounded people in that helicopter to Divulje, that is to Split hospital.

OK, that's the beginning. However, in 1992 you start flying for Bosnia as well?

For Bosnia in 1992? I don't think so, except for some humanitarian flights that the others undertook. Ours didn't go until 1992. Those were certain groups that had MIG 26 and flew from the Split airport, from Divulje. They mostly flew for the areas where they...

Who flew? What groups were those?

Those were paid Russian crews. Paid Russian crews and humanitarian organizations.

Wait a minute. So, those were paid Russian crews taking off from Divulje...

Or from the Split airport, most often from the Split airport...

And where did they go?

They went for Bosnia with their humanitarian loads. Mostly to the areas where the Muslims were in the majority. Mostly to those areas.

You don't know who backed up those flights? Who was really...?

There was a man from Austria, some gentlemen from England, I don't know myself who were all of them.

And you didn't know what was being transported back then?

No. No, we didn't. That was back then, in the autumn of 1992, somewhere around then. Autumn. After this in Dubrovnik, this begins by...

But tell me, in this period, before you started flying, was something coming to Divulje from Bosnia? Some people, some wounded?

I don't know about that. I didn't take notice. There were also other planes taking humanitarian routes. But yes, they were going for Sarajevo.

Yesterday you mentioned they called you «Katavić mixed escadrille».

Yes.

So, why were you Katavić mixed escadrille, and what did you do to deserve that title?

We deserved that title since, while the others were in Split collecting money and sought something in money, we were the only ones that never asked for money from either a company or an individual. We never asked for money. We had lists of what we needed: from ordinary things such as glasses, chairs, tables, to phones, computers etc. So we got a first computer from a group of people from Livno who lived in Germany. We were among the first to have a computer of a sort.

Is this why they said you were imaginative? You were resourceful?

Yes. While all the others asked for money, we knew exactly what we need, what could be... For Divulje were totally empty. With places burned down.

Flights for Bosnia – when do these start?

So, flights using our aircraft, the escadrille aircraft, began by the end of 1992. That means that we started with the first flights by the end of 1992. One of the great problems was flying from the islands je in middle Dalmatia. Flights involving medical help to the people from these islands who were in trouble were seized, practically from when JNA left, which was in spring 1991,

till the end of 1992, and nobody performed them. As soon as we became operative, seven days after we got the new helicopter, it was Christmas, and we started...we brought a sick man, a wounded man from Korčula. After these seven days we immediately started with the flights including medical help from the islands as well as medical help for the army's needs. The first serious operation including the wounded was in 1993, in the vicinity of Maslenica. Of course nobody there mentioned us. We were also a backup in Maslenica. I myself, for example, used to drive to Maslenica two, three times a day, from Zadar to Rijeka. I didn't know, and I was a commander, I didn't know that Maslenica action is in progress. I saw that something was going on, that there is a state of alert in Zadar; something was going on in Zadar. As I landed I saw there was nobody there, so I took some of the wounded that were taken care of only partly – which meant that something was up, something was going on. This wasn't something usual. So I'm driving them to Kantrida, and I have no idea that Maslenica action is taking place. We also intervened there. Whatever was needed. We were also «imaginative» because we used to perform five tasks per one flight. There were such occasions. We would perform five different tasks in one flight. I would take the wounded or the sick to Zagreb, and fill the gas tank on my way back. In reality I used the existing fuel to work on Velebit for couple of hours. Then I would fill in, work a couple of hours on a shift u working on Velebit – as it was impossible to work for seven days due to the storm – so that on the day when the weather was nice, it would take us 10 helicopters to compensate for the seven days we couldn't work. So, I helped out there, and just before the nightfall I go back to Divulje. I used to do that dozens of times. I worked on Velebit, but I never spent the night in Karlobag like all the others. Like the shifts who *did* spend the night in Karlobag and there, in Šepurine. So, that was around Velebit and Maslenica. However, the situation in Bosnia was becoming more complicated, and we already made contacts with Bosnia in 1992 regarding aircraft parts which were in some repositories in Bosnia. We mostly contacted Croats, warning them and

telling them it would be good if nobody took away, for example, tires for MIG planes from there. We wanted them to save certain assets of value to us or anybody else, so that we might know what's up with it, to be prepared. I don't know if that's so with the Muslims. Even if they asked for some flour, for some cans, we will also do that just so they wouldn't throw it away. So we had in middle Bosnia... there were some contacts there. We had contacts with the Muslims; they were cases when we were able to talk to them. So, we exchanged. We would get something from Zagreb. So we gave it... And we got sets of tires; I think we got over 100 sets of tires for MIG planes just for MIG planes. Not to mention that we had ammunition for MIG planes till the end of the war.

When did the more intensive flights for Bosnia start?

They started by the end of April in 1993. So, the end of April 1993, they started with a sort of agreement. What level was that? That was obviously governmental level, and it was later taken down to main headquarters level. As an escadrille commander, I was authorized to use safety council resolution, to conduct humanitarian flights with the volunteers who are ready to go...

Who issued a commandment for the flights?

I can't recall, but Agotić was a commander and he surely had to do something with it. I also know we talked over the phone and that I was issued a commandment of a sort.

Was it an oral commandment?

No, no, it was written. It was an agreement about flights on which everybody that will be in need on **that** area, those in greatest need, they will be medically provided for in Split, and we...

Just a minute. You were flying for Bosnia, and Agotić knew that. That was all agreed upon. You went to help there, to whom?

Back then it wasn't separated so that to... We went to the areas where Croats were in the majority. But it wasn't so that we only helped Croats, but also to whoever required our help from that area. For example, we drove a

certain number of Croats, a certain number of Muslims and a Serb here and there. That was...

So, you were helping everybody?

Yes. We didn't observe... We just said that we aren't there in a capacity of an army, but as volunteers, but also that the army gave us permission to do so. I mean, our military leadership gave us permission. Of course, we couldn't just take our aircrafts. But we weren't an army meant to help the HVO (Croatian Defense Council), instead we were humanitarians wanting to help on that area.

OK.

And that worked. So, we went if there were medical requests; medical requests from Split who got a call from, for example, from middle Bosnia, from Vitez. They got in on paper, perhaps, through fax machine, that they have a certain number of sick people there, such and such, and they need a better medical...

Attention?

Attention, because there medical care was on the level of ambulances. Even the hospital from Zenica mainly sent Muslim children over that line toward Split. The request came from somebody, from middle Bosnia, from medical circles, and not from the army.

So, this is how it worked? A health facility, or a hospital, would send a request...

To Split.

To Split. To whom in Split?

To KBC hospital in Split.

KBC hospital. And who was in charge of that in the hospital? Who was the main person to communicate back to you?

We got it through the civilian line. How could I say this? We got our requests directly from the medical staff.

Do you recall the name of a person, a doctor with whom you often cooperated?

Most often we cooperated with the head nurse Marija Županović, here from the KBC hospital. KBC hospital in Split.

Marija Županović?

Yes. And she knows quite a bit about it. She still works here.

Where? In KBC hospital?

Yes. And she knows quite a bit about that. I mean, she knows the whole... It was mostly her. Because it wasn't... the principal, but we used to get from them, how to say this, operative... I can't now... They have a civilian centre for alarming, notifying, alerting. The centre was used as well. The civilian centre, the one from back then that stayed. Now it was turned into help-line 112. The one, what was its... next to it, ZMIN came about. However, this didn't come through some sort of a military source. Nor did we only transport the wounded, military members, but all people... if there was a complicated pregnancy, certain childer problems, broken bones and so on...

But there were also the wounded?

There were the wounded, and ** people in various states that required immediate attention.

***** the wounded**** were there also uniformed soldiers?**

No. I saw no uniforms. There were many uniformed people next to the helicopter. There were members of the medical staff and uniformed people. But not in the helicopter, no, there were no wounded people in uniforms.

Tell me, what were the places in Bosnia that you and your crew visited?

So, we went to places around Bosnia-Herzegovina. Mostly, in the beginning when we were with the wounded, I mean wounded people, we would take not only wounded soldiers, but also wounded civilians, we would take them from war hospital Rumboci in Rama that's located by Prozor. That's where we took most people from in the beginning, from war hospital Rumboci in Rama.

You will be able to see that from our records. There are many things... After that, we mostly covered Kiseljak and Vitez, somewhat equally. Kiseljak and Vitez. And a little bit less Busovača. And some other places in Herzegovina, also less often. We might have some isolated cases in Črsnica or something like that. But mainly middle Bosnia and Rama, Prozor. That was the hardest... where we... and those were... that was war hospital, and Rama even had crews, doctors from KBC Split hospital that were there. And they made direct contacts; «We have this many kids, we have the wounded here, we have...» Look, we went there as humanitarians. That's how we acted. That's how the medicine crew acted. We made no distinctions on the basis of nationality or on the basis of the wounded... whether it was a soldier or a man in the field; or perhaps somebody's child. That wasn't relevant... same goes for the sick. Those were the people in need of help; persons that should be helped, so we acted accordingly. We only had our ranks to show, we weren't armed. *** we weren't armed, we had no protection. In the beginning we didn't even wear bullet-proof vests, nothing, until it changed...

How long did this go on?

This arrangement, this sort of a more peaceful situation, where we didn't separate, where there were Muslims and others, where the enclaves weren't precisely defined, the enclave of Middle Bosnia – that went about until 20th, 21st May. So, not even a whole month.

Not even a whole month?

Not even a whole month.

And then what happened?

Up to that moment... The turning point was when last B-H helicopters of B-H Army came to Zenica, when the last helicopters came to Zenica over the territory of Croatia, their helicopters. So, they used our space to bring in transport helicopters and then immediately, the following day, they attacked our helicopter as it was returning from middle Bosnia. The message was: «We will no longer play the game we played until now...»

What happened after that?

It was another story after that. Everybody who is smart enough can recognize a treat, so we couldn't fly the same way again. In the altitudes where a helicopter is vulnerable, somebody might get hurt or **** luck for being shot ** shut couple of times ***. It's a matter of luck that nobody was hit, that nobody was hurt. There were about ten sick women and alike. There were ten, twelve, I don't know how many persons in the helicopter. It wasn't completely, but there were people. And it was hit five, six times. Nobody was hurt, but they could've been. That's when we saw that things don't work. Actually I saw it, as a commander, I saw that things don't work anymore. After this report, Agotić naturally forbade... he didn't forbid us in a written commandment, but he orally forbade us to undertake those flights. He forbade it in a way... I said: «OK, it's war time. We flew there.» The line was still there, medical crews still asked for us to take people out. They kept sending **** and asking for *** with the medical flights. They kept asking for... I asked it from Agotić and from up. I said: «We can get no guarantees.» I talked to NATO representatives. «We can get no guarantees. They don't cover, they couldn't cover themselves, their own aircrafts, let alone ours.»

So, the risky flights started in May 1993, right?

Right.

And how long did they go on?

They practically went on until February 1994 treaties.

Wait a minute. Lets get back to the events in May 1993. Did something special happen back then? So, until then, let me recapitulate: by then you flew, you took in all the wounded that were in need of help, right?

That's right.

What happened in May 1993? What represented the breaking point where things changed?

That's when things changed... I knew what was going on. Two last

helicopters arrived. I think that six or eight of them came in through Croatian territory within a period of one month.

Hold on. Which helicopters were coming? Where from? Where were they going?

They came from the east, who knows who bought them. They were sent to B-H Army.

So, B-H Army got their helicopters.

That's right. And Croatian government allowed for the space.

By May 1993, B-H Army didn't have the helicopters?

They had some. Not enough.

And they didn't perform humanitarian flights?

No.

But we did?

Yes.

In May 1993, got more helicopters, right?

Yes, that's right. They got about ten more helicopters.

So, in May 1993 they managed to get more helicopters, and now they had about 10 of them?

Yes.

These helicopters...

Back then our escadrille had three helicopters.

Do we know where do these helicopters come from?

****For example, they came from the direction of Hungary.

Over Croatian air space? And where were they heading for?

For Zenica.

For Zenica?

Yes.

What happened after the helicopters came to Zenica?

After the last helicopters arrived to Zenica, the very next day they attacked our helicopter that was returning from middle Bosnia.

Our helicopter that was...

That was on a humanitarian flight... It was attacked. There was no prior warning.

Who attacked it?

It was attacked in the area firmly controlled by B-H Army, on the mountain Vranica.

Who was there, who flew that helicopter back then?

*** Dragan Kostadinović, the technician was Drago Brkić.

And that was the first attack, right?

That was the first attack. It was raining, they had to go through a little lower, through the mountain, and they came on nicely. They probably had a task, not probably but certainly, to wait in the classic lines. Of course, a transport helicopter is ideal for a couple of lines, so that the soldiers with machine guns align and fire. They knew the exact usual route. There was no...

So, we can conclude that B-H Army suddenly and without a prior notice attempted to stop the flights that were beneficial and accepted by them.

That's right.

Was that surprising to you? Were you surprised?

I wasn't glad that somebody was stopping that, because we took in their people too. I think that's, I can't...

Did you think this was weird?

I think this was weird. Because I didn't... I never... In all those contacts from 1992 where I accepted the Muslims, we took them in over night, some of them were eating there, and there were all sorts of humanitarian aid that we had in our shelters, we were driving them in and away. I was puzzled... I couldn't understand why somebody would work against themselves. It's one thing to work against somebody – but against your own interests – that was strange to me.

Tell me, how did the Muslim side interpret that attack? Were

there any explanations?

No.

None?

No. There were no explanations. Later, after we got hold of the codes in which they communicated, PZO (Air Defense). «It will come now...» Later the one in the *** of their corps gave away a special order in September that they're wasting too much ammunition on helicopters, and to shoot at a helicopter, at a Croatian helicopter only when they can take it down beyond any doubt. That means, not in all situations.

So, that was...?

It was already... yes, yes. That's what HVO captured and these are the telegraphic messages they sent us. So, they communicated among themselves. It was later all... they were... the whole system was operational. We had to go openly. That's a rarity in the world. I don't believe that this was anywhere in the world, this sort of situation... This should be checked in the history, was there a situation where we would keep going and acting as humanitarians. Because I asked the UN: «Can I do something outside your resolutions 815 and 816?» *** said «Don't announce the exact time of my departure,» He said: «Why not?» «You precisely tell to all sides the exact time of my trip, I have to report the points where I'm going, but don't announce it to the enemy PZO.» He replied: «No, we are obliged to do that.» I said: «What are you obliged to do? You announce me there.»

After that you kept going, but these were no longer peaceful flights?

No. For starters, we first got an oral commandment from HRZ commander to see and evaluate how dangerous that is. I said, «OK». «Of course it should be evaluated». However, in June there was a cease of fire, and I lost it when I saw that they kept bringing wounded people from Rumboka the whole day long. They were driving them in some busses, some 30, 40 kilometers across the Muslim territory, for a whole day.

Wait, but you have to tell me now, people you took after May 1993, whose wounded people were these? Were they exclusively Croats, or were there Muslims as well?

That's not my... We kept landing in the areas where we were landing. But we don't pick among the wounded.

You kept landing in the same places where you used to land?

Yes. And it's not our problem as to who needs to be transported. We just kept coming...

Wait a minute. So, B-H Army keeps firing at you, and you keep taking the wounded that require attention?

Everybody who happens to be there; that's a medical issue. It was not up to us to determine who was wounded, or whom they belonged to. Not even then. Regardless of... But, there was a cease. So, I had the commandment of a cease, and in June there was a civilian convoy organized with the UN, from hospital in Nova Bila to hospital in Rumboci. With several busses and some 70 ... or more, maybe even 90, with the heavy wounded. They drove them for 30 kilometers, for the whole day, over the Muslim points.

Who formed the convoy?

The convoy was formed by UN, in humanitarian purposes, because they were... that's what our medical staff asked for in this area with the... since we, we weren't allowed to go there any more. They said we couldn't come. So they had to come to Rumboci over the Muslim territory. But that took the entire day. It got a bit complicated. Some of them were, there were consequences, some died.

What does that mean? Wait a minute. People were supposed to come to Rumboke?

From Nova Bila.

From Nova Bila.

So that we could take them in the helicopters.

Over the Muslim territory?

Yes.

There were problems, right?

Of course! They were traveling the whole day long...

The Muslims kept them?

Yes. They stalled, maltreated them...

What was the result of that?

People came to Rumbok after ten hours of such a trip.

What would be the normal duration of such a trip?

An hour, using any kind of transportation. With us it would take them less than an hour from Vitez to Split.

So, this trip lasted for 10 hours. When people came, you say there were also those who died, right?

Yes, there were... as they had wounds that weren't properly treated, that affected them. Even a lay person can feel that, you could feel the *** smell on the wound that wasn't properly treated. They were short on supplies back then. Just imagine amputations and how it looked in those conditions. And what were the problems. Of course, all of that resulted in people dying even in Split. That didn't happen to us in the helicopters, but some situations were so complicated that it used to make me sick. We only had two helicopters and we would come here over the night and take them away... in the late afternoon and the night. We would take the wounded to Split. I repeatedly asked to reduce the suffering of these people. I knew it was risky. Everything is risky. However, there was a breakthrough of a sort. I think that the minister intervened himself, our minister, Šušak. He cut it. And they asked through some channels, they asked from me if it's safe to go. I...

Minister Šušak intervened and asked to go at any cost?

No, no. He didn't ask to go at any cost. The ministry asked me to say if it's safe to go, are there conditions to go for the wounded? I claimed that there are always conditions, but that it's war time. Perhaps unlike the others, transporters in Zagreb, where they also had helicopters, I wanted the people to sense the war and that's how fate *****. What will happen to him? That's not it, it's not necessarily so that when you go through the hardest parts, and whoever makes the

riskiest moves will get hurt. You can get hurt, if it's meant to be, you can get hurt in a time of peace, you go to a wedding and get a strayed bullet. I said it's complicated, but it can be done. I knew that for technical reasons we needed to take high flights which were strictly forbidden to us by all rules. I definitely knew they would shoot. We were threatened with shooting, our families and us.

Who threatened you?

We were receiving anonymous telephone calls, they threatened us in Split. They threatened my family.

What? You received phone calls? What were they saying?

They were saying they would surely kill us. And they were sending greetings from «the green brothers» (the Muslims) and the others. We reported this to the services, but nobody reacted.

OK. However, you remained at your decision, and you kept flying, right?

That's right.

How did these flights look like from then on?

Because of this whole complicated situation, areas were spread from one line to the other. The width of the enclave was such that you would be under fire by both lines, so to speak. So you wouldn't have the depth, you pull away from the line and make a spiral. Then you're under fire from both south and north lines, and on some places even from three sides. And I decided since I knew, as I've flown even in the most complicated conditions, I decided for high flights, to fly over Vranica. And Vranica had **** top Krstac, over 2000 meters in altitude. And Nadkrstac is surely supplied with *** transportable air defense system, and it was surely the highest top, and they could take us down. So, we were supposed to fly over the top of Vranica – high, on the altitude of five or six thousand meters, then to come to Vitez on five to six thousand, come all the way there, and then perform a deadly spiral, a very dangerous maneuver, of course with an empty helicopter *** an empty helicopter so that, you could practically hear the metals bend. Of course, here the game begins, who will get to whom. As the matter of fact, how will they get us... we had to. What did

we have to do? I told everybody: «We have to change diving speeds», because, if they catch us somewhere, where we are easy to hit, from 2000 meters down, then we have to change the speed of the dive in order to, so that they wouldn't catch us in our speed, whoever has a certain asset in the vicinity, a machine-gun, browing of any kind u or anything from the B-H Army. So, if anybody was skillful enough, they could take us down. They start shooting below us, catch us, our speed and the rest, and they will hit us. They can hit us the same way on our way back. They were so persistent; they kept shooting at us even when we were on the ground, which was holding us back. So, we didn't... in our reports we filed half an hour of detaining. And we used to be detained for five hours, or even 10. They used to fire mortars on the helicopter, when it was on the ground. So, they constantly kept firing a mortar shell each, 10, 15 minutes in the direction of the area where the helicopter landed. Of course, they managed to damage a helicopter there in September. So, they were firing at as while in the air, as we were landing and then tried to get to us using mortar shells. According to the words of HVO troops, a helicopter was to them of the same importance like an action of taking over a village. So, a landing of a helicopter was a small war

****** HVO action? That was by the way of information...**

No, no. That was concluded by how they put up with their attack. So they, for example, when they tried to attack, take over or occupy a place between Busovača and Vitez, they attacked them in the same manner. With the same amount of force they used to attack the helicopter, a humanitarian helicopter. They knew it very well that it's a humanitarian flight, it was announced to everybody. Now when I think about it, it wasn't a problem for them that we will take out the 15, 20 wounded, but their biggest problem was that we kept our morals up. As we kept coming, we kept up the morals of those people. We gave these people, to some of them in the enclave, to all of them who were there, we gave them a certain hope that somebody is coming for them. As we came, following the same request, there was a certain number of wounded, there were certain names, there were the sick, and th same cliché of a request, the same *** of a request. We also went there. The difference was that now in these flights there were more wounded as opposed to e

the situation in May. We used to have more sick. Now all of a sudden there were more those that were wounded. And it seems that our arrivals caused the wounded, as every time we would come, somebody would get hurt from the mortar shell; there were people there. Somewhere in the beginning were the wounded that we're supposed to take, and then if there are no houses around they are hidden somewhere. But we said later: «Don't stay out in the open. You can see that the helicopter is under fire». I mean, the best thing was to leave the helicopter for a while to stand empty on a plane, and nobody should come close, because the person next to the helicopter will get hurt. So, they systematically, B-H Army knew exactly that they are firing at me, as only I was coming that summer, and they were firing at my crew. They systematically tried to take the trophy, to take me out.

According to UN regulations, those humanitarian flights had to be announced?

That's right.

And they were always announced?

Yes.

And that meant, in this case, that the other side can ambush you and fire at you?

That's right. And they knew exactly who was coming.

The UN knew you were being fired at?

Yes. They knew.

How did they respond to that? What did they say?

They took records. Each time they would ask us: «Were you attacked? Who fired at you along the way?»

But were they doing something about it?

No. I asked them: Why do you ask when... «Don't you worry about anything», they said: «That's for the history». They didn't say that nobody was to be held responsible. I said: «I'd like to see who'll be held responsible. Because I need something right now.»

Do you recall names of the people, the people that were in the UN then?

My people remember some, they remember a name. Enzli ****.

How was that?

His name was Enzli. I think he was... Drago Brkić or somebody else will maybe know better... They just took notes and forwarded them. As if though it has nothing to do with them, and like they have nothing to do with security. I was surprised. In those flights, in that period, I announced Busovača for the first time. Somewhere around 15th May, before the cease in 1993, before the cease.

OK.

So, what surprised me? I was surprised by that diving, it wasn't a high flight or something, but Busovača was very problematic. I mean, the first conflicts there came about already in April. And there were Ahmići, *** was a stone in shoe because of everything. And now we arrived to Busovača. We were supposed to contact Avaks, it was along the way **** saw some of those and so on. As we were diving down, landing, there were a couple of pairs of UN aircrafts behind us, two pairs of F 16. F 15 – they went in front of us and behind us in wide arches, as a convoy, as a small demonstration of force. That surprised me. And they knew. I think that didn't have a lot to do with the UN, but rather with the NATO. NATO wanted to demonstrate something, force. So I experienced it for the first time, that they are following us after all, that it was a humanitarian flight. The assumption was that they will try something there, the Muslims because that was... this was the edge, having in mind conflicts because of Ahmići and this, we thought they might do something to the helicopter.

OK, this is what I would like to know now. After you've been fired at, you tried to ask the responsible people at the UN not to announce the details about the flight.

I managed to achieve this kind of flexibility maybe with a German, with a Dutchman from EZ monitor. They were more flexible, some of their announcements **** were more flexible. You don't have to fly there right away. But do so within the limits I set for you. «Common, announce me now at two o'clock and I will come the same night.» So that they at least wouldn't know what

period I will go. I will pick a period according to the moonlight, according to the situation. According to something... Surprise them a little, for when somebody is awaiting for you, then everybody, all the militaries in the world, at trying to surprise them. As the matter of fact, it wasn't important to me. I wasn't attacking anybody. I was setting up a surprise to stay alive, not to attack somebody. I wanted to avoid being attacked. I needed the surprise to make it somehow. The way they fired at me, they couldn't even tell when I started flying back. They didn't know what they achieved, have they damaged me in the air or while I was on the ground. They didn't know what they achieved. Later they would fire mortars at increasingly bigger intervals, calculating where we are by arranging points in a certain field where they would approximate that we are located. They would arrange mortar shells, supposing that some of them hit the vicinity of the helicopter and that it ***. Then after two or three hours they would fire shells each 10 or 15 minutes, and later each half an hour. That's when we were able to use those big intervals between the firing of the shell to take off, to board the helicopter and take off. On the other hand, they made the big intervals considering they achieved something. They waited to see what the achieved. That's when we ** surprise **** and took off. *** didn't know it's over; it was like they flew there and come back in half an hour, but we would usually come back in three hours, in five hours because of the shelling, which was a surprise for them. And we would manage to do so, and it's usually so, I deliberately waited for the night in these conditions so that I would come in daylight, and leave during night, use a spiral... They mostly fired at us fiercely later, on higher altitudes. They fired at us from Vranica, from road less regions... I know that there are no settlements there. Those were groups, one little group after another, like flashes. You could precisely spot firing groups. They used whatever they had to fire, even handguns. So, the helicopter was to them for this whole area something like, there it is, hunt-season is open.

You told me yesterday that a price was set on your head?

It was probably a major trophy for them, for B-H Army, surely. That was because they were aware I was coming there in the capacity of a leader, a commander.

They knew that you were flying?

They knew. They knew that I was the best trained, and they knew through these... For example, they knew when we, we would land in a village, Večerska, for example, we would land there in July, in a fenced orchard, and then again when we wanted to come there again because of certain circumstances during the night seven days later **** the landing was specific, there were problems because of the spiral and the firing, and so on, and my engine stopped functioning properly which can happen in these extreme situations. When you try to perform a sharp spiral and a steep dive, the inner engine can't perform normally, the engine that's inner in the circle, in the turn. It can't grasp enough air. And it loses the flow...

It suffocates.

It suffocates.

OK.

And it gets... the engines get the scissors. The inner engine shows signs of going off every minute, literally going off. Since they were firing at me, I used the spiral. Later, as I came to 500 meters and came behind a hill, I needed a straight line, a normal flight for a while to normalize the motors, both of them. I was then aware that I might fall with only one engine. OK, I was empty, but the helicopter wasn't envisaged for a normal landing with only one engine. I prayed to God, hoping there are no wires, no electricity over the corn field. That was next to the orchard where I was previously. Nothing. Landing point was 100 meters east from the one seven days ago. I landed; the engines started working normally just before I landed, some ten meters before landing. The other engine started working normally and so we landed fine. Immediately they started firing mortar shells. They fired at our previous spot. That was Večerska, a predominantly Croat settlement. They fired on the previous spot, the one from seven days ago. The helicopter left three tires in a fresh soil, three tires left their mark. The space between the tires is around five meters, roughly, so it's a triangle of five times five meters, a little bit more. As the matter of fact, it's a little less toward the front, but it doesn't matter; roughly five

meters. Three 120 shells fell within that triangle. They knew exactly where the helicopter landed seven days ago. It's like God said: «I won't let them land on the same place». Had we landed on the same place, the helicopter would be 100% destroyed.

So, they waited for you?

We never landed in Vitez. We couldn't land in Vitez because of a simple reason – a part of the town was under Muslim control. So, we would land somewhere in the vicinity of Vitez. It was a little safer to go to Kiseljak, a little bit safer. But they kept firing at us in the air. In Kiseljak they didn't fire at us on ground, because UNPROFOR was close. But here, they knew exactly, not only did they wait for us, but they operatively managed to find out, using their connections, the exact position of our last landing. So, it was very important to change our locations whenever we came because... I think it's incomprehensible... If we would solve it militarily, in such a way, you would soon see that B-H Army was very serious about destroying that helicopter, military. I can tell, they had a carrier of a nuclear head.

OK, yesterday you told me that you often contacted with Blaškić?

Yes.

Where was that?

He would come, or he waited if he found out where we were, sometimes he would wait for us on the ground, or he would come later, after we landed. So, for example, he was in Večerska, in Bare also. That's when Dario Kordić was there also, municipality mayor.

Did you get a chance to talk to Blaškić?

He would give me the information as to how complicated it is to get there at the moment. So, he was there to help us in a way. Nothing special, but only to tell us in what way the situation is becoming increasingly complicated, what's happening with the lines and that things are getting more complicated in regard with our safety. They didn't scare us, but they would instead realistically tell us that they are growing weaker; that HVO is equipped with

men, but that they are inferior in ammunition. And that it can cause a major problem for us. I mean, it was more of a welcome; he waited for us as a host, to encourage us.

In that time, in the area of Zagreb, Muslim pilots were trained, Russian crews are taking off, and there is an air line toward Čoralići...

Yes, obviously...

Did you know about that back then? Were you aware as to what is going on in the same air space?

No, I got to know about the later period, after our flights, when we went for Bihać. They asked me about that. Teo Grgičević, who was all around the place, asked me how to solve the problem of breaching Serb lines toward Bihać with paid crews from Russia. I told him: «First of all, there is no theory to go my way. If you fly high, they will take you down. You're supposed to go as low as possible, as low and as fast as you can. And you need to keep changing routes. Leave it to the Russians. Just tell them to choose the best way to go, by forest, and to stay low, where there are trees». It is hard to hit a helicopter from a forest.

You didn't know that Muslim pilots are being trained in Croatia – up until August 1993.

No. No. Let me tell you an important thing... ***** **a commotion**, (*people shouting in the bar*). We can continue tomorrow. But this in August 1993, there was a meeting arranged in Kiseljak between HVO and B-H Army, the two sides were supposed to agree on humanitarian flights. The observers were from UN and NATO. I was also a neutral side, as an executor. They needed to agree. What was the problem? Nurkić Ešrep, who lives next to me now, he is my neighbor, he was a commander in the army. He was a commander; he represented B-H Army.

What was the name of the man?

Nurkić Ešrep. He lives...

How was that? Nurkić?

Nurkiš Ešrep.

Ešrep?

Ešrep.

Nurkić Ešrep.

Yes. Nurkić Ešrep, he was a colonel of B-H Army. He negotiated on behalf of B-H Army. He knew about me. He was up to something. I don't know, from our side there was a younger boy, from HVO, and he said: «There are no problems. We could proceed toward Split in the same manner. If you want to, the Muslims can be taken separately and they can immediately be taken over by an international squad on the airport and be taken to Europe or wherever the Muslims want to go.

Who should drive them? You, or...?

No. We take them, or whoever wants to take them from Bosnia. But if the Muslims have something against that, they can organize the transportation of their sick, of their wounded from Split airport to wherever they want to, to a third country. They don't have to drive with us, we don't have to drive. So, my neighbor, the one that lives there now said: «I wouldn't dare to go to Bosnia if I were you». – and now he freely walks the streets of Split. Afterwards he retired and... He used to live in Split during the time of the war, too. His family was in Split and nobody touched them.

He was the negotiator at the time?

Yes. And he was a part of B-H Army.

When was that?

August 1993. His family lived in a cruiser where Sead Hadžić lived, in my street, the same street as mine. His family lived in an apartment, and he was a colonel in B-H Army. And he would practically go for vacation, during the war. I wouldn't dare to go even today, I wouldn't go to Zenica. ***. Let alone... But fine, it's like, we are all ustaša, and he gets away. What point is very important here? When things snapped, there was an American brigadier, pilot brigadier, I can't remember his name, but he could recognize what was going on. He said: «You keep quibbling,

you from B-H Army. First you couldn't report a humanitarian flight, and then you reported it as you came back with the wounded». Three helicopters took off with three wounded. Three helicopters took off, carrying a platoon of soldiers. And each of them returned with two or three wounded. There were wounded on every corner back then. It was a state of war. Wherever they flew with the back-up, they gathered somebody who was sick or wounded and said: «It was an emergency, we couldn't report to you.» And it was like, whatever Croatia, whatever HVO had to offer, he categorically declined. And the American approached really normally, openly, if it's possible in any way. So he said: «Wait a minute. Let me put out official NATO numbers. 126 times until today, that's how many violations B-H Army committed up until today. 126 violations. They haven't reported flights in the area where flights are forbidden. We control flight zone over Bosnia-Herzegovina. 126 times. HVO had three violations. Croatian side not even one.»

Do you have any records supporting that?

Yes, I do. Somewhere.

Somewhere? Don't make me have to come to your home **.**

They're not home. They're at another place. This American brigadier, he knew what it means not to report three helicopters taking off... That means that each of them had a platoon of armed soldiers, 25 soldiers. And they came back with a wounded person they took along the way – and he emphasized some other details: you know that the colonel could use other items from Resolution 815. And I ask; «What items?» He could be armed and return fire. And he didn't. He wasn't armed.

We know that

And you found out only then that you could have returned fire?

Yes. He could've been armed and returned fire...

Hold on a second, why haven't you found that out sooner?

Because nobody sent me details. Agotić didn't send me details, or anybody else for that matter, since Resolution 815 and 816...

So, in other words, you had the permission to be armed, to return fire, but you weren't aware of that?

That's right.

And nobody told you anything about that, including Agotić?

No.

Please introduce yourself again; this is the beginning of a new recording.

Mladen Katavić. I live in Split, Ruđera Boškovića 26. Recording continued. I'm a retired brigadier. We were to continue from a part from August 1992 when a brigadier from HRM (Croatian Navy) came to me and told me that he has problems with transshipping of an ammunition convoy. I didn't immediately know what it's about, but he said he has all the commands that cannot technically be performed in Lora. Although it was intended for the navy, but as Divnije was empty, with big hangars and large maneuver areas, it was doable in Divulje. Then he explained to me that it's transshipping of ammunition that's intended for Bosnia-Herzegovina. He said it was fine and according to the commands. And of course, that it's nothing private. That's when, in the beginning of August...

August 1992?

August 1992. There came an advance guard of the Croatian Army military police security and they said that the convoys, trailer trucks will be coming that day. I think there were about 25 trailer trucks.

Where were they coming from?

From the direction of Rijeka.

From Rijeka?

From Rijeka to here.

You don't know specifically?

I wasn't familiar with all the details. The main thing is that we got some people from the navy with the fork-lift trucks and then they started to unload the items in the hangars. We had two large hangars. The larger old hangar was completely filled up. In the same time people came from B-H Army and they were taking it away. As the matter of fact, they organized the action and explained that it will be reloaded there. So that, as they came along, they reloaded the items in smaller trucks, so that, let me approximate, 25 trailer trucks arrived in about seven days. These trailer trucks came within one, two or three days, I think

it was two. In the following five or six days they transported the items to Bosnia. I think there were about 110 trucks.

They reloaded items into smaller trucks?

Smaller trucks.

But which trucks...? Military or...?

No, no.

Civilian?

Civilian trucks from Bosnia. It was coordinated by B-H Army.

Who was there? Give me some names.

As much as I can remember, there was the logistics guy, Čengić.

Čengić. OK.

And there was Šabić, he was a Croat, Šabić, or something like that. He was from the B-H Army logistics.

Šabić. Čengić. Who else was there?

I can't remember other names.

Common, please.

Very few people... very few people were involved. They weren't too prominent, either.

OK. What was the name of the man who came to you and said there was a problem with the reloading?

He was from the navy, his name was Grego.

Grego?

Grego, the brigadier.

What was his name?

I can't remember his name.

Do you perhaps have phone numbers of these people? How can I reach them?

I'll have to check that for Grego. I think he lives in Split. As for these from Bosnia, I don't know where they are. From my people you can, everybody from Divulje can testify, about the reload. And for the others, for another things as well. Before that,

and after, all kinds of people used to spend the night, several trucks. Items came for HVO. Or B-H Army. Or they came together. And they would drive something together without...

And you didn't know what was inside?

No. I wasn't familiar with the details. So, it was that somebody would ask me: «Can I spend the night?» People would sometimes leave their things. «Could I put this somewhere in the room, some things, they will be taken away later.» That was, as far as I can recall, from summer 1992 till the beginning of 1993 – something was always happening. But this was the only convoy that was really big.

OK, so there were people with B-H Army insignia?

Yes. They would come and offer us; they would say they have a truck or a trailer truck they would want to exchange for humanitarian food. They asked for food and flour. They wanted to leave it there until somebody comes and looks at it, so they would make the exchange. Some things simply couldn't be supplied, so they had to get to them somehow. We didn't really want to have any part in this. We were here more as those who have some empty space at their hands. We weren't a part of their... we weren't organizing, what ever it was they were doing. What was organized in August, this reload; that went over the brigadier Grego from... He was in the HRM as a part of the technical crew.

Brigadier Greg?

Grego.

Grego?

Yes. I need to find his name. I can't remember his name right now, but he came to me saying that it was impossible to do that. Of course, I saw that it was complicated to do that in Divulje, let alone in Lora.

That means, there was a huge amount of items? Right?

Yes, yes. That's right. The hangar was full. At one point, later, there was about 50 smaller trucks there...

Did you see a specification of a sort, what could be found there?

No, I didn't try to find out, we didn't even enter in. There were a few men there,

Šabić and the others from B-H Army; they were the only ones working with that. But trailer trucks were, of course, civilian. The drivers were civilian. And whatever they brought here was mostly brought in private trucks, they could carry up to 7 tons. That was reloaded. So there was... Some said there was over 100 trucks, and there were about 25 of these that brought the items.

And you don't know where they were heading?

Toward Zenica.

They were heading toward Zenica?

Yes, mostly over Herzegovina, and all of that was intended for Zenica. There were some stories later that they gave something to HVO. I don't know, they didn't give anything away in Divulje.

So, if I wanted to investigate that event in the archives, I should look for August, the beginning of August 1992?

Yes. But there were other occasions besides this one, there were such occasions, but they didn't relate to us that much. I am mentioning this larger case. There were smaller individual cases in which they used Divulje as via point, but they mostly organized those themselves.

How long have these smaller, individual cases taken place?

Well, intensively from summer till the end of 1992.

And later?

Later there were less of those.

And it lasted?

The same. Those were the same, however, that's when we started to fly, and I couldn't keep track, and then UNPROFOR came there, so things changed a little. You couldn't enter so freely and so on. Right now I need to emphasize that Ahmići took place in April – and that helicopters for B-H Army were coming through Croatia until May.

That's interesting information. When did Ahmići take place?

In April 1993.

In April 1993?

And in May 1993 B-H Army helicopters were still flying over the Croatian territory, going toward Zenica.

What route did they take?

They mostly flew over Lučko, some of them over Divulja, and some over Lika.

Where were they coming from?

They were coming from, let's say, from northern corridors. From Europe, from...

OK.

Hungary. They would come to Lučko, to Divulje or through Lika, then somewhere to Bosnia.

Would they stop in Divulje?

Some would, some wouldn't.

When they landed there, what would they get? Fuel?

Yes. Everything.

So, they came there after Ahmići?

Those helicopters didn't just fly by; those were new helicopters, sent to them. They weren't accidentally in Croatia, those were their reinforcements.

Those were Muslim crews?

Yes, Muslim. There were some combined, but mostly they were theirs, with their insignia.

Do you know what was in those helicopters?

Supposedly it was humanitarian supplies. But I haven't checked.

So, those were helicopters with supposed humanitarian aid...

That's right.

So, they normally, after Ahmići, in 1993, they normally used Croatian flying space...

Yes, by the end of May, until that thing happened in May.

In 1993, right?

Yes. When our helicopter was attacked, when it was finished...

And by May they transported all the helicopters they intended to?

Yes. Let's just not forget that by the end of May they finished that action. I think

they brought in about then helicopters over Croatia. I can't remember when the first one arrived... It was in 1992, by the end of 1992, and they finished in May. And HVO just barely managed to get their first helicopters by the end of September, just two of them. So, after them – and it was like we were helping the HVO.

Let's say this again. So, the Muslims by April had...

By the end of May 1993 they definitely had 10 helicopters...

Which came...

Over Croatia.

Over Croatian space. And in the same time HVO...

They didn't have a single helicopter by the end of September 1993. Then they got two and remained at that number. They only had two. So, if you wanted to characterize it as a criminal organization, - then HVO should have had 10 helicopters by May and Muslims shouldn't have had any. However, the situation was reverse; we were actually helping our enemy. Totally! And our people...

That would be a special, new form of criminal organization...

We sabotaged our own people! And then we were a criminal organization? And what I said in August 1993, when we were at the meeting...

You had negotiations then, where were they?

The negotiations were in Kiseljak, they were about humanitarian flights. That's when we realized that B-H Army is misusing humanitarian flights. The American from NATO...

Which *?**

Brigadier K... something with K, something like Koming, I don't know...

OK. Do you know the exact date?

It was sometime during August 1993, in Kiseljak. He also warned that by then B-H Army during 1993 violated flight ban for I think 116 or 126 times, according to the Bosnia-Herzegovina zone surveillance. So, they violated Resolutions 815 and 816 over 100 times, using the excuse that they have no time to report flights, to undergo examination. They mostly reported flights and underwent examinations on their way back. With one or two wounded or sick.

Wait a minute. You talked about these humanitarian flights there?

Yes, but we also talked about the surveillance of Bosnia-Herzegovina air space.

But you mentioned that the last time, it wasn't recorded, so I'd like you to repeat it, what way do you think they were doing that? What was the point of it?

Military, it's evident...

How many wounded can be placed in a helicopter?

In certain combination, you can place up to 20 wounded in a helicopter.

OK. And they came back with two wounded?

Even with one, as they would come back. But that was only as they were coming back. Because they were going like... what did they do?

It was their excuse; that they went for one or two wounded?

Yes. No, they never brought many wounded in these flights. That was...

Brought them from where?

Somewhere.

From somewhere, to where?

From a certain location to Zenica.

OK.

For their base was in Zenica. But, when you look at it military, when you take a look, what were they doing really? They took off with the army; with the critical ammunition they needed somewhere, where it was critical. They could take a platoon of soldiers, 25 armed soldiers. That helicopter could have taken them anywhere, wherever they needed. They could take up to 25 soldiers or some critical ammunition, a combination of people and ammunition. They could take it, I don't know to what destination, maybe somewhere in middle Bosnia, to Travnik, around Kiseljak, Busovača, somewhere to their line or to its vicinity. They would take it there and unload it. Then they would take a wounded, or a sick people... there were everywhere, they could take somebody, anybody. It was a time of war. Just dress a man in pajamas and put some bandages around him. Nobody from EZ monitors was checking that. They weren't so... So, when they arrive to Zenica, they would say: «We had to rush to Travnik to get

the wounded, here he is.»

So that's what they did, they reported their flight later, right?

Yes. So he openly told them: «You play it dirty, because HVO committed three violations with an ultra light flight.» They were investigating something, I don't know. With a glider, a motor glider where you can fit one man. Or with an umbrella, an ultra light plane which can take one man who can look at something. I'm not even sure if it had any special equipment, perhaps even not, but fine. It was a violation. According to them, we didn't make a single violation. So, all the flights we undertook from Divulje were correctly reported, examined and monitored by NATO forces.

Unlike you, they didn't do so...

What were they doing? They were operating on Bosnia-Herzegovina territory. Then HVO realized they could do the same. I mean, not the same, but still, why wouldn't they have helicopters when these have 10 of them, and they had none.

There is another interesting detail from the meeting in Kiseljak, and it's about you realizing something you didn't know by then, right?

Yes. I didn't know the details.

How did you come to realize it? How did it come to that?

As we talked. They started talking about some assurances, about what was reported. Then they started about what Serbs reported for medical flights. From aircrafts they reported combat airplanes for medical flights. Then as we talked, I realized that you can carry... The American said to the representatives of B-H Army: «You almost regularly attack Croatian helicopter, and you know that the Resolution gives it right to return fire. And if it returned fire, innocent people might get hurt. This is probably why they don't return fire.» Somebody would get hurt who is – these areas are quite populated and you couldn't return fire around Bosnian enclaves. They are heavily populated.

But, only then you found out...?

That we could've been armed, we could've been better equipped, and we could've done this and that. Only then did we find out what is Resolution 815.

Who was supposed to let you know those things?

Of course, we should've gotten all the details from the HRZ headquarters and commanders. All the details, as we were operating here. We...

Agotić was the commander?

That's right. Agotić was the commander. We should've got all the details on humanitarian flights as we were practically the only ones performing them... Resolution 815, 816 could, of course, be interpreted as a general Resolution. But everything connected to the humanitarian flights was applicable in certain situations, it was there, but we didn't know that...

Let's repeat it once again, what was the name of the American who was at that meeting who...?

I can't... something like Koming or something, I don't know. We should go through documentation to find that out – but he was a brigadier, he was one of the operatives who were in the NATO center in Pleso. That's when there was a NATO center in Pleso for the areas of ex Yugoslavia in charge of monitoring the flights, coordinating them. So, he was an airman. He didn't just happen to be here, but he was rather well informed, he knew many things. He was in possession of the information from AVAKSI, from fighter planes from the carrier and all other interesting things.

Dear sir Mladen, listen to me: I have to leave Split now, but I will return. Just, please, now you know everything I need. First of all, ammunition, then people who were witnesses, papers. That would be extremely valuable to me. So, if you find a paper...

I have almost no papers about, for example, about August 1992, about the reload. Not almost, but certainly I have no papers, for we were merely observers there. Just like when the helicopters were going for Zenica, we were also merely observers. It could maybe be, I don't know...

OK, then there is another option: people who witnessed it, just like you have, and who can testify to that. So, please, we will be...

Well, Ivan Hudoletnjak from Varaždin is alive – he was the main dealer of

helicopters at the time.