

Yugoslavia estimates \$100 billion in damages from NATO bombing

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The Yugoslav government has released preliminary data on the damage caused to the country during the first 27 days of NATO's air bombing campaign. The government figures, which do not include deaths or casualties suffered by Yugoslav military personnel, give a glimpse into the widespread devastation that has been inflicted upon one of Europe's poorest countries.

Despite the damage and misery suffered by the Yugoslav people during the first month of NATO's campaign, NATO has continued to intensify its bombing, utilizing more military hardware and expanding its use of bases into Turkey and even proposing to now use bases in Hungary to further expand its attacks. According to Yugoslav government estimates, NATO had launched over 7,000 attacks, including the firing of 2,000 cruise missiles and the dropping of 6,000 tons of explosives on a nation which is similar in size and population to that of the US state of Ohio.

These attacks led to the deaths of nearly 500 civilians and a further 4,000 were seriously injured. Hundreds of thousands of people also face health problems after being exposed to poisonous gases as a result of the bombings. One million people were immediately confronted with water shortages due to NATO's attack on the country's water supply network.

The destruction of industrial facilities has led to 500,000 workers being left jobless, with a further 2 million people affected by this loss of employment. It is estimated that over \$10 billion in damage had been caused in the initial stages of NATO's campaign.

NATO has deliberately targeted both industrial and civil facilities, which included during the first 27 days: aircraft, pharmaceutical, appliance, electrical, chemical, tobacco, tubes, plastics, rail, hydro-construction, printing, shoe, automobile, machine, cotton yarn and surface coal mining. Some of the bombings were carried out during working hours—at the “Zastava” auto plant in Kragujevac,

Yugoslavia's fourth largest city, 120 workers were wounded during a NATO attack. The bombing has also devastated small businesses. Over 250 commercial and craft shops in Djakovica alone were damaged.

Refineries and warehouses storing liquid raw materials and chemicals have been destroyed, contaminating several thousand hectares of fertile soil, rivers and lakes, as well as polluting the air. Those attacked include: nine fuel storage/warehouses, two oil refineries, a service station, a chemical plant, a fertilizer plant, a thermo-electric power station and the petrochemical industry in Pancevo, which was demolished.

Four agricultural complexes had been attacked and 250 hectares of land had been burnt down due to forest fires begun by bombings. The sea port of Bogojevo was also attacked.

Sixteen hospitals and healthcare centers were hit, some partially damaged and others destroyed. A total of 190 schools had been damaged, including 20 faculties, 6 colleges, 40 secondary schools, 80 elementary schools and 6 student dormitories. The number of schools damaged would be the same as if every college, university, technical and community school in Ohio were attacked.

Further damage to Yugoslavia's infrastructure included the destruction of one bridge and damage to another thirteen. Twelve rail lines had been destroyed, as well as three railway stations. Six major roads and highways had also been cut due to the bombing. Two bus stations had been destroyed, as well as a hangar full of new buses. In the Leskovac region alone over 3,500 industrial facilities and dwellings had been destroyed or damaged.

Seven airports had been attacked and damaged and several thousand private houses across Yugoslavia were either destroyed or damaged—especially housing blocks in the cities of Aleksinac and Pristina.

Public facilities and government buildings that had been

damaged or destroyed include the Republican and Federal Ministry of the Interior in Belgrade; Security of the Ministry of the Interior and Hydro-Meteorological Station, both in Banjica; the TV-RTS studio, post office and refugee center, all in Pristina. The Tornik ski resort, the Divcibare mountain resort and the Baciste Hotel were also attacked. The city power plant in Krusevac and the Meteorological Station on Mt. Kopaonik had also been hit, and heavy damage was inflicted on four libraries in Rakovica. The refugee camp in Paracin was also attacked.

Infrastructure damage was also caused to Batajnica's electrical power supply, Zemun's water supply, Bogutovac's power station and telephone lines, Pristina's power station and Polinje's hydroelectric power station. Across Yugoslavia 17 telecommunication and TV transmitters were attacked.

Religious sites and buildings were not spared from NATO's bombing. Nine monasteries were damaged, many built between the twelfth and seventeen centuries. Four churches were damaged, as were religious monuments. A memorial complex was destroyed and two cemeteries also suffered damage; eight historical monuments and museums were also attacked.

The latest figures for overall damage caused by NATO were presented on May 17 by the Yugoslav authorities to a United Nations mission which visited Belgrade. Damage caused directly by NATO's bombing is now estimated to be over \$100 billion. More than 1,200 civilians are confirmed dead and over 5,000 have been wounded. Since the air attacks began more than 160,000 inhabitants of Kosovo and Metohija have been made refugees. These include ethnic Albanians and Turks, Serbs and Montenegrins.

The United Nations mission includes the UN's senior policy advisor for Environmental Programs and it has begun to investigate the environmental and long-term impact on Yugoslavia from NATO's bombing. The team is due to visit the Pancevo complex, a southern suburb of Belgrade where NATO's repeated bombing of an oil refinery, petrochemical and fertilizer plants has resulted in the release of large amounts of chemicals into the Danube river, the largest and most important river in Yugoslavia.

When the industrial complex was first hit in mid-April, carcinogenic matter over Pancevo was measured at 7,200 times above the level considered safe as phosgene gas, chlorine and hydrochloric acid were also released into the air and soil. The effects of this will be felt downstream of the Danube river into Romania, Bulgaria and then into the Black Sea. Southern Europe's groundwater supply is also

at risk of contamination due to seepage into the soil.

The UN team is also due to visit Baric and the third largest city, Nis, where the continued bombing of industrial areas has led to the release of dioxins into the atmosphere. Levels of dioxins, a group of chemicals which are the most toxic poisons known to man, are reported to have increased by fifteen times over Yugoslavia since NATO's bombing campaign began.

Supplemental data also shows that NATO has been using ammunitions containing depleted uranium, a waste product of the uranium enrichment process. Similar uranium depleted rockets were fired during the 1991 Gulf War against Iraq, and the radioactive waste released that contaminates the human body is being investigated as a possible cause for severe health problems suffered by many Gulf War veterans. Once exploded, the rockets release uranium oxide into the air. The use of such weapons in southern Iraq during the Gulf War has led to a dramatic increase in stillbirths, birth defects and childhood leukemia's as well as other cancers in the area. Tests have shown that enhanced radiation levels in the atmosphere and soil in Kosovo have already been measured.

A press conference held Tuesday by the Union of Greek Scientists warned of the serious long-term damage created by the NATO bombing. Its president, Nicholas Katsaros, said it is not possible to yet determine whether the land in Yugoslavia could ever be farmed again. So great is the contamination of the soil that Greek scientists also believe the environmental damage is irreversible.

These figures can only begin to paint an overview of the widespread suffering that has been caused by the NATO bombing, and the consequences for decades to come for the people of the Balkans.



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