

# Another Kosovo lie exposed: NATO used doctored video to justify bombing of passenger train

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In the *Frankfurter Rundschau* of January 6 reporter Arnd Festerling documented how NATO used falsified video recordings to justify its conduct of the war in Kosovo.

At least 14 people died on April 12, 1999 when a US Airforce bomber fired on a railway bridge near the Serbian village of Grdenicka just as a passenger train was crossing the bridge. Following the initial strike of the train, the pilot returned to make a second sweep of the burning bridge and dropped a bomb on a carriage that had not been hit by the first assault.

At the time NATO described the bombing of the commuter train as a tragic accident. NATO's presentation of events, it now emerges, was based on doctored video recordings and misleading descriptions of what took place aboard the fighter plane.

One day after the strike, in an effort to demonstrate that the attack was a case of inadvertent "collateral damage", General Wesley Clark, the Supreme Commander of NATO forces, called a press conference and showed two video films taken by cameras located in the noses of the remote control-guided bombs. According to Clark, the films made clear that the passenger train was approaching too fast for the pilot, who was concentrating on the difficult business of guiding the bombs, to react. The pilot had "less than a second" to abort the strike, Clark asserted.

Of course, this version of events did not explain why the plane turned round and dropped a second bomb. But the official NATO account given by Clark was misleading in two further respects.

First, the video film sped up the actual sequence by a factor of at least three. Second, the fighter plane used in the attack—type F15E—had a crew of two, a pilot and a

weapons systems officer. The pilot played no role in directing the bombs and could not have been diverted by that task. In this type of plane the bombs find their own way to the target as soon as the target co-ordinates have been set by the weapons systems officer, who can, however, intervene to stop or divert them.

Festerling pointed out that status signals giving technical information and a running clock normally shown on such videos did not appear on the videos shown to the press public by Clark. Festerling explained:

"According to the video 2.3 seconds elapse from the time the train clearly enters the field of vision to the time the bomb strikes home. This implies the train was travelling at 300 kilometres per hour. If one assumes, for the purpose of making calculations, that the train was actually travelling at 100 kilometres per hour (a figure which is probably far too high, bearing in mind the antiquated state of the Serbian rail system) the video [shown by Clarke] is running at least three times faster than real time. This means the weapons systems officer had at least 6.9 seconds to react, instead of 2.3 seconds—which Clark, in his presentation, had reduced to 'less than a second'.

"NATO therefore showed a film which was totally unreliable with regard to the crucial question of when the attack took place. On the basis of these unreliable videos and a misleading choice of words, the NATO Supreme commander in Europe led the public to believe that the attack on the train was unavoidable because of time pressure."

NATO has now largely conceded that this is, in fact, what happened.

Festerling quoted an official of Shape, the central

NATO command in Europe, who said, “Yes, the video ran considerably faster.” The headquarters of the US Air Force in Europe, located in Ramstein, Germany, also confirmed this fact, but then went on to speak of a regrettable hardware error, which they attributed to the firm of Sun Microsystems.

According to their account, the speeding up of the film took place unnoticed as the video was being transformed into mpeg-format. The main concern was to make the material available to the public as soon as possible, and therefore a supposedly arduous stage in the conversion of the film was neglected. The status signals did not appear on the video because, for some unexplained reason, the film taken came from the accompanying plane and not the plane responsible for the attack. The bombing videos from the attack plane itself are no longer available.

This whole explanation is extremely dubious. One can only assume that anybody with experience working with of this type of weapons technology would have been able to immediately identify the speeding up of the tape. Furthermore, the technology necessary for the supposedly arduous conversion of the film into mpeg-format takes, in fact, just a few minutes. At a cost of a few hundred dollars it can be loaded onto any standard personal computer. NATO's explanation assumes that it possesses technology inferior to that at the disposal of the average video amateur.

The revelations concerning the bombing of the passenger train are only the latest exposure of NATO lies and distortions in connection with the Kosovo War. Last October the British newspaper *Observer* published reports detailing the NATO bombardment of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade. The reports made clear that, contrary to NATO's version of events, the bombing was deliberate.



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