

British documentary substantiates US-KLA collusion in provoking war with Serbia

Related Sunday Times article alleges CIA role

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On Sunday, March 12, Britain's BBC2 television channel ran a documentary by Alan Little entitled "Moral Combat: NATO At War". The program contained damning evidence of how the Clinton administration set out to create a pretext for declaring war against the Milosevic regime in Serbia by sponsoring the separatist Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), then pressed this decision on its European allies. The revelations in the documentary were reinforced by an accompanying article in the *Sunday Times*.

Little conducted frank interviews with leading players in the Kosovo conflict, the most pertinent being those with US Secretary of State Madeline Albright, Assistant Secretary of State James Rubin, US Envoy Richard Holbrooke, William Walker, head of the UN Verification Mission, and KLA leader Hashim Thaci. These were supplemented by many others.

The documentary set out to explain how "a shared enmity towards Milosevic" made "allies of a shadowy band of guerrillas and the most powerful nations on earth".

Ever since the Bosnian war of 1995, the KLA, seeking to capitalise on popular resentment among Kosovan Albanians against the regime in Belgrade, had pursued a strategy of destabilising the Serbian province of Kosovo by acts of terrorism, in the hope that the US and NATO would intervene. They ambushed Serb patrols and killed policemen.

"Any armed action we undertook would bring retaliation against civilians," KLA leader Thaci explained. "We knew we were endangering a great number of civilian lives." The benefits of this strategy were made plain by Dug Gorani, a Kosovo Albanian negotiator not tied to the KLA: "The more civilians were killed, the chances of international intervention became bigger, and the KLA of course realised that. There was this foreign diplomat who once told me, 'Look, unless you pass the quota of five thousand deaths you'll never have anybody permanently present in Kosovo from foreign diplomacy.'"

Albright was receptive to the KLA's strategy because the US was anxious to stage a military conflict with Serbia. Her series of interviews began chillingly with the words: "I believed in the ultimate power, the goodness of the power of the allies and led by the United States." The KLA's campaign of provocations was seized upon as the vehicle through which the use of this power could be sanctioned.

A March 5, 1998 attack by the Serbian army on the home in

Prekaz of a leading KLA commander, Adem Jashari, in which 53 people died, became the occasion for a meeting of the Contact group of NATO powers four days later. Albright pushed for a tough anti-Serbian response. "I thought it behoved me to say to my colleagues that we could not repeat the kinds of mistakes that had happened over Bosnia, where there was a lot of talk and no action," she told Little.

NATO threatened Belgrade with a military response for the first time. "The ambitions of the KLA, and the intentions of the NATO allies, were converging," Little commented. He then showed how a subsequent public meeting between US Envoy Richard Holbrooke and KLA personnel at Junik angered Belgrade and gave encouragement to the Albanian separatists. General Nebojsa Pavkovic, the commander of the Yugoslav army in Kosovo, states, "When the official ambassador of another country arrives here, ignores state officials, but holds a meeting with the Albanian terrorists, then it's quite clear they are getting support."

Lirak Cejal, a KLA soldier, went further, "I knew that since then, that the USA, NATO, will put us in their hands. They were looking for the head of the KLA, and when they found it they will have it in their hand, and then they will control the KLA."

By October 1998 NATO had succeeded in imposing a cease-fire agreement, partly by threat of force and partly because of Serbia's success in routing the KLA. A cease-fire monitoring force [the Kosovo Verification Mission] was sent into the province under the auspices of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and headed by William Walker.

The interview with Cejal is the only reference to US control of the KLA in Little's documentary, and then it is only anecdotal. It seems that the BBC for its own reasons chose to back-pedal on this issue, given the article in the *Sunday Times* that ran the same day Little's documentary was aired.

Times journalists Tom Walker and Aidan Laverty wrote: "Several Americans who were directly involved in CIA activities or close to them have spoken to the makers of Moral Combat, a documentary to be broadcast on BBC2 tonight, and to *The Sunday Times* about their clandestine roles 'in giving covert assistance to the KLA' before NATO began its bombing campaign in Kosovo."

The *Sunday Times* explained that the anonymous sources "admitted they helped to train the Kosovo Liberation Army". They add that CIA officers were "cease-fire monitors in Kosovo in 1998

and 1999, developing ties with the KLA and giving American military training manuals and field advice on fighting the Yugoslav army and Serbian police."

The *Times* article continued: "When the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), which co-ordinated the monitoring, left Kosovo a week before airstrikes began a year ago, many of its satellite telephones and global positioning systems were secretly handed to the KLA, ensuring that guerrilla commanders could stay in touch with NATO and Washington. Several KLA leaders had the mobile phone number of General Wesley Clark, the NATO commander."

The article goes on to cite unnamed "European diplomats then working for the OSCE" who "claim it was betrayed by an American policy that made air strikes inevitable." They cite a European envoy accusing OSCE head of mission Walker of running a CIA operation: "The American agenda consisted of their diplomatic observers, aka the CIA, operating on completely different terms to the rest of Europe and the OSCE."

Walker was the American ambassador to El Salvador when the US was helping to suppress leftist rebels there and is widely suspected of being a CIA operative. He denies this, but admitted to the *Sunday Times* that the CIA was almost certainly involved in the countdown to air strikes: "Overnight we went from having a handful of people to 130 or more. Could the agency have put them in at that point? Sure they could. It's their job."

The newspaper cites the more candid comments of its CIA sources: "It was a CIA front, gathering intelligence on the KLA's arms and leadership," one says. "I'd tell them [the KLA] which hill to avoid, which wood to go behind, that sort of thing," said another.

To back up these claims, the *Sunday Times* notes that Shaban Shala, a KLA commander now active in the campaign to destabilise ethnic Albanian areas in Serbia, claims to have met British, American and Swiss agents in northern Albania in 1996.

Little's BBC documentary makes no such explicit suggestion of CIA backing for the KLA, but it does put flesh on the bones of how the cease-fire became the occasion for strengthening the separatists' grip on Kosovo. He explains that wherever the Serbs withdrew their forces in compliance with the agreement, the KLA moved in. KLA military leader Agim Ceku says, "The cease-fire was very useful for us, it helped us to get organised, to consolidate and grow." Nothing was done to prevent this, despite Serbian protests.

Little explains that the BBC has obtained confidential minutes of the North Atlantic Council or NAC, NATO's governing body, which state that the KLA was "the main initiator of the violence" and that privately Walker called its actions a "deliberate campaign of provocation". It was this covert backing for the KLA by the US which provoked Serbia into ending its cease-fire and sending the army back into Kosovo.

The next major turn of events leading up to NATO's war against Serbia was the alleged massacre of ethnic Albanians at Racek on January 15, 1999. To this day, the issue of whether Serbian forces killed civilians in revenge attacks at Racek is hotly contested by Belgrade, which claims that the KLA staged the alleged massacre, using corpses from earlier fighting.

It is certainly the case that when the Serb forces pulled out after announcing the killing of 15 KLA personnel, international monitors who entered the village reported nothing unusual. It was not until the following morning, after the KLA had retaken control of the village, that Walker made a visit and announced that a massacre by the Serbian police and the Yugoslav army had occurred. Little confirms that Walker had contacted both Holbrooke and General Clarke before making his announcement.

Racek was to prove the final pretext for a declaration of war, but first Washington had to make sure that the European powers, which, aside from Britain, were still pushing for a diplomatic solution, would come on board. Talks were convened at Rambouillet, France backed by the threat of war.

Little explains: "The Europeans, some reluctant converts to the threat of force, earnestly pressed for an agreement both the Serbs and the Albanians could accept. But the Americans were more sceptical. They had come to Rambouillet with an alternative outcome in mind."

Both Albright and Rubin are extraordinarily candid about what they set out to accomplish at Rambouillet. They presented an ultimatum that the Serbian government could not possibly accept, because it demanded a NATO occupation of not just Kosovo, but unrestricted access to the whole of Serbia. As Serbian General Pavcovic comments: "They would have unlimited rights of movement and deployment, little short of occupation. Nobody could accept it."

This was the US's intention. Albright told the BBC: "If the Serbs would not agree [to the Rambouillet ultimatum], and the Albanians would agree, then there was a very clear cause for using force." Rubin added, "Obviously, publicly, we had to make clear we were seeking an agreement, but privately we knew the chances of the Serbs agreeing were quite small."

KLA leader Thaci was the only problem, because he was demanding the inclusion of a referendum on independence. So Albright was despatched on St. Valentines Day to take charge of winning him over. Veton Suroi, a political rival of the KLA involved in the talks, gives a candid description of Albright's message to Thaci: "She was saying, you sign, the Serbs don't sign, we bomb. You sign, the Serbs sign, you have NATO in. So it's up to you."

After three weeks of discussions, Thaci finally agreed to sign the Rambouillet Accord. The path was cleared for the US to begin an open war against Serbia, a war that had been prepared with the aid of CIA dirty tricks and political manoeuvring with terrorist forces.



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