

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement

News Releases

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Bosnian human rights violator convicted of immigration fraud

PORTLAND, Ore. - An Oregon resident who served four years in the Zvornik Brigade in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the mid-1990s was convicted on Aug. 6 by a federal jury on charges of visa fraud and making a false statement to an agency of the United States, following an investigation by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Office of Homeland Security Investigations (HSI).

Zeljko Boskovic, 50, of Beaverton, Ore., came to the United States as a refugee in 1998. At that time, he claimed that he did not participate in the Bosnian Civil War, which took place from 1992 to 1996. He claimed he lived outside of Bosnia during those years.

However, evidence presented during trial showed that Boskovic's claims were false.

Records and other documents showed that he lived in Zvornik, Bosnia, during the war and served in the Zvornik Brigade from July 1992 through at least February 1996. He initially served with the infantry for two years before being transferred to the military police for the remainder of the war.

The Zvornik Brigade participated in the executions of unarmed Bosnian Muslim men and boys captured from the United Nations designated safe-area of Srebrenica in July 1995. Members of the Zvornik Brigade were responsible for atrocities at or near four school sites, including the Orahovac School, which was in close physical proximity to the Zvornik Brigade headquarters.

"Those who knowingly hide their past not only defraud our nation's immigration system, they hope to avoid taking responsibility for the crimes they have committed," said Leigh Winchell, special agent in charge of the ICE Office of HIS in Seattle. "We have made it a priority to use our unique investigative authorities to ensure that human rights violators do not use the United States as a safe haven."

"Our nation's refugee programs are among the most generous and compassionate in the world," said U.S. Attorney Holton. "Refugee applicants who create fraudulent personal histories in order

to be admitted to the United States - and to deny affiliation with groups like the Zvornik Brigade - abuse that generosity and compassion. Their misrepresentations cast a pallor of suspicion over all legitimate refugees who played by the rules."

Trial evidence included military records seized in 1998 from the headquarters of the Zvornik Brigade, Army of the Republika Srpska in 1998. The search was conducted pursuant to a warrant issued by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia in The Hague, the Netherlands.

Boskovic is scheduled to be back in federal court for sentencing on Oct. 14, 2010. The maximum penalties for visa fraud and false statement are 10 years and five years imprisonment respectively.

U.S. Attorney Holton praised the investigative work of the special agents in ICE HSI who worked on the case. Assistant U.S. Attorney David Atkinson of the District of Oregon and Trial Attorney Matthew Singer of the Criminal Division's Human Rights and Special Prosecutions Section handled the prosecution of the case.