

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF MISSOURI  
EASTERN DIVISION

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Plaintiff,

v.

RAMIZ HODZIC,

Defendant.

Case No. 4:15 CR 49 CDP  
(DDN)

**TRANSCRIPT OF DEFENDANT RAMIZ HODZIC'S STATEMENT**

Defendant Ramiz Hodzic through his attorney, Assistant Federal Public Defender Diane L. Dragan files the attached transcript of Defendant Ramiz Hodzic's videotaped statement to the Court at sentencing. Defendant is filing a redacted copy with this pleading and will file an unredacted copy under seal.

Dated November 14, 2019.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/Diane L. Dragan

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**CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE**

I hereby certify that on November 14, 2019, the foregoing was filed electronically with the Clerk of the Court to be served by operation of the Court's electronic filing system upon Assistant United States Attorney Matthew Drake.

/s/Diane L. Dragan

**IPT**



**Ramiz Hodzic Video Statement Transcript**

*(not an exact transcript, in-office product offered to help clarify Mr. Hodzic's words)*

[00:00:09.19]: My name is Ramiz Hodzic. People call me Ziggy. That is my nickname from my childhood. I was born in Bosnia. I live over there in my city in Teslic for seventeen years. When I got [turned] seventeen, its war come to my city and my country. Before war, I was live with my family, with my mom, my dad, two sisters, two brothers. We don't have too much but we have nice and happy life.

[00:00:46.25]: After war, I was married my wife Sadina and I got three beautiful children with her. My daughter [REDACTED], my oldest son [REDACTED] and my little one is [REDACTED]. I miss him so much, you know, now, and.... I got, I was from mixed family. My mom is Catholic. My father is Muslim. In Teslic we lived together with Serbian, Catholic, Muslim, everybody, we didn't pay attention who is who. I was grow up basically with Serbian people. My best friend is Serbian.

[00:01:33.25]: He is with me all my childhood. We knew each other from school, you know. In seventeen, Teslic is occupied. I was go to war at age almost eighteen, I got seventeen. I was in war almost five years.

TITLE: Ramiz describes his hometown of Teslic in the days leading up to its occupation.

[00:02:01.27]: Lot guys from my city, they have joined Serbian Army, together with Red Beret. I am with, his Catholic guy, he's my, was good friend, they come, they knew his name is Ragan, he is Catholic, he's sit, he's my friend, he's sitting with me, we drink coffee and they calling him by name. They calling him, like [Ushtarshata?], means something bad, you know, for Catholic people. And they start kicking, you know, for nothing, he didn't do nothing. Just by, they know that he is Catholic.

[00:02:38.06]: We grow up with him, you know. We so sad, you know, and my Serbian friend say, what kind of man we are, you know. They beating our friend, we just staying, looking to them, you know, why, but we are scared. They got guns, you know. They can do whatever they want. They just beat him so badly, so badly, just because he is Catholic.





We heard that they organize like a Catholic Army, you know, to defend village, you know, we start to hear that, you know.

[00:03:09.17]: And that's only hope, you know, that they will try to protect, you know, people from that. We heard about raping, you know, about a lot of stuff, killing. All over TV, you can see, you know, war. We see, but you can't feel, like I say, it's hard to understand. We see twenty miles from my city, they raping, we see that they raping, we see how burning villages. We say, not with us. We grow up with them. We believe my city is safe, because we didn't understand war. Like I say, it is hard to understand. You never been to understand, we never been in war, we didn't understand twenty miles what's going on from my city.

[00:03:52.21]: We say, we say, that our neighbor, they maybe now little you know like mad, because of war, but they still good people, we say. But, after couple months, we see we are wrong.

[00:04:08.14]: Next day, my friend, he Serbian, he grow up with me, he's my best friend. Still, today, I think that he is my best friend I have ever had in my life. He's told me you have to flee, you know, from Teslic. I say, I don't want to go, you know, I didn't do nothing. He say, he, you don't understand. Anybody who can lead people or giving good advice, they will arrest them and they will arrest all people who is aged who can fight. That's priority number one. He say, you in that age. He saved my life. He's told me, you have to go to Tesanj, because Tesanj is majority Muslim, you know, and Catholic. Over there is not war. Over there, is still everything normal. I say, I don't know which way. He say, I will show you. And I tried to ask my mom to leave with me.

[00:05:08.23]: She think that we just talking teenager stories, that we are sure, that she is positively sure that nobody will do nothing against us because we never did do nothing to our neighbor. And, you know, but I was see with my eyes what they were doing to the city. How they were beating people. I was see, you know, how people who go with me school, he Serbian, he stop one day walking in the street, I say hey, what's up... he stop talking to me. It's really weird. You can see, you didn't do nothing to him, but he feel like he is better person. I don't know! Overnight, everything is change.

[00:05:51.27]: I was left my mom and two brothers and two sisters and I was left to Tesanj.

[00:05:59.20]: TITLE: Ramiz describes the initial confusing days of being a refugee in his own country and how he became a soldier.

[00:06:01.17]: I don't know where I was going. I ask this Muslim village. I come, I see that they got lot of people from, I don't know, but they call him, like, [BOSNIAN WORD FOR REFUGEE], that mean refugee. They say, oh, you [BOSNIAN WORD FOR REFUGEE], refugee. I say, yeah, but I still don't understand how I can be [BOSNIAN WORD FOR REFUGEE] refugee in my country.

[00:06:26.12]: I go to Tesanj and Tesanj, two or three school that's full. They told me to go to another one village. I go and they got some school. That school maybe twenty people, okay. We sleep in floor, okay, I was with them. And I was been in that school sometime, not too long, and one truck, big truck, you know, really big. They stop, and they got ten people in uniform, with badges of Croatia Army. They looking for volunteers to protect their village. That village is in my city, like I told before, that five six villages, they want to surround. They tried to fight to protect their family and houses, you know, land.

[00:07:23.06]: I was go to that first volunteer group to, that name is Studenci, that's name of village in territory of my city of Teslic. When I come over there, I was try to be soldier to protect that, and that chief, commander, you know, that military, they say, you're too young, you know, you can help us with bring food to soldier who is in trench or houses all around the village that they protect, you know. But Serbian already start attacking that village before, you know. And they made grenade. One day, somebody said or somebody dead or something like that, and after couple day I bring that food, they told me, you know, if I really want to be soldier, they need me because they don't have enough people to protect. We can't cover all territory.

[00:08:20.26]: I say yeah, I will. When I got my first day to trench, I was been in [incomprehensible] with weapon. I didn't know how to use my gun. They give me like maybe ten minutes instruction, you know. See this, this is how you put the...



[00:08:35.27] Interviewer: So you had never held a gun before?

[00:08:37.12]: No. Just see that in TV. I never that, no. And they just told me, this is like this, this is like this. Stay like this, fire one bullet, I fire. They say, you see that's easy, you good. That's all that I got. And they put me with one guy in trench together. And every maybe hundred yards is two men, two men. We have to watching for twenty four seven, you know, if enemy come or to protect, you know. I was start my war in that village with my Adidas, with my jeans, with my Adidas T-shirts, that's how I fight maybe for couple months.

[00:09:22.08]: Another guy, he is Catholic, his family is in Germany. They send him maybe like ten uniforms. He give me T-shirt, long-sleeve. I got down my jeans, and I got camouflage in top. And that's how Bosnia start to defend. Somebody got this and somebody got shoes, they don't have uniforms, somebody got some parts in uniform like this, this. That's basically, we got uniform of donation, we got food of donation.

[00:09:52.22]: To look like soldier, to be soldier, you have to look like soldier. I know when I go to war, I got my Adidas, you know, and I got my Levis, and T-shirts and AK47. You know. But when I got uniform, I feel like soldier. I got some duty because that say I'm somebody. You know, I am now soldier. That's what make soldier. Uniform, you know. We had one guy like five men, one gun, one AK47 for five people. We don't have enough AK47, we don't have enough ammunition. We don't have uniform. And day by day, people who is around who go to Germany, Italy, everywhere, they sending help. They start buying guns, they start buying uniforms. They sending us over there and day by day, you know, we got uniform from them, we got food from them, we got weapons, and that's all from donation from somebody else.

[00:10:54.08]: TITLE: Ramiz and his father were both soldiers in the Bosnian War

[00:11:01.22]: My father in same war. We find each other in battlefield, in life. And I was saw him and I ask him where you are. He's told me he's over there and that day when we got big fight, when we, when enemy occupied us, his squad come to help us. That day,



they help us, but still, enemy is too strong and we lose territory. All village, they burn out. Anybody who didn't run got chance to run, they go concentration camp or they kill.

[00:11:44.01]: TITLE: On one occasions, Ramiz fought alongside his father in battle to save a hospital from Serbian forces. This would be the battle in which Ramiz's father was injured, ultimately causing his death.

[00:11:54.17]: We've been in some spot and we've been like some special force. We need to free six seven mountain, hill. From that hill, enemy got artillery, you know what that is artillery, and they fighting medical center, hospital. They killing people in hospital and we got mission we have to free that, because nobody can go to hospital. If you got injured people, go to them, they kill him with grenade. And we need to take that five six hill to make free. And we go over there and my father he is being behind me. And we clean territory, we almost done. We got only little hill. And we come to that hill. I was be first guy who come and enemy, two people, they get up from trench. They start fighting to me. I start fighting to them. And they put grenades to me, and I saw grenades and I run. And I lay down, but my father, he didn't see that grenade. He tried to protect me, he start to fighting, and I tried to yell him no, no more. He didn't hear me because he fight. And two grenades they come to between his legs and he, they blow up them.

[00:13:33.00]: I come to him and try to pull him back to save, you know, but I see that his legs, they already twisted, they already done.

[00:13:43.08]: TITLE: The hardships of war...

[00:13:48.22]: I know exactly what is hard time. What is be poor man. You know, I was be hungry lot of time in war. I know I working and I have to sit down because I'm hungry. In my head, it's everything its spinning. But I never never still... that's what one of reason I never want to Abdullah or somebody like her to steal and somebody can say they go to Syria to stealing, not to protect women or children, something like that.

[00:14:22.04]: Money in war, it's worth like weapon. You have to go to war weapon and you have to money because of hungry or kids or you or, everything. I know exactly, you know, what mean to have weapon. In Bosnia, we don't protect each other, they go to



concentration camp or to rape the woman, children. They kill. That's one of reason, you know, I help my brother Abdullah, my friend Abdullah.

[00:14:59.22]: Because I know what is war. It's hard to understand, but believe me this is true what I say. We cannot survive without help of our people who is outside. A lot of my people who have been in war in Bosnia, they don't like people who flee to Germany and Italy, but without them, if you talk reality, we cannot survive. We don't have money to buy one bullet. They send me for bullet, for protection. We have to say to thanks to them, we save thousands and thousand woman to be raped. Because, we save, because I know that any village any city who didn't defend that city, thousands woman, I think 220,000, 220,000 Bosnian woman is raped. And when you see when they rape them, any city any village who didn't defend, who didn't have weapon.

[00:15:58.00]: Between that 220,000 woman who is raped, one of them [REDACTED].

[00:16:04.13]: Why we didn't defend Teslic? We didn't have weapon to say no to enemy, to say.... That's one of most reason what I try to stop in Syria, it's killing children and rape woman. And I didn't like idea when my brother Abdullah, my friend Abdullah, when he go over there, but when he go over there, I know that he tried to stop what we passed in Bosnia. And I was always think that my money will save some children and some woman, and give him better life. If you got money in war, you live, you fight less. In war, you need to eat. But in war, company doesn't work. You don't have production, you don't have nothing. But still you have to eat. You need first aid, even. Somebody shoot, you need supply for medical, you know. You need anything, you need to buy. We don't have money to buy. People in Germany, Italy, Bulgaria, England, they raise money buy medical, they buy medicine, send us. They buy shoes, food, everything they send to Bosnia. If we don't have that, we will lost country. We will be all dead or concentration camp.

[00:17:34.20]: Anyone who is not been in war, he can't understand, you have to been to can explain that. You never can explain 100%. You know what, how is people scared. After one years, nobody don't care. Somebody say, I don't care if I die, I can't do anymore.

[00:17:57.18]: No electric. Any war, I think it's bad for people, you know. Maybe it's good for some politic, but for people, it's definitely not good.

[00:18:14.27]: TITLE: In 2012, while deep in addiction, Abdullah calls Ramiz and tells him about his drug use...

[00:18:22.17]: And I told him, you know, you need to find a way to leave them. He say, what you doing now, and I say, I'm doing now, I stop drinking and I start go to mosque and that my life now. He say what and I start talking to him about, he start calling me every day, we start talk. And like for months, he never did touch no drugs. That's how he left drugs. He come to St. Louis in maybe one year before he moved to Bosnia then Syria.

[00:19:01.21]: We got together pray. We go together in same mosque. He is really good person and one day he is told me that he go to Bosnia, and everything is good. He going to Bosnia and I call him with Skype. One night, he say, he call me and he say, bro, I got news for you. I say, what is it? He say, I going to Syria. To protect people. I say, huh? He say, I go, that my calling? He told me that. And I say, you don't need to go, because we Muslim believe that we scholar, if scholar see that we need to protect somebody, they need to say, hey our religion is you need to protect. That's what I believe. But I say to him scholar never did say that we have to go. He say, that's what I say to you.

[00:20:00.15]: We hang up and I didn't sleep all night. I think, did he really go, you know. I call him tomorrow in Skype, he never answered. And after maybe couple day, Abdullah he's call me and he say I'm here now. I say, send me some picture, see what's up. And he say, I need to come here. And he send me picture, he got around his head something and that's his first picture, and he got the pistol. And I told him, that to keep your hands clean, if you go to protect people, protect. Be a real soldier. Don't kill innocent people, church, please nobody, try to be good soldier. If you go. And I ask him, where is uniform? Where is uniform? He say I sell in Bosnia. Sell, he say. Milosevic, he killing Bosnian people killing here, serious, everything. And he say, like in Bosnia, we don't have uniform. We, he say, I buy my AK47 for my money because you don't have enough. He said same like Bosnia, one weapon, five six people.

[00:21:22.00]: And I say what you need? He say nothing, we got everything. And I say, you need uniform? I see because you don't have... He say, yeah, we need uniform. And I

say, how many Bosnian people is over there? He say about ten. And I say, I will send you uniform. And I was go to Uncle Sam, or, some another store, I can't remember exact. I think Uncle Sam. And I was buy some shoes and uniform. I was go to Walmart to buy underwear, socks. I call him and say how I can send that? He told me you can send that to Niya Lukic in Turkey. And I send him some money and I know if you got money, you know, you will fight less, you can go to drink coffee, you don't need make...

[00:22:22.12]: You know, people make bad stuff war, they make robbery or something if doesn't have money, they stealing. And I was try to they will proud like I am proud, to never steal in war. I never did send money before, because I never did know true, but when he is go over there, when he told me what going on, I believe him, that they rape kids, killing, he put picture, he is told me what's going on, I believe him. I remember I see one picture, one little baby, maybe two years old, she is dead in a carton box. She is freezing [frozen], she is dead. I didn't sleep all night why that picture is my, you know, my wife is crying, she is saying, and I call Abdullah, and I say, Abdullah, what's really going on? And he say, it's really cold. Colder than in Bosnia.

[00:23:22.23]: I told him, how much is a stove? You know, they can use as heater. He is told me some, how much, and I remember, I send money and I told him, buy please ten stove, in my name and my family, buy to somebody who got children and put them to protect. You know, it's still money. If you don't have more than one stove, maybe fifty bucks, your children is dead. I sending that, I try to help Bosnia people and people from Syria, woman and children especially. And, I still hope and I believe that some children is still alive because of me. Because of that ten stove, that I buy, maybe I was save life to some children and with that food that we buy, maybe I will save one life. And I believe that I save minimum one life or that kids or woman.

[00:24:33.14]: And what I send to Bosnia people, I try to that they look like soldier, to be like soldier, to be honest like soldier. If you got money, you don't need to steal. But I never did want anybody say Bosnian people come to Syria to be gangsters, to to stealing or something.

[00:24:56.07]: But, I was believe that Bosnian people go to Syria to protect people, to fight against Assad. But when they go there, you know, in war, minds change. You believe what you general say to you. You believe something, like I believe what my commander say to me. You know, you believe that you good guys, everybody believe



that they good guys. I believe that it was some criminals, rapists, just anybody, are you good guy? He will say yes. Especially in war, you know, you fight for something and somebody say this this, only I don't know how they, why they stay, when they see that they fight each other. That's my only question when I ask Abdullah, he always told me, don't believe news, they're lying. That's not everything, what they say over there. I say, it's true, I read some of it, that they're killing Bosnian people purposely. And I was really mad. He said don't believe that, you know, that's not true.

[00:26:10.08]: After he is dead, I didn't trust anybody anymore. But only my question is, to him, why he stay, he say, I believe [incomprehensible], that I still protect people. That enemy from all over, they attacking. I don't know now, he is dead, but only my question is still, why he didn't come back when they crushed everybody, each other. That's only why I am still sad, you know. I believe that he needed to come back home in January 2014.

[00:26:48.11]: TITLE: Ramiz describes his life after the Bosnian War and his plan for a better life for his wife and future children.

[00:26:52.29]: After war, I was voluntary, you know, take out from military, because I got lot of memory of that, and uniform and everything, that's not for me. I need better life, you know, especially because my wife is come to be pregnant, and I know that I have to go for better life for my kids. For me, it's not be safety over there because [incomprehensible] are not over, I don't want my daughter and my kid to grow up to know, to call each other like name. You know, especially after war in Bosnia, people call each other still with name, you know, from enemy army, you know, like bad name for Serbian people is like Cetnik, or Croatian Urshatan [?], Muslim like Baria [?]. I don't want my kids, when I got my kids, you know, to grow up like that. That's for me, still like hate. To hate people.

[00:27:59.19]: I would been in war, but I never did hate people. I was been in war not because I want, because I have to, I need to protect country. One main reason, it's, when I found out Sedina is pregnant, is I want to leave Bosnia is to save my kids from that hate, you know. After war, I was married. When my wife is pregnant, I was looking for better life. And I apply for Visa to come to United States of America in May of 1998, I was come to Washington, D.C. I'm thankful for that.



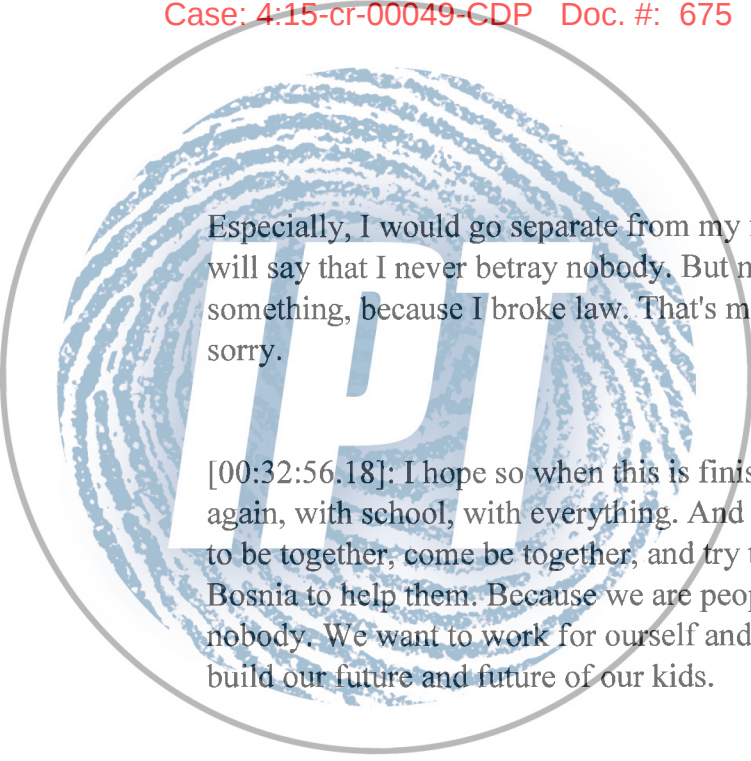
[00:28:43.12]: In America, after three months, my first daughter, my [REDACTED], she is born in Washington, D.C. I was come to visit St. Louis. In St. Louis I like it too much. They have a lot of Bosnian community. And I was moving St. Louis and I was living St. Louis now for nineteen years and I got two years in Washington D.C. That's mean I'm 21 years in United States.

[00:29:17.17]: My kid is United States citizen. They will stay here. I am not United States citizen. That's hard part for me. Kids will come to be separate. But still, I'm thankful that they will stay in safe country and they will got better life here. I just hope so they will finish school.

[00:29:47.20]: [REDACTED] right now going to online school because they don't have time, because she have to work to help mom. My middle son, [REDACTED], he work, too. They don't have choice because they have to help to pay bills. My younger son, he is in school. Today, when you speak with people, my kids, you can see that I was put in my kids everything that I can to, they never hate nobody. I was in jail, but from jail, I was always send to message, don't accuse everybody. Because I am here. And I heard from people that they are good kids. They don't hate nobody. They helping people. Like I was try.

[00:30:37.23]: But every time when you do something like I was try to help people. I didn't mean to break law of United States of America. I was break. I feel sorry. Helping my brother Abdullah, he is for me, good man, but he is been in bad company. With time, time coming, that's his group or his company, or that state coming to be, bad state. And one time, I was questioning, you know, myself what he doing. I was talk to him, Skype, I was told him to come back to Bosnia. To try to leave everything over there, he is doing good over there. He is told me, that is not true what I see, what I see in news. But I can't believe that, I was trust him, I was love him. For my discovery, I will see that he is sometime talking to another people, different stuff. I didn't know that.

[00:31:38.01]: If you, If I cannot put myself now in that position, what I know now, what I know now, if I know then, for sure I will not do that. I was late, I just can say I'm sorry if I got tell you. In my future chance to give somebody like help like that, I would never do that. I will never, I know for this that I am breaking the law, I would never put my kids, my wife, and myself, and everybody, I would never put in that dangerous.



Especially, I would go separate from my family. But if you ask everybody about me, they will say that I never betray nobody. But now I feel that I betrayed United States law, something, because I broke law. That's my big regret. Now it's, it is what it is. I feel sorry.

[00:32:56.18]: I hope so when this is finished. That I will got chance to help my kids again, with school, with everything. And to make my life and Sedina life be easy again, to be together, come be together, and try to help our kids what we can, we can try from Bosnia to help them. Because we are people who like to work. We don't want to beg nobody. We want to work for ourself and we hope we will got chance to do that again, to build our future and future of our kids.

[00:33:40.13]: I was try to be good person, to help people. That's me. I was person who never hate people. Everybody know that. And I just hope so that my kids, they will do what I teach them to be honest people and they will finish school and then be good people for their country. And I say their country. Bosnia is my country, but United States is country of my kids. They want be, I hope so they will love United States how I love Bosnia. And that they will loyal to United States how I am loyal to my country, Bosnia. I respect United States and I love my country Bosnia. And my hopes that they will like and love and respect United States, and respect every another country.

[00:34:44.29]: And I hope that we will soon be together.