

REPUBLIC OF SERBIA
Ministry of Information
Belgrade 11 March 1998

STATEMENT

In a preliminary report of the Ministry of the Interior regarding the suppression of terrorism in Kosovo and Metohija, adopted at yesterday's meeting of the Government of the Republic of Serbia, it is said, inter alia:

Several months long terrorist attack in the territory of Srbica which threatened the security of several routes and resulted in many civilian casualties, created general insecurity among citizens of all nationalities, necessitated the need to establish in this area full security of communication lines, by positioning police units there.

In an attempt to prevent these measures, a terrorist group of Adem Jashari attacked on 28 February police patrols, killing four police officers and wounding 2. Sixteen terrorists were liquidated in this attack.

In the early morning hours, on 5 March, a group of terrorists attacked a police patrol in the vicinity of the village of Donje Prekaze. After the resolute response by the police, the terrorist group withdrew and barricaded itself in a base at the Jashari family estate in the same village.

In accordance with the rules of service, police forces encircled this terrorist group and called them to surrender. At the same time, they asked other persons present there to leave, giving them 2 hours to do so. Within the two hours, several dozen persons accepted the invitation and left the scene in safety.

After two hours, after the call was repeated, the terrorist group of Adem Jashari, responded with fire, using heavy arms - mortars, machine guns and bombs - automatic and sniper rifles.

The conflict with terrorists lasted 27 hours. Fifty-one persons were killed in all. Unfortunately, as was subsequently established, there were members of the Jashari family, whom the terrorists prevented from leaving the base. The Ministry of the Interior expresses regret and indignation over the fact that those were the victims of cruelty and ruthlessness of Albanian terrorists. Police was not in a position to know how many other persons stayed with terrorists, since several dozens left the scene after their call. How ruthless Adem Jashari was can be seen from the fact that he killed his own nephew to prevent him from leaving.

Two police officers were killed in this anti-terrorist action and 7 were seriously wounded.

In both actions, a total of 67 terrorists were killed. In the action of 28 February, several persons were also killed whose bodies were removed by terrorists from the scene.

After the action was completed, the competent judicial authorities – an investigating judge from Kosovska Mitrovica in the presence of a Prosecutor - carried out an on-site investigation and undertook further investigation, after which full freedom of movement was established.

The claims that these actions involved an excessive use of force by the police, are being looked into by the competent authorities in a regular investigation procedure and will inform the public accordingly.