

JUSTICE NEWS

Department of Justice

Office of Public Affairs

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Wednesday, August 22, 2018

Justice Department Secures Denaturalization of Convicted War Criminal Who Fraudulently Obtained Refugee Status and U.S. Citizenship

Defendant Concealed that He Had Murdered Civilians and Prisoners of War During the 1990s Balkans Conflict

On August 15, Judge Thomas F. Hogan of the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia entered an order that revoked the naturalized U.S. citizenship of a convicted war criminal. The court held that defendant Edin Dzeko, a native of the former Yugoslavia, procured his U.S. citizenship illegally and by concealment of material facts and willful misrepresentation. The court's order was based, in part, on Dzeko's admission that he misrepresented and concealed his military service on immigration forms and lied while under oath at his naturalization interview.

"War criminals are not entitled to safe haven in the United States, and we will not allow individuals who commit such atrocities to take advantage of our immigration system," said Acting Assistant Attorney General Chad A. Readler. "This case sends the message that the Department will remain resolute in our commitment to prosecute those who seek to gain, or have gained, U.S. citizenship unlawfully."

"This case demonstrates that the United States will protect the integrity of its refugee programs," said U.S. Attorney Jessie K. Liu. "Working with our law enforcement partners, we will continue to target war criminals who attempt to abuse the process to gain entry into our country."

Dzeko, 46, was part of an elite unit of the Army of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina that attacked the village of Trusina in April 1993, in what is known as the Trusina massacre. The unit allegedly targeted Bosnian Croats who resided in the village because of their Christian religion and Croat ethnicity, killing 22 unarmed individuals including women and the elderly. A Bosnian court previously found that Dzeko played a key role in the massacre, serving as part of a firing squad that executed six unarmed prisoners of war and civilians. Dzeko was admitted to the United States as a refugee before naturalizing in 2006.

In June 2014, Dzeko was convicted in a Bosnian court of war crimes against prisoners of war and war crimes against civilians, and held responsible for eight killings, including the six described above. Dzeko is still serving his 13-year prison sentence in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Justice Department is also pursuing the denaturalization of Sammy Rasema Yetisen, aka Rasema Handanovic, one of Dzeko's fellow soldiers and another perpetrator of the Trusina massacre.

"Those who commit such acts of inhumanity and abuse may not use lies and deceit to fraudulently call this country home," said Brad Bench, Special Agent in Charge of Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) Seattle. "Today's announcement marks the necessary carriage of justice, and I am proud of the professional investigators who upheld the law and order that defines our nation."

This case was investigated by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's (ICE) Homeland Security Investigations Human Rights Violator and War Crimes Unit and the Civil Division's Office of Immigration Litigation, District Court Section (OIL-DCS) National Security and Affirmative Litigation Unit (NS/A Unit), with consultation and support from

ICE's Office of the Principal Legal Advisor (OPLA) Human Rights Law Section and Seattle Office of the Chief Counsel, and the Criminal Division's Human Rights and Special Prosecutions Section.

The case was jointly prosecuted by Deputy Chief Timothy Belsan and Senior Counsel for National Security Aram Gavor of OIL-DCS's NS/A Unit and Trial Attorney Steven Platt of OIL-DCS, and Assistant U.S. Attorney Wynne Kelly of the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Columbia.

Members of the public who have information about foreign nationals or naturalized U.S. citizens suspected of engaging in human rights abuses or war crimes are encouraged to call the ICE tip line at 1-866-DHS-2-ICE or to complete its [online tip form](#); or the Justice Department's Human Rights and Special Prosecutions Section at 1-202-616-2492. Callers may remain anonymous.

Topic(s):

Immigration

Component(s):

Civil Division

USAO - District of Columbia

Press Release Number:

18-1092

Updated August 22, 2018