

BRITISH BROADCASTING CORPORATION

RADIO 4

TRANSCRIPT OF "FILE ON 4" – RADOVAN KARADZIC

CURRENT AFFAIRS GROUP

TRANSMISSION: Tuesday 5th July 2005 2000 - 2040

REPEAT: Sunday 10th July 2005 1700 - 1740

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PROGRAMME NUMBER: 05VY3019LHO

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ACTUALITY OF SERBIAN RELIGIOUS FESTIVAL

HAWTON: Traditional music blaring out at a Serbian religious festival. A few metres away, t-shirts for sale, emblazoned with pictures of the former Bosnian Serb leader, Radovan Karadzic. A hero to many, he's been on the run for the past eight years. Indicted for genocide by the UN War Crimes Tribunal in The Hague, Radovan Karadzic has defied all attempts to arrest him.

SENAD: The mere fact that he's at large and that he's likely just, so to say, under the nose of the international community, of the strongest military alliance in the world that is supposed to be chasing him and getting him, that is really a disaster for NATO.

HAWTON: So how has he managed to evade justice for so long? File on 4 goes on the hunt for the former Bosnian Serb leader. We uncover a history of missed opportunities to track him down, expose the powerful criminal networks that have protected him and, for the first time, learn that Europe's most wanted man is now believed to be living outside the jurisdiction of international peacekeepers.

SIGNATURE TUNE

ACTUALITY AT GRAVE

KOSALKA: You're looking at a secondary mass grave relating to Srebrenica massacre of 1995. You're looking at a lot of isolated body parts. It's very smashed.

HAWTON: Renee Kosalka is a forensic anthropologist working for the International Commission on Missing Persons. Here, up this dusty track in the beautiful rolling hills of eastern Bosnia, she is scraping the mud from human bones. How difficult is it to excavate this grave?

KOSALKA: On a scale of one to ten, I would say this is probably a 9.5, because it's so completely disturbed, and especially the fact that this area was used as a rubbish fill beforehand.

HAWTON: How do you think these bodies ended up here?

KOSALKA: They were probably transported here in a dump truck of some sort and dumped while the machine was moving out of the grave towards the road.

HAWTON: It's still early days, but what can you tell from these remains so far about the age and the sex?

KOSALKA: They seem to be mostly young males, approximately between fifteen and early twenties. There are some older individuals, but it's very co-mingled and I can't give an estimate of how many people are actually in the grave at this point.

HAWTON: The victims are from the town of Srebrenica. They're just some of the eight thousand Muslim men and boys who were systematically murdered when the town fell to Bosnian Serb forces on July 11th 1995 - the worst atrocity in Europe since the end of the Second World War. This is just one of dozens of mass graves relating to the massacre. Thousands of Srebrenica victims still have to be found and identified.

HAWTON cont: For the relatives, the pain continues. Hatidza Mehmedovic remembers saying goodbye to her husband and two sons, who'd decided to flee into the mountains around Srebrenica in order not to be captured by the Serbs when the town fell.

MEHMEDOVIC (VIA INTERPRETER): The last time I saw them was in the village of Brestova Ravan and I will never forget it. When I sleep, I dream about it, and when I dream about it, I wish I will never wake up. I can hear now the words of my youngest son saying "Mummy, don't come with us." And he was hugging me and I'll always feel his arms around me. And when the time came to part, he put his hands over his eyes and said, "Mummy, I don't want to see you leaving." I was looking back for a long time and I could see he was still holding his hands over his eyes. I have that picture in my head all the time and it will never disappear. Never.

HAWTON: Hatidza's husband and sons were almost certainly killed by Serb forces blocking the escape from the town. Their bodies have never been found. She believes it's time for those responsible to face justice.

MEHMEDOVIC (VIA INTERPRETER): They are not being arrested. What are we waiting for? It's been ten years now. Is it going to be another ten years before they are arrested? Or perhaps a hundred? I really don't know. But it seems they've been greatly rewarded for what they did.

HAWTON: Several individuals have been prosecuted for the Srebrenica massacre. But the two most wanted – the former Bosnian Serb President, Radovan Karadzic and his military commander Ratko Mladic – have yet to face their day in court. The Hague's indictment against Mr Karadzic summarises the crimes he's accused of - and doesn't only include Srebrenica.

READER IN STUDIO: Radovan Karadzic...aided and abetted the planning, preparation or execution of the destruction of the Bosnian Muslim and Bosnian Croat national, ethnic, racial or religious groups ... the killing of Bosnian Muslims after their captivity in different locations in and around the Srebrenica enclave.

HAWTON: Ten years on from the initial indictment, Radovan Karadzic is still free.

ACTUALITY OF PRAYERS AT FUNERAL

HAWTON: Prayers said over the coffin of Jovanka Karadzic, Radovan's mother, who died in May this year in the town of Niksic in neighbouring Montenegro. More than a thousand people attended the funeral. The Serbian Orthodox Metropolitan Amfilojie conducted the service comparing Jovanka Karadzic with the mothers of past Serbian heroes. Agents of foreign intelligence services were said to be bumping into each other as they mingled with mourners waiting to see if the deceased's favourite son would make an appearance.

Radovan Karadzic did not turn up to his mother's funeral. During his time on the run he's continued to thumb his nose at the international community. He's written at least one novel and helped publish a series of personal documents from his time as the Bosnian Serb war leader. Florence Hartmann from the Prosecutor's Office at The Hague says it's vital that he and Ratko Mladic stand trial.

HARTMANN: There is no peace for the victims until they are tried. Can you imagine ten years after the Second World War, the people who have been tried in Nuremberg, publishing books in Germany, it would be a shame. It was a genocide and we cannot let it go, and there is no trial in absence, and if we don't bring the indictees to the custody of the tribunal, there will be no trial and there will be no conviction and it means that there will be impunity, and we cannot accept that on the soil of Europe, we cannot accept that anywhere in the world.

HAWTON: But finding Radovan Karadzic has not been easy. One of the main reasons for this has been the protection he has received from the political and military structures that he himself helped to create.

ACTUALITY AT RIVER VRBAS

HAWTON: Children playing in the River Vrbas in the northern Bosnian city of Banja Luka. With a history dating back to pre-Roman times, the city has seen its fair share of armies coming and going. The Kastel Fortress is its most famous symbol, dominating the river as it wends its way through the town. Banja Luka suffered little damage during the war. Like many other towns in Serb-controlled areas, the front line never came close. These days Banja Luka is the capital of the Serb half of Bosnia. The Dayton Peace Agreement, which ended the Bosnian War in December 1995, divided the country into two entities. One, the Muslim-Croat Federation, the other, Republika Srpska or RS. Both entities have their own armies, parliaments and police forces. For the past ten years, Republika Srpska has, in effect, been controlled by the political party founded by Radovan Karadzic – the Serbian Democratic Party or SDS. The power structures he built up during the war, in many ways, still exist today. And individuals who took control of those structures are still in charge. Some people believe this state of affairs hinders the search for justice. Refik Begic is a Muslim politician in the town of Bratunac in the Republika Srpska. He says the war criminals of yesterday are being protected by the politicians of today – and he knows that from personal experience:

BEGIC: In May 1992 I saw the people who actually they are killed just because they are Bosnian people, and I have no idea why.

HAWTON: Where did you see that?

BEGIC: I saw this in a school. It's a sports hall in Bratunac. I was a prisoner in this school, I lost my best friend in this cause. I saw over a hundred people who actually died.

HAWTON: And the people who carried out those killings, where are they now?

BEGIC: Some of those people, I know they are walking on the street, they are free. We sent a letter to the prosecutor and they didn't do anything, you know. We made very clear the situation to the prosecutor.

HAWTON: So you sent this letter giving clear evidence to the prosecutor about people who committed crimes in 92, and what did the prosecutor tell you?

BEGIC: We still have no answer.

HAWTON: And how long ago was it you sent the letter?

BEGIC: Three years.

HAWTON: But using the law is not the only method used by those who've kept power for so long. According to some, the SDS political party and the shadowy individuals it is linked to have ruled Republika Srpska through a mixture of fear, intimidation and sheer ruthlessness. Branko Todorovic is the head of the local branch of the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights.

TODOROVIC [VIA INTERPRETER]: SDS actually has their structures of the party, you know, which is transparent. But there is the other side of the SDS which is illegal, which is the strong base of the support to the war criminals, and they have been using fear and a lot of pressures, blackmail that gives them that power.

HAWTON: How does the fear and intimidation work?

TODOROVIC [VIA INTERPRETER]: For example, we have big number of political liquidation in the RS in last ten years. Many persons were killed and nobody was arrested, not at all. Also several high officials from the police in RS, for whom there are a certain information that they wanted to cooperate with international community and they wanted to help actually to stop these criminal acts within the SDS. Actually they were also assassinated after trying to do so. If you are within the SDS and if you are criticising, then you are in big trouble.

HAWTON: International financial investigators believe huge amounts of money have been diverted to protect Radovan Karadzic and other war crimes fugitives.

ACTUALITY AT BANK

HAWTON: What are we looking at here?

ROBINSON: Hundreds of notebooks that contain the bank's records, they contain our efforts of tracing through the mainframe database following the money. And what flowed through this bank ...

HAWTON: Toby Robinson shows me around her offices in Sarajevo. It's her job to investigate why one particular bank in Republika Srpska – the Privredna Banka, East Sarajevo – went bust. And it's not an easy task. Her predecessor was forced out after being threatened and beaten.

HAWTON: What's this here?

ROBINSON: We put some plastic here, because this window fronts on a major street, so we tried to put this plastic here. It's to deflect any hand grenades or something that's thrown in.

HAWTON: In case anybody's attacking the office?

ROBINSON: Because we cannot lose the documents.

HAWTON: Toby Robinson was appointed a year ago and has gathered a detailed insight into how money from the bank has been diverted.

ROBINSON: This bank was never very large. Its total assets were never over sixty million KM, which is thirty million euros, yet we see loan losses of 45 million. That's beyond bad business.

HAWTON: And what do you mean by a loan loss?

ROBINSON: Well, they were bank loans that were uncollectible the day they made them, to state-owned companies. Many of the loans flowed out the other side of the state-owned company into front companies for certain individuals, it flowed out in cash, which you can't trace anymore and we don't know where that went. As the bank was failing in early 2003, one specific individual was able to withdraw 948,000 euros. This was at a time when the bank could not pay salaries. It was past due on its electric bill. It had no cash, it was totally illiquid. There was a run on the bank. They devoted all cash so that this one individual could get that cash out.

HAWTON: And this individual is closely associated with Radovan Karadzic?

ROBINSON: According to, you know, the high representative, as well as he's on the US executive order listing that he is a Karadzic supporter.

HAWTON: Was that money given to Radovan Karadzic?

ROBINSON: I can't say. It was withdrawn in cash and we don't know what he did with it.

HAWTON: The Chief International Envoy to Bosnia, Lord Paddy Ashdown, says the laundering of money through criminal structures, and the protective networks that surround them, make it extremely difficult to penetrate. He says Mr Karadzic has been able to benefit from the system before – and since – he disappeared in 1997.

ASHDOWN: This man is not a hidhhook, a hidhhook is the Balkan word for some Robin Hood figure who is hiding in the mountains, who steals from the rich to give to the poor. He is actually the head of a thoroughly sophisticated criminal network that uses the proceeds of drug smuggling, of people smuggling, of smuggling of prostitutes in order to fund the networks that support him. It is a single space and it extends from the political structures that run the country through the criminal structures that make money out of illegal activities to the war criminal structures, and they're all completely interlinked. And the major ingredient in the failure to catch Karadzic is the up-until-now

EYEWITNESS [VIA INTERPRETER]: At half past twelve that night, a huge explosion or detonation occurred, the sound of which I had never heard before. My daughter ran into the room and said, ‘Dad, it’s an earthquake. We need to get out.’

HAWTON: But what the family had experienced was not an earthquake. It was explosives used by NATO troops to gain entry to the Priest’s residence in the centre of the town. Acting on intelligence that Karadzic was there, NATO-led troops, using helicopters and civilian vehicles, launched a late night raid on the building. British Special Forces were rumoured to have spearheaded the operation

EYEWITNESS 2 [VIA INTERPRETER]: After the explosions, helicopters arrived – four or five of them. They had their lights shining down. That gave me the opportunity to see how they got into the house – with ladders to break in. I could hear the priest shouting, “Stop! Stop! What are you doing?” After that, a burst of gunfire could be heard in the priest’s house. Not long after, two soldiers ran to what looked like an ice cream van and took out two stretchers and first aid kits. And after that, I moved with my friends to get closer to see what was going on. We could not see who was injured in the priest’s house. But I saw that night two people lying on the grass in front of the house. It was a brutal deed against the Serb people.

HAWTON: The raid left the priest and his son with multiple fractures and serious head injuries. The following day a large demonstration was held in the town, condemning the NATO action. Foreign civilians were advised not to go to Pale during the following days – for their own safety. As for Radovan Karadzic? No sign. The intelligence had been faulty. And not for the first time. File on Four has spoken to one individual, who’s spent many years close to the Karadzic investigation. He gives a rare insight into the problems they’ve faced. He does not want his identity revealed and we’ve used an actor’s voice.

MAN [READ BY ACTOR]: The problem has always been that the intelligence that was gathered showed where Karadzic may have been the day before or two days ago, but never where Karadzic would be this afternoon or tomorrow morning, and that’s what you need, of course, if you want to do an action or to deploy people in the field. You have to know where a specific person will be at a specific time.

HAWTON: Why has it not been possible then to be able to predict where he is tomorrow?

MAN [READ BY ACTOR]: In order to predict where a person will be tomorrow, you would have to have solid information from the close circles around that person, and that obviously hasn't happened so far. It's proving very difficult – and even impossible – to go that deep into the organisation that supports Mr Karadzic in order to get that close to him that we would know where he would be tomorrow.

HAWTON: Why? Why is it so difficult?

MAN [READ BY ACTOR]: Well, you're talking about a close community of hard line Serbs around Karadzic, who cannot even be motivated by a \$5 million reward that was put out for the arrest of Karadzic and others. They say, 'We don't care about this \$5 million. We are good Serbs and we keep on protecting our own people.'

HAWTON: But it's not just that the intelligence has been late or inaccurate. Even when timely information has been available, it's not always been shared. One of the basic problems has been the sheer number of international organisations operating in Bosnia during the past ten years. All of them, in one way or another, involved in the hunt for war criminals. There've been international police missions, NATO peacekeepers, EU peacekeepers, investigators from The Hague, national intelligence agencies – including the CIA and MI6. Not to mention a whole raft of local armies, police forces and intelligence services. All of these organisations have their own agendas and all of them, in the course of their duties, gain intelligence about war criminals. Our source confirms the problems.

MAN [READ BY ACTOR]: It's typical, when you talk about intelligence, that a lot of people are reluctant to share the information and intelligence they gather.

HAWTON: Who is reluctant?

MAN [READ BY ACTOR]: It comes from different sides and from almost all sides, I think. It is traditional when somebody gathers intelligence, you know, to share that is not easy because you cannot control your intelligence anymore. Certainly you would like to talk to the sources of somebody else, but nobody wants to share his or her sources.

HAWTON: But this is a guy accused of genocide. I mean, surely people must be talking to each other and sharing intelligence?

MAN [READ BY ACTOR]: Certainly it happens and it happens at all levels. It's just a question, is all the intelligence shared, and is there not just one little piece missing? Maybe the piece that could lead to the right track to find a certain person.

HAWTON: And File on 4 has learnt that one potentially vital piece of intelligence relating to Karadzic's period in hiding was not even shared between the two agencies at the centre of the hunt – NATO and investigators at the Hague Tribunal.

EXTRACT FROM LETTER

READER IN STUDIO: The 24th of December, 2002. I love you, my dear, and I enjoyed it so much and I want us to meet again as soon as possible. I understand you and suppose it can't happen whenever I want, but I was hoping that we would be together for our New Year, just like last year.

HAWTON: These are words apparently written by Radovan Karadzic to his wife. And it's just one of at least seven such letters. They provide remarkable detail of the fugitive's life, showing his continuing close connections with his family - and even give an insight into the family business.

READER IN STUDIO: The 18th of December 2002. I'm sure it would be better if the company finds a location and builds six to ten apartments, of which we could sell half and use the other half for the family, but it doesn't exclude the possibility of building more apartments for members of the family. That is the cheapest way to get the apartments.

HAWTON: The letters are believed to have been seized from the Karadzic family house by NATO forces in 2004. But the originals of these letters – which could determine their authenticity or otherwise - have still not been passed to investigators at The Hague more than a year later. In fact, The Hague only saw copies when they were passed to them by a friendly journalist. Florence Hartmann is the spokesperson for the Prosecutor's Office.

HARTMANN: Documents seized by NATO are not always given to the Tribunal. Those letters, we have them because they have been published in a Montenegro newspaper a year and a half ago. We are still expecting them from the institution which seized them. That's also the problem.

HAWTON: Presumably you would have liked to have seen these letters before they hit the media?

HARTMANN: We would have been very happy to see the original letters which have been seized, yes.

HAWTON: Why don't you think you were given them, and what do you think about that?

HARTMANN: I don't know. I don't know. We have requested them and we are still hoping to receive them.

HAWTON: And you still don't have them?

HARTMANN: No, we have the media copies. We are keen to receive the original in order to authenticate them definitively.

HAWTON: What does this say about the attitude of the international community to the work of the prosecutors?

HARTMANN: I have no comment on that.

HAWTON: Why do you have no comment?

HARTMANN: I mean, it's useless to comment that. There are problems, which is maybe the reason why no one has succeed to reach the goal to arrest him, maybe not because they are so smart but just because there is something which could be improved.

HAWTON: The Prosecutor's Office, headed by the Chief Prosecutor, Carla Del Ponte, depends almost entirely on NATO. The Office has set up its own intelligence-gathering operation involving tracking teams which criss-cross the former Yugoslavia, trying to find war crimes suspects. But the teams are small. Intelligence they receive is passed on to the peacekeepers who, along with the local police, are the only ones with the power to carry out arrests. But prosecutors feel they are being kept in the dark about what happens next. On one occasion, The Hague passed on what was believed to be intelligence on the location of Karadzic. He was said to be in a village on the Bosnia-Serbia border. But, to The Hague's frustration, they never heard back from NATO about whether the information had been acted upon.

HARTMANN: We were providing all the information we would collect on fugitives, including Radovan Karadzic. We need to have a feedback from NATO in order to know if our information were reliable or not. Problem is not that did they miss him or not, it was also to check our information, was this information good or not, because maybe the information is related to a place where he was twenty four hours or forty eight hours earlier or maybe two hours earlier, and that information and this cooperation between the institution is very very difficult, and we needed strong support from the intelligence community, which is something which can be authorised at a very high level.

HAWTON: The NATO peacekeeping mission to Bosnia came to an end last December. It's been replaced by a 7,000-strong European Union force, known as EUFOR. Its current commander is the British General, David Leakey, who previously served with NATO in Bosnia immediately after the war.
Your intelligence is not good enough, is it, to get Radovan Karadzic?

LEAKEY: I think if Radovan Karadzic chose to live in Bosnia and Herzegovina and was here on a regular basis, I think our intelligence would be good enough to get him. He knows that and that's why his visits here are extremely secretive, extremely well-planned, extremely fleeting and possibly even extremely rare, but I wouldn't want to give any more indications than that.

HAWTON: The problem is, isn't it, that over the last ten years you've got EUFOR here, you've had ESFOR here, you've had IFOR here, you've got local intelligence, local police, you've had the UN police here, you've got suspicions and doubts and jealousies within all these international organisations. It was a pig's ear, wasn't it? You were never going to catch Radovan Karadzic.

LEAKEY: Well, you're asking the wrong person. I wasn't here over that period and I'm ...

HAWTON: You were here in 96 and 97 and you're here now.

LEAKEY: I was here in 96 and 97, and when we had actual intelligence we planned operations, undertook them, carried them out successfully. From where I was sitting, we were doing as good a job as the intelligence allowed us to do.

HAWTON: Do you think it could be more streamlined though? So many organisations are involved in this.

LEAKEY: Here in Bosnia Herzegovina, the state of this country at the end of 1995 was such that you couldn't have done it without all of the different agencies, international agencies coming in here and pumping huge amounts of money into this country. There is bound to be a bit of disfunctionism in all of that, but I think the end result is that the international community has done a good job here.

HAWTON: The Hague doesn't always see it that way. They feel disconnected from the process.

LEAKEY: Carla del Ponte was here just two weeks ago, two or three weeks ago and we had a long and very frank discussion. She expressed her complete satisfaction for what EUFOR has been doing here since the 2nd December in 2004. If there has been any criticism, it hasn't been of EUFOR.

HAWTON: But some believe the blame goes higher than the peacekeepers on the ground. Senad Slatina, is the former country head of the International Crisis Group, an organisation which works in areas of conflict. He says there's been a simple lack of political will amongst western governments.

SLATINA: I tell you this, if in 1995, if I were given ten associates and if I were tasked with hunting Radovan Karadzic with resources that NATO alliance had at its disposal, I can guarantee I would put all my property on that that I would have arrested him. So there was obviously no will to accomplish that. We are talking about the lack of political will of the international community, a strange and mixed gatherings of British politics, French politics, German politics, US politics, and probably we need to be most focused on the US politics as the principal leader of the free world. It is really unexplainable how the most superior military alliance in this world is incapable to arrest him if it really wants, if that is the policy of that alliance.

HAWTON: Lord Ashdown accepts that mistakes have been made by the international community. And with the tenth anniversary of the Srebrenica massacre only days away, he accepts the relatives of the victims are still waiting for justice. There will be a lot of emotion at Srebrenica, there will be many thousands of people there who lost relatives in the worst atrocity in Europe since the end of the Second World War. Do you think they will view the actions of the international community as being coordinated and efficient in terms of trying to find Radovan Karadzic?

ASHDOWN: No, of course they won't, because what they want is results. They will blame the authorities for failing to bring the perpetrators of this terrible deed to justice ...

HAWTON: And do you think they're right?

ASHDOWN: Of course they are right. Even if they are right or if they are wrong, it's thoroughly understandable and that's what I would do in their circumstances. But, you know, our policy has to be determined not by the anguish of those who have suffered so terribly, it has to be rather more measured to what, in a calculated fashion, I calculate best to deliver these people who've committed those crimes. Am I saying that the international community has acted perfectly and without any mistakes? Of course I'm not ...

HAWTON: What were your mistakes? What have been the mistakes?

ASHDOWN: I'm really far less interested in saying what the mistakes have been than now addressing the question of how we complete this job.

HAWTON: But do you not think it's important that the lessons to be learnt from this involve the mistakes and the divisions and the problems and the different policies and agendas of the international community in Bosnia for the past ten years and acknowledge what those mistakes were?

ASHDOWN: Let me see if I can say this to you again, just in case you haven't heard it. The international community has not acted perfectly here. This is nine years of operation, highly difficult. I wasn't here for most of it. No one is pretending for a second that there have not been mistakes made. Okay? Second point: is it my duty to write the history books to say this is the lessons learned, or is it my first duty to do what is necessary to catch Radovan Karadzic and Ratko Mladic. My first duty is to do the things that are necessary now to catch Karadzic and Mladic. Now if you want to distribute blame, because you enjoy the blame game, help yourself, but at least be fair and distribute that blame where the majority of it lies. And, by the way, that is not with the international community, it is with the complete failure of the local authorities, especially the Serbs, to fulfil their obligations under international law.

HAWTON: For the past two years, the West, led by Lord Ashdown, has exerted enormous pressure on Republika Srpska and individual politicians, businessmen and members of the security forces. Lord Ashdown's office has frozen bank

HAWTON: So when you pass intelligence or information to the authorities in Montenegro or elsewhere, do you feel that they act on it, do you feel that they respond to that?

LEAKEY: There is an increasing cooperation and a sense of collaboration and a sense of willingness to act on this, but if I was to tell you absolutely honestly, there are still too many supporters of Karadzic and the other indictable criminals to be 100% confident.

HAWTON: So you would like to see some more cooperation?

LEAKEY: We are cautious about how much information and intelligence we pass across because, as I said, we have to protect sources, but increasingly the cooperation which we're receiving is absolutely positive, but they have to deliver - not just talk a good talk.

HAWTON: But it'd be quite tempting, wouldn't it, to go and get him?

LEAKEY: Don't tempt me. I'm untemptable.

HAWTON: The Montenegrin security forces say they have no information on Radovan Karadzic living on their territory. But in the days leading up to the making of this programme, Serbian and Montenegrin police carried out a number of raids on properties owned by family members in Belgrade and in Niksic. Computers, photographs and other documents were taken away. The Karadzic family has always denied knowledge of his whereabouts.

SIGNATURE TUNE