



Department of Justice

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Attorney General Dick Thornburgh today announced the deportation to Austria of Josef Eckert, age 75, a native of Austria-Hungary. Eckert, who has been living in La Puente, California, was deported on the basis of his service during World War II as an armed SS guard at the Auschwitz death camp complex in Poland.

Thornburgh pointed out that Eckert's deportation was brought about by the exemplary efforts of Justice Department official Michael S. Bernstein, who lost his life in the December 21, 1988, Pan American Flight 103 explosion while returning from negotiations with the Austrian government.

"The successful completion of the Eckert case is a fitting tribute to Mike Bernstein's prosecutorial and diplomatic skills and to his dedication to the pursuit of justice," Thornburgh said.

Bernstein was assistant deputy director of the department's Office of Special Investigations (OSI), which pursues former Nazis who may have participated in war crimes.

The OSI brought proceedings in U.S. Immigration Court seeking Eckert's deportation from the United States in 1987. On

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September 27, 1988, Eckert entered into an agreement with OSI in which he admitted his membership in an SS guard unit assigned to Auschwitz where he guarded prisoners, including those newly arrived to the camp as they disembarked from transport trains. During Eckert's service at Auschwitz, millions of men, women and children were murdered by the SS.

In 1956 Eckert, who was then living in Austria, obtained a visa to come to the United States by concealing his Auschwitz service from U.S. immigration officials.

In December of 1988, pursuant to a 1954 Declaration of Readmissibility, the Austrian government informed the United States that Eckert would be readmitted based on his having fraudulently obtained a visa to immigrate to this country.

This decision came after negotiations with Bernstein, on behalf of the U.S. government, in Vienna.

Neal M. Sher, Director of OSI, said that Eckert was the twenty-seventh former Nazi deported or otherwise removed from the United States as a result of OSI's efforts.

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