
SERBIAN SECURITY CHIEFS BEGIN DEFENCE AT HAGUE TRIAL

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Balkan Transnational Justice (18 June 2019)

Lawyer Wayne Jordash told the Mechanism for International Criminal Tribunals as the trial resumed on Tuesday that the defence will call witnesses who will confirm that Jovica Stanisic, the former chief of the Serbian state security service, was not in command of Serbian paramilitary or police units in Bosnia or Croatia during the war, as the indictment claims.

Jordash argued that police and paramilitary units from Serbia that were in Bosnia in 1995 – which he described as ad hoc groups – were under the command of the Public Security Service of the Serbian Interior Ministry and its chief at the time, Radovan Stojicic, alias Badza.

Badza, not Stanisic, was in charge of the MUP [Interior Ministry] involvement. Obrad Stevanovic was the direct commander, answerable to Badza, Badza answered to [Zoran] Sokolovic, the interior minister of Serbia, Jordash said.

Stojicic was shot dead in a restaurant in Belgrade in 1996.

Stanisic is being retried for war crimes against non-Serbs in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina from 1991 to 1995, along with his former assistant Franko Simatovic, alias Frenki, who was the head of the state security services Special Operations Unit.

They are charged with four counts of crimes against humanity and one count of violating the laws and customs of war.

The prosecutors allege that the crimes were committed during the execution of a joint criminal enterprise aimed at permanently and forcibly removing Croats and Bosniaks from large parts of Croatia and Bosnia for the sake of achieving Serb domination.

According to the prosecutors, the joint criminal enterprise was led by Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic.

Jordash told the court that Stanisics defence will argue that the state security service was designed to provide security in Serbia, not wage war in other Yugoslav republics.

He said the defence will also argue that the outbreak of armed conflict in the Krajina and Golubic areas of Croatia in 1991 was a defensive endeavour.

Both defendants pleaded not guilty in December 2015 after the appeals chamber of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia overturned their acquittal in their first trial.

The appeals chamber ruled that there were serious legal and factual errors when Stanisic and Simatovic were initially acquitted of war crimes in 2013, and ordered the case to be retried and all the evidence and witnesses reheard in full by new judges.

Stanisic has been on provisional release in Belgrade since July 2017 due to illness.

The trial continues on June 25.

<https://balkaninsight.com/2019/06/18/serbian-security-chiefs-begin-defence-at-hague-trial/>

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