
SERBIAN SECURITY CHIEFS 'OPERATED IN CROATIA IN 1994'

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A retired Serbian State Security Service officer told the retrial of Jovica Stanisic and Franko Simatovic at the Mechanism for International Criminal Tribunals in The Hague on Wednesday that he met the defendants in November 1994 on Petrova Gora mountain in Croatia, which at that time was part of the self-proclaimed Republic of Serbian Krajina established by rebel Croatian Serbs.

Witness Radenko Novakovic testified that as well as Serbian Security Service officials Stanisic and Simatovic, there were representatives of the RDB [state security department] of the Republic of Serbian Krajina, representatives of the military of Serbian Krajina, representatives of the civilian and military organs of the Republic of Serbian Krajina.

Stanisic and Simatovic are accused of establishing, funding and arming special military units that committed crimes in Croatia, where the forces of the Republic of Serbian Krajina fought Croatian government troops until they were finally defeated in 1995.

Novakovic told the court that he stayed that for around a month on Petrova Gora and sent reports to the Serbian State Security Services so-called Second Administration, also known as the Intelligence Administration, where defendant Simatovic worked in a senior role.

I assume that the reports were sent to Mr Simatovic. I assume so. For sure. There was no one else they could go to, Novakovic said.

Simatovic, who also was commander of the State Security-run Special Operations Unit and Stanisic, the former chief of State Security, are accused of having been part of a joint criminal enterprise led by then Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic, aimed at permanently and forcibly removing Croats and Bosniaks from large parts of Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

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, but the trial has continued without him being present in court.

Before being deployed to Croatia, witness Novakovic said he was an operative in a state security centre in the town of Uzice in western Serbia.

He said the centre was in charge of the security situation in the area, which is on the border with Bosnia and has an ethnically-mixed population in some places.

According to Novakovic, since the war started, extremist Serbs had been active in the area, but also extremist Muslims that cooperated with Bosniak-led forces in Bosnia.

He said that this called for more organised, concrete, serious, operative approach that also included surveillance.

The centre monitored military forces operating across the border in Bosnia, but also eavesdropped on Serbian citizens, he told the court.

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