

Blagojevic Trial Extended

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Prosecution is given more time to present its case after two new witnesses are introduced.

Prosecutors trying the case against Vidoje Blagojevic and Dragan Jokic - two Bosnian Serb army officers charged with helping to organise the Srebrenica massacres - were supposed to wrap up their case this week, but were granted extra time after announcing that they had recently discovered additional witnesses who were willing to testify.

"I know I told you that if we didn't finish for February 6, I would jump off a balcony," said chief prosecutor Peter McCloskey this week, before requesting an additional four days to make his case.

The prosecution reportedly tracked down Blagojevic's personal driver as well as the driver of one of the trucks used to transport bodies during the mass burials following the 1995 executions in the village of Kravica, site of the largest single massacre.

McCloskey said that as neither witness had a valid passport, it would take some time to deliver them to The Hague. They are expected to arrive toward the end of the month.

Presiding judge Liu Daqun of China granted the prosecution's request, adding, "Please, Mr McCloskey, don't jump from any balconies."

As prosecutors wound up their case in preparation for the final witnesses to arrive from Bosnia, they called on two expert witnesses to provide background, context and expertise on what happened in Srebrenica.

The first to take the stand was Helge Brunborg, a Norwegian statistics professor whom the prosecution had previously called on to provide evidence in the case against Radislav Krstic, the Bosnian Serb general who was sentenced to 46 years for his role in the 1995 massacre. Brunborg's rigorous analysis concluded that 7,475 men and boys were murdered in and around Srebrenica - a number that has become generally accepted.

The second expert witness to testify was Dean Manning, an Australian investigator who has meticulously studied the mass graves around the eastern Bosnian town.

Manning described in detail how his team exhumed the mass graves in the Zvornik area. In a similar testimony as earlier in the Krstic trial, Manning explained how in July and August of 1995 the bodies were brought to primary mass graves, and how these were dug up a couple of months later and transferred to secondary ones.

Manning's testimony was especially chilling as it corresponded exactly to the previous week's testimony of a witness who had participated in the reburial operation.

Following the testimony of the final witnesses, which is expected to take place on February 23, the proceedings will break until March 17 to give the defence time to prepare its case.

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Location: China
Bosnia and
Herzegovina

Focus: International Criminal Tribunal for the former
Yugoslavia

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