

COURTSIDE: Bosnian Generals Case

Lawyers for Bosnian army generals says they need more time to examine witness evidence

The defence team for three Bosniak army commanders, accused of crimes against Bosnian Croats and Serbs in central Bosnia, urged a delay to the start of their trial, scheduled for April 2002, at a status conference on their joint case last week.

Generals Enver Hadzihasanovic and Mehmed Alagic and Colonel Amir Kubura

pleaded not guilty to charges of killing, illegal detention and maltreatment of detainees and destruction of property of non-Muslim civilians four months ago.

At the status conference, their defence counsels said they were overwhelmed by the documentation they needed to examine before they can outline their cases.

They said they were also waiting for complete transcripts and evidence from the earlier trials of Tihomir Blaskic and Dario Kordic, Bosnian Croat leaders in central Bosnia, found guilty of crimes committed against Bosniaks in the same region.

The lawyers said they had to study written statements from 84 prosecution witnesses disclosed so far. Another 15 are expected. When the defence rejected an April target date for the trial, the prosecution suggested it would not oppose a delay.

In the meantime, the trial chamber will have to rule on defence complaints about the form of the indictments and requests for the accused men's provisional release.

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