

Courtside: Krajisnik Case

Author: [IWPR](#)

By Vjera Bogati in The Hague (TU 289, 11-16 November, 2002)

Krajisnik was appearing at a pre-trial conference to discuss his genocide trial, which is expected to begin in February 2003.

The accused was one of the most senior members of the Bosnian Serb leadership, which plunged the country into war in 1992. He is charged with killings and illegal detentions and a series of other crimes in dozens of locations.

The court has already given him permission and funds to appoint the largest defence team in the history of the tribunal. In seniority, he is second only to former Yugoslav president Slobodan Milosevic.

Last month, the chamber denied his request for an increase in financial support after hearing that he had already spent more than 800,000 US dollars of money allocated by the tribunal.

Consequently, Krajisnik said he would not be asking the tribunal to pay for the extra defence investigators. The chamber did not immediately respond to the new request.

The accused has claimed that his investigators have had trouble contacting witnesses, saying some are "in the woods or hiding so far underground that not even SFOR (the NATO-led Bosnian stabilisation force) can reach them".

In October this year, Krajisnik's co-accused Biljana Plavsic - a political leader of Bosnian Serbs during 1991-92, the time relevant for the charges - pleaded guilty to crimes against humanity in exchange for seeing her genocide charge dropped.

Krajisnik's defence lodged a written request for facts that Plavsic accepted as true in her plea of guilty last month, but the court said they would only be disclosed at Plavsic's sentencing hearing on December 16 and 17.

The Krajisnik case is likely to be one of the longest in the tribunal's history. With 193 witness statements and 124 "live witnesses" to be heard, it is expected to last more than a year.

Vjera Bogati is an IWPR special correspondent in The Hague and a journalist with SENSE news agency.

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