

## **COURTSIDE: Ljubicic Case**

Bosnian Croat hands himself in after his secret indictment is unsealed

The prosecutor office's recent strategy of unsealing all outstanding indictments that have been kept confidential for years seems to have yielded its first results.

Having had his indictment unsealed less than 10 days ago, Bosnian Croat Pasko Ljubicic, former commander of the HVO military police in Central Bosnia, handed himself in to the police in Croatia on Friday November 9.

He is expected to arrive at the tribunal next week. Ljubicic's lawyer Tomislav Jonjic, according to media reports, said his client had decided to hand himself in after learning the exact charges, some of which would be "easy to refute".

Ljubicic, 35, is accused of persecution and murder of Bosniaks in the Lasva valley during the Bosniak-Croat conflict in the region in 1992 and 1993. The main focus of the indictment, however, is the military police attack on the village of Ahmici on 16 April 1993 when more than 100 Bosniaks, mainly civilians including women, children and elderly people, were killed and all Bosniak houses burnt.

Ljubicic is charged for participating in the planning of the crime as well as in carrying out the raid.

The existence of the indictment against Ljubicic was not a surprise since his name and role were touched upon at other trials that dealt with the Ahmici massacre. It was assumed that he went into hiding as early as 1997 in order to avoid an arrest by SFOR in Bosnia.

The Zagreb media speculated that the former HDZ government provided shelter for Ljubicic in Croatia under a false name. However, it is still not known for sure where he was in the period up until his surrender on Friday when he entered Croatia from Slovenia.

Last year, a Croatian court opened an investigation into the Ahmici massacre and issued arrest warrants against Ljubicic and three others. Two of them - Anto Sliskovic and Tomo Vlajic - were arrested in Croatia last year. Upon his surrender, Ljubicic was interrogated by a Croatian prosecutor in connection with their own investigation.

In a recent interview to a Bosnian magazine, Ljubicic announced his coming surrender and refuted claims made by General Tihomir Blaskic's defence during his trial that Ljubicic acted in Ahmici not on the basis of his orders but rather on that of both military police command in Herzegovina and politicians like Dario Kordic.

In his interview Ljubicic, who is said to be married to Kordic's sister, claimed all the orders he received came through Blaskic's central Bosnia HVO HQ. Both Blaskic and Kordic have already been found guilty by the tribunal of planning the attack.

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