

Courtside: Mrdja Case

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Trial may shed light on cliff-top "massacre".

With the arrest and transfer to The Hague of Darko Mrdja, a leader of a Bosnian Serb special police unit in the Prijedor area, the tribunal may discover what happened to a convoy of men who never made the trip from captivity to safe territory.

Non-Serb civilians had been detained in Trnopolje and other camps in the Prijedor municipality of north-west Bosnia as a part of widespread and systematic operation by Bosnian Serb forces.

The accused, whose indictment was issued two months ago and unsealed on his arrival at the Scheveningen detention centre last Thursday, is charged with killing over 200 non-Serb men on Mount Vlasic, northern Bosnia, on August 21, 1992.

The men are believed to have been a part of a convoy of people, escorted by Mrdja, who were travelling to Travnik in central Bosnia for the purposes of a prisoner exchange.

It is alleged that the convoy was stopped in a wooded area, where the men were separated from women, children and the elderly and were ordered into two empty buses. It is then claimed that they were taken to the side of a steep cliff called Koricanske stijene, told to kneel, and then shot before falling into the chasm.

One of 12 survivors, Emsud Garibovic, spoke of the incident at the trial of five men later convicted for crimes against prisoners at the Omarska detention centre. Garibovic said an officer told the men at Koricanske stijene, "Here is where we do the exchange; the living for the living, and the dead..."

The indictment alleges that the officer in question was Mrdja. He is charged with two counts of crimes against humanity and one count of violations of laws and customs of war.

He falls into the category of middle-ranking indictees charged with particularly serious crimes. The tribunal hopes to concentrate on such cases along with those of high-ranking suspects, and defer low and middle ranking ones to domestic courts.

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Location: [Bosnia and Herzegovina](#)

Focus: [International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia](#)

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