

## **Milosevic 'Knew of Srebrenica Plans'**

**Author:** [Stacy Sullivan](#)

General Wesley Clark testifies that Yugoslav leader told him he was aware of Bosnian Serbs' massacre plans.

When General Wesley Clark took the stand against Slobodan Milosevic in The Hague this week, everybody expected a showdown.

Both men are currently running for political office - General Clark, former Supreme Allied Commander of NATO forces in Europe, as Democratic presidential hopeful in the United States, and Milosevic as a member of parliament in Serbia's December 28 elections.

But while Milosevic was clearly playing to a hometown crowd, proclaiming himself as the man who tried to broker peace and the leader who stood up to the West, Clark focused on providing evidence to help tribunal prosecutors bolster their case against the former Yugoslav leader, providing what they described as some of the most important evidence to date.

By far the most damning testimony Clark gave was his claim that Milosevic had prior knowledge of the Srebrenica massacre, in which 7,000 Muslim men and boys were summarily executed in July 1995.

Both the public and the press were prohibited from attending Clark's testimony on December 15-16, because the prosecution had agreed to allow the United States government to review the evidence before publication. The tribunal made a transcript of the court proceedings available on its website on December 18, and showed it to the public on December 19.

Recounting a meeting that he, US envoy to the Balkans Richard Holbrooke and several other American representatives had with Milosevic in autumn 1995 while the United States was trying to broker a peace accord, Clark said Milosevic gave the delegation assurances that he had the authority to speak for the Bosnian Serbs and could force compliance with an agreement.

Clark, uncertain about the basis on which Milosevic wielded this authority - whether it was legal or a matter of influence - asked the then president how he could be so sure that the Bosnian Serbs would do what he wanted. According to Clark, Milosevic replied that they "would not resist the will of the Serb people."

Clark said he then went on to ask Milosevic about Srebrenica.

"Mr. President, you say you have so much influence over the Bosnian Serbs, but how is it then - if you have such influence - that you allowed [Bosnian Serb army chief] General Mladic to kill all those people in Srebrenica?" Clark recounted in court.

The general said that at this, Milosevic looked at him, paused for a moment, and then said, "Well, General Clark, I warned Mladic not to do this, but he didn't listen to me."

While this testimony may not appear so damning at first - after all, it depicts Milosevic asking Mladic not to commit the murders and proving unable to restrain him - it is more damaging when taken in context with the rest of Clark's testimony, and with the prosecution's other evidence that Milosevic exercised control

over the Bosnian Serb leadership.

It is not in dispute that it was Milosevic - not Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic or military commander General Ratko Mladic - who signed the Dayton Peace Accord.

Moreover, as Clark testified, Milosevic regularly exercised his authority over the Bosnian Serbs. As proof, Clark cited an incident in 1997 when a Bosnian Serb mob descended on a television transmitter that NATO forces were holding near the city of Brcko. When NATO troops were unable to disperse the mob, Clark called Milosevic. Within a half-hour, the mob was gone.

Given that Milosevic both claimed to exercise control over the Bosnian Serbs, and showed that he actually did, Clark's allegations that the president knew about plans to kill thousands of Muslims in Srebrenica before it happened could significantly bolster the prosecution's case.

Although he did not order the crimes, the prosecution could argue that he did not take all possible measures to prevent those crimes.

During cross-examination, Milosevic angrily rejected Clark's account of the meeting. He said Clark's testimony about the conversation about Srebrenica was a "blatant lie" - "first and foremost because we did not talk about Srebrenica at all, and secondly because - throughout this time, through all of those years - I never issued a single order to General Mladic, or was in a position to issue him an order."

Milosevic went on to say he believed that the killings that took place in Srebrenica were carried out by mercenaries, and that Mladic did not order them.

During his testimony, Clark also recounted a meeting he had with Milosevic in the autumn of 1998 when he was attempting to get the Serbian leadership to sign an agreement allowing NATO overflights to monitor a cease-fire agreement between the Kosovo Liberation Army and Serbian forces in Kosovo.

During the meeting, which was also described in Clark's 2000 book, "Waging Modern War," Milosevic is quoted as saying, "You know, General Clark, that we know how to handle these Albanians, these murderers, these rapists, these killers-of-their-own kind. We have taken care of them before.... In Drenica in 1946, we killed them. We killed them all.... Oh, it took several years, but we eventually killed them all."

During his cross-examination, Milosevic claimed that he was only referring to Albanian "terrorists" not the general population. "General Clark, isn't it clear that the reference here is not to Albanians but to terrorists who that year had killed more Albanians than Serbs, as a matter of fact?" he asked.

Clark responded that this was not at all clear. Instead, he said, Milosevic was "equating the problems in 1998 with the problems in 1946, and there was a strong suggestion that they would be dealt with the same way, by attempting to kill them all over a period of years, and that was in fact what was already going on and that's what NATO was attempting to have handled through diplomatic means to resolve this issue".

In a performance that appeared to be directed toward viewers in Serbia, Milosevic repeatedly tried to portray the tribunal as unfair for limiting his questioning of Clark to the events the general described in his testimony.

In his cross examination, he also repeatedly tried discredit Clark. In addition to accusing him of lying in court, Milosevic referred to a quote in a November issue of The New Yorker magazine in which former chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff Hugh Shelton was quoted as saying that Clark was removed as NATO's Supreme Allied Commander, Europe because of "integrity and character issues".

Clark dismissed those allegations, reading out positive remarks that both Shelton and US Secretary of Defence William Cohen had said about him and his service in Kosovo. According to a report in The New York Times, in the wake of Milosevic's allegations about Clark's integrity," the prosecution also sought a letter from former President Bill Clinton attesting to Clark's character.

Speaking to the press after his testimony, Clark characterised the former Serbian leader's behaviour in court as "stubborn and petulant". "It was a typical Milosevic performance. It was grandiose in effort, misplaced, and in some ways overly personal," he said.

Nonetheless, he said, giving testimony had been a "very, very satisfying experience".

Stacy Sullivan is IWPR's tribunal project manager in The Hague.

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