

Mladic Notebooks Handed to Tribunal

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Indictee's wartime notes seized from wife could figure in several trials.

Over 3,000 pages of handwritten notes by Bosnian Serb General Ratko Mladic were recently seized from his wife's home in Serbia and handed over to The Hague tribunal, court motions showed last week.

Now, prosecutors working on four active cases - including that of Bosnian Serb president Radovan Karadzic - are seeking to add the 18 wartime notebooks as exhibits they will present at trial.

According to motions filed last week by prosecutors, the notebooks were found by Serbian police during a February 23 search of Bosiljka Mladic's apartment. On March 29, the Serbian government provided scanned images to the tribunal, followed by the original notebooks on May 11.

Court documents stated that police found a total of 169 items during the search, including "approximately 120 audio/video recordings, a computer memory stick, medical records, mobile phone SIM cards and miscellaneous papers".

The prosecution is in the process of "inventorying these items and may make additional motions with respect to them in the future".

Mladic, the commander of the main staff of the Bosnian Serb army from 1992 to 1996, is wanted by the tribunal for genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Like Karadzic, Mladic is charged with responsibility for the 1995 Srebrenica massacre, the 44-month shelling of Sarajevo, as well as deportation, extermination, murder and persecutions of non-Serb civilians in various Bosnian municipalities.

He has evaded arrest since 1995, and is currently thought to be hiding in Serbia. Last week, prosecutors filed a motion seeking to amend the indictment against him. If accepted by judges, the changes would make the Mladic indictment nearly identical to Karadzic's.

As he was the highest-ranking authority in the army and Karadzic's close associate, Mladic's notebooks could provide crucial insight into the Bosnian Serb wartime leadership.

Prosecutors on the Karadzic case said in their motion last week, "The Mladic notebooks are contemporaneous notes of an alleged key JCE (joint criminal enterprise) member taken during meetings with the accused, high level military and political officials, and others throughout the conflict in the former Yugoslavia."

While prosecutors stated that they are still processing the material, there are six specific entries which they say are relevant to the Karadzic case. The entries mainly deal with meetings among high-level Bosnian Serb officials between 1992 and 1995.

According to the brief descriptions, these entries deal with the military and political situation in Bosnia, the threat of sanctions by the international community, and the strategic objectives of the Bosnian Serb army.

In addition, one entry details a meeting shortly after the July 1995 Srebrenica massacre with generals from the United Nations Protection Force, UNPROFOR, "during which treatment of the Srebrenica population was discussed".

At a press briefing last week, prosecution spokeswoman Olga Kavran said she could not elaborate on the motions set forth by prosecutors, but added that if judges rule favourably on them, the material "could become exhibits and be made available to the public".

Prosecutors say the notebooks have been reviewed and verified as authentic by General Manojlo Milovanovic, former chief-of-staff and deputy commander of the main staff of the Bosnian Serb army. He was a "close friend and associate of General Ratko Mladic before, during and after the conflict in Bosnia and Hercegovina", prosecutors stated in their motion.

Scanned copies of the notebooks were disclosed to Karadzic and his defence team on April 12, but his legal adviser, Peter Robinson, told IWPR that they have not yet had the opportunity to review the diaries, as they were disclosed just before the trial restarted on April 13.

"We have been fully occupied trying to prepare for each upcoming witness," Robinson said.

Prosecutors in the cases of Serbian nationalist politician Vojislav Seselj; ex-Serbian security officials Jovica Stanisic and Franko Simatovic; and former Bosnian Serb interior ministry officials Mico Stanisic and Stojan Zupljanin are also seeking to enter the notebooks as exhibits in those trials.

The Stanisic and Zupljanin motion cites a meeting referred to in the notebooks from June 2, 1992, attended by Mladic, Karadzic and other officials, where the "problem" of "14,500 Muslims" is discussed. At that same meeting, another official "confirms the takeover" of the northern Bosnian town of Doboj, and the fact that "the enemy is disarmed and that functioning authorities have been established".

The motion in the Seselj case cites a meeting from May 22, 1992 which summarises "the situation in Sarajevo by noting the ongoing process of replenishing and enlarging units and problems regarding the administration in Vogosca (more crimes, volunteerism and interpersonal dislike)".

According to prosecution spokeswoman Kavran, two other notebooks believed to have been written by Mladic were seized during a search in December 2008. Kavran said some of the contents have been admitted as exhibits in the trial of Croatian army generals Ante Gotovina, Ivan Cermak and Mladen Markac.

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