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Author: [IWPR](#)

By Katy Glassborow in The Hague (TU No 485, 19-Jan-07)

The trial against three Croatian generals accused of crimes committed during "Operation Storm" - a Croat military offensive to reclaim Serb-held parts of Croatia in summer 1995 - will begin on May 7.

Ante Gotovina, Ivan Cermak and Mladen Markac are charged with the murder, persecution and deportation of Croatian Serbs during the offensive.

The charges also hold Gotovina responsible for the cumulative effect of the killings, burning and destruction, which led to the displacement of up to 200,000 Krajina Serbs to Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia.

The operation is thought to have been masterminded by the late Croatian president Franjo Tudjman, with Čermak in charge of the Knin garrison, and Markač commanding the interior ministry's special police.

Gotovina, who disappeared at the beginning of July 2001, had been the most wanted Croatian war crimes suspect until his arrest in a luxury hotel in the Canary Islands in late 2005, after four years on the run.

The defence attorneys acting on behalf of Gotovina, Markač and Čermak had all filed objections to the joint trial, with Markač and Čermak's lawyers suggesting they would have to wait for Gotovina's defence to catch up with preparations for the trial that they had already made.

In spite of that, the joint trial is forging ahead. In December 2006, the accused generals pleaded not guilty to the charges against them in the joint indictment.

Court sources have suggested that the case against Gotovina, Cermak and Markac will take over a year to complete.

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Topic: [Briefly Noted](#)

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