

Possible Contempt of Court in Kosovo Six Trial

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By Sara Goodman in The Hague (TU No 503, 25-May-07)

The tribunal judges this week determined that one or several people could be in contempt of court for intimidating a witness in the case of six former high-ranking Serbian officials.

In March this year, Lakić Dorović, former military prosecutor in the Republika Srpska and Kosovo, testified in the trial of ex-Serbian president Milan Milutinović; former deputy prime minister of Yugoslavia Nikola Šainović; former Yugoslav army, VJ, chief of staff Dragoljub Ojdanić; and police and VJ officials Sreten Lukić, Nebojša Pavković and Vladimir Lazarević.

The six men stand accused of responsibility for war crimes committed in Kosovo, including the forcible deportation over 800,000 Kosovo Albanians to Albania, and for causing “destruction or purposely devastating damage to Kosovo Albanian’s religious objects”.

In March, Dorović gave evidence about the justice system within the Yugoslav army and his experiences as a military prosecutor.

During his testimony, Dorović told the court he had been intimidated in Serbia because of his coming to The Hague. After he returned to Serbia, he was arrested and threatened with physical violence and lost his military post, according to a document filed by the prosecution in April.

The court began looking into the possible harassment of the witness shortly after receiving notification from the prosecution. The president of the National Council for Cooperation with the Hague tribunal, Rasim Ljajić, told the tribunal the claims of intimidation by Dorović were false.

The judges ruled this week there was sufficient evidence for the prosecution to investigate the matter further, with a view to prepare and submit an indictment for contempt based on their findings.

Judges in the case this week also ruled that the defence teams will get an additional week to prepare their arguments.

The defence case was scheduled to begin on July 30, but the lawyers requested more time because of a delay in the prosecution’s case. They requested August 27 to be the new start date.

The prosecution said it didn’t mind an extension but wanted to ensure it also had adequate time to prepare for the defence’s witnesses.

The defence teams will start presenting their case on August 6.

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Location: Albania
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