

Srebrenica Trial

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Prosecution presents damning video footage of Bosnian Serb General Radislav Krstic.

Video footage showing Bosnian Serb General Ratko Mladic intimidating Muslim refugee representatives after the fall of Srebrenica in 1995, featured prominently in the prosecution case against Bosnian Serb General Radislav Krstic last week.

Prosecution witness, Camila Omanovic, told the court that Mladic believed the capture of Srebrenica represented the greatest achievement of his military career. Mladic spoke of his victory with pride to representatives of the Muslim refugees during meetings at the Hotel Fontana in Bratunac on 11 and 12 July 1995.

In order to immortalize his moment of triumph, television cameras from SRT, also known as "TV Pale", filmed his Mladic's every step. According to Omanovic, Mladic behaved like "principal actor, presenter and director."

The VRS footage showed Mladic telling Muslim representatives that it was up to them to choose whether their people "survive or vanish." Krstic was seated next to Mladic in both meetings.

During the first meeting just before midnight on July 11, the Dutch United Nations Protection Force commander, Colonel Tom Karremans, described to Mladic conditions at the Dutch base, which was home to over 20,000 refugees. Karremans presented him with a list of basic essentials needed for the refugees: food, water and medicines.

Mladic said the main problem was Bosnian fighters in the enclaves. He said he would personally guarantee their lives if they lay down their weapons. Mladic then told one refugee representative, a local school headmaster Nesib Mandzic, that they could "survive or vanish".

Clearly terrified, Mandzic replied that he was only a representative by "accident" and that he had no power. Mladic nonetheless set a deadline of 10 o'clock the next day for Mandzic to find someone to respond to the ultimatum. Mladic ended the meeting saying, "Nesib, the fate of your people, not only in this area, is in your hands."

At the second meeting with Mandzic, Omanovic and Ibro Nuhanovic, Mladic repeated his ultimatum, " I demand the surrender of arms for survival. After that you can choose whether to stay on the territory or to go where you want to."

The video footage and testimony from both Mandzic and Omanovic indicated Krstic was silent throughout both meetings, as were the other VRS officers present. According to Omanovic, "everything was directed, planned in detail, and we [Muslim representatives] were brought there as to a stage."

Prosecutors, Mark Harmon and Andrew Caley, placed great emphasis on Mladic's chilling choice to the refugee representatives. The prosecution has to prove beyond reasonable doubt that not only grave crimes were committed in and around Srebrenica, but that they were committed with a specific "genocidal" intent. The prosecution contends that Mladic's words "survive or vanish" clearly expressed this "genocidal" intent.

Krstic, like Mladic and Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic, stands accused of genocide in Srebrenica - a crime carried out with intent to destroy in whole or in part, a national, ethnic or religious group.

The judges asked Mandzic and Omanovic to explain how they understood Mladic's words "you can survive or vanish." Both replied that they took the words as a threat, that if the Muslims stayed in Srebrenica, they would simply "vanish". They said they concluded there was no alternative but for the refugees to leave and try to "survive" elsewhere.

When asked by the judges whether Krstic or other VRS officers present at the meetings reacted to Mladic's threats, the witnesses said they did not and that this was what frightened them most, because they realised that everybody "agreed with the general's idea that they could vanish."

The defence made much of the fact that Krstic was silent during the meetings, but it remains unclear how much benefit this will be to the general. In the opening statement, the prosecution referred to the Nuremberg trials after the Second World War.

Addressing the question of commander responsibility for the orders of superior officers, the Nuremberg Tribunal stated a commander had four options - he could issue a countermanding order, he could resign; he could sabotage the enforcement of the order or he could do nothing.

The prosecution contends that Krstic chose the fourth option, did nothing and cannot, therefore, "wash his hands of international responsibility."

Krstic's second line of defence also became clear during the cross-examination of prosecution witnesses last week. Without denying that the crimes took place in Srebrenica, Krstic's defence is trying to shift responsibility for them onto the civilian and/or military police intelligence structures, both of which were outside Krstic's chain of command as officer in charge of the Drina Corps.

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

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