

## **Sredoje Lukic Pleads Not Guilty**

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(TU No 440, 17-Feb-06)

Lukic faces trial with his cousin Milan Lukic, who led a notorious Bosnian Serb paramilitary force known as the "White Eagles" or "Avengers".

The paramilitaries are alleged to have imposed a "reign of terror" on the local Muslim population in the municipality of Visegrad in southeastern Bosnia, near the border with Serbia, between 1992 and 1994.

Prosecutors say Milan Lukic is due to be transferred to The Hague later this month from Buenos Aires, where he was arrested in August 2005.

Sredoje Lukic surrendered to the authorities in Banja Luka, Republika Srpska, in September on his return from Russia, and was transferred to the tribunal's detention unit in The Hague.

The new 21-count amended indictment against both men was accepted by judges earlier this month, after the defence challenged both the original indictment, issued some seven years ago, and an earlier amended version of it as "impermissibly vague". The latest amendments include five new counts against the men.

On one occasion in 1992, prosecutors allege, the two men killed some 70 Bosnian Muslims by driving them into a house in Nova Mahala, setting fire to the building and then gunning down anyone who tried to escape through the windows.

They are alleged to have employed a similar method a fortnight later, this time barricading some 70 Muslims into a house in Bikavac and throwing explosives into the building. Only one person survived.

In February 2004, a third White Eagles member, Mitar Vasiljevic, was sentenced to 15 years in prison by the tribunal's appeals chamber for his role in the murders of seven Bosnian Muslims.

The prosecution has requested that Milan and Sredoje Lukic be tried in local courts in Bosnia, as part of the tribunal's completion strategy which sees the court focusing on higher-level cases in order to meet its goal of finishing all trial proceedings by the end of 2008 and rounding up its work two years later.

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