

Stanistic and Simatovic Pleas

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They each face five counts including murder, persecutions and deportations in Bosnia and Croatia from 1991 to 1995. Prosecutors say they helped to organise, train and finance units which took part in fighting in both countries.

No new counts have been preferred against the men in the second amended indictment, but new factual allegations were introduced concerning the activities of special units of the security services – the Scorpions and the Red Berets – in and around Srebrenica during 1995.

The indictment alleges that “Special units of the Republic of Serbia DB [state security] under the control of Stanistic and Simatovic, including Red Berets and Scorpions participated in [an] attack” by the Bosnian Serb army in July 1995 on the Muslim enclaves of Srebrenica and Zepa.

The indictment further alleges that Scorpions, under the command of Simatovic, based themselves near Sarajevo, and attacked Bosnian Muslim forces there “in a co-ordinated move” to draw those units away from Srebrenica and Zepa.

The indictment goes on to describe how male Bosnian Muslim prisoners from Srebrenica were distributed to different military units. “About fifteen male prisoners were taken ... for execution by members of the Scorpions units,” it said.

A further six prisoners were taken by truck “to a secluded rural area”, where their murders were videotaped, says the indictment.

The videotape was played at the Milosevic trial in June last year, but judges later disagreed with prosecution arguments that they needed to present new evidence, stating that “none is of significance for the ultimate legal question of whether the accused is responsible for the crimes alleged in the indictments”.

Stanistic’s lawyers have argued he is too ill to face trial on war crimes charges. A “debilitating intestinal disease” is preventing their client from preparing properly for the proceedings, they say, and would impair his ability to take part once they got underway.

Both men entered their pleas by video link from Belgrade.

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