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International
Criminal Tribunal
for the former
Yugoslavia

Tribunal Pénal
International pour
l'ex-Yougoslavie

Press Release . Communiqué de presse

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CHAMBRE DE 1ÈRE
INSTANCE

TRIAL CHAMBER

The Hague, 1 July 2004

JL/P.I.S./866e

MIRKO NORAC TO ATTEND INITIAL APPEARANCE AT ICTY IN THE HAGUE ON 8 JULY 2004

On 30 June 2004, Trial Chamber I, composed of Judges Liu (presiding), El Mahdi and Orić, issued a “*Scheduling Order for Initial Appearance, and Request for the Detention of Mirko Norac and His Surrender to the Netherlands*”.

In the Order, the Trial Chamber specifically:

- Scheduled “*a hearing to take place on Thursday 8 July 2004 at 16:00 hrs. in Courtroom I for the purposes of allowing the Accused to enter a plea to the charges raised against him before this Tribunal*”;
- Requested “*the Government of Croatia to detain the Accused on behalf of the Tribunal on 8 July 2004 and to ensure that he is escorted on that same day to Schiphol Airport in The Netherlands and surrendered to the Dutch Authorities there;*”
- Requested “*the Government of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to detain the Accused upon receiving him from the Croatian Authorities in Schiphol Airport and to transport him immediately to the United Nations Detention Unit in The Hague;*” and
- Ordered “*the Registrar to ensure that the Accused is adequately represented by counsel and is present at the hearing scheduled*”.

Mirko Norac is currently serving an unrelated prison sentence in Croatia.

Background

According to the Indictment, in November 1992, Mirko Norac was appointed Commander of the 6th Guards Brigade of the Croatian Army (HV). The 6th Guards Brigade was renamed the 9th Guards Motorised Brigade in 1993. Mirko Norac remained Commander of the 9th Guards Motorised Brigade at the time of the Croatian military operation in the Medak Pocket. During this operation he was appointed Commander of Sector 1 – a combat group formed for the purposes of conducting the operation.

The Indictment, confirmed on 20 May 2004, alleges that “*before and during the Croatian military operation in the Medak Pocket, from 9 September to on or about 17 September 1993, Mirko Norac, acting individually and/or in concert with others including Janko Bobetko and Rahem Ademi, planned, instigated, ordered, committed or otherwise aided and abetted in the planning, preparation or execution of persecutions of Serb civilians of the Medak Pocket on racial, political or religious grounds.*”

Internet address: <http://www.un.org/icty>

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The Indictment alleges that the crime of persecutions was perpetrated through the following:

- the unlawful killing of Serb civilians and captured and/or wounded soldiers from the Medak Pocket;
- cruel and inhumane treatment of Serb civilians and captured and/or wounded soldiers from the Medak Pocket, by inter alia, causing serious injuries by means of shooting, stabbing, cutting of fingers, severe beatings with rifle butts, burning with cigarettes, jumping on bodies, tying bodies to a car and dragging them along the road, mutilation and other forms of mistreatment;
- terrorising the predominantly Serb civilian population of the Medak Pocket by, inter alia, the mutilation and desecration of the body of Boja PJEVAĆ; the public killing of Boja VUJNOVIĆ by burning her alive whilst mocking her; expressing an intention to kill all civilians; placing racist graffiti on buildings; and leaving sinister and menacing messages on a destroyed building, all of which resulted in the civilian population being forced to abandon their homes and property and to leave the area permanently;
- the destruction of personal property belonging to Serb civilians of the Medak Pocket, in that on or after 9 September 1993, the Croatian forces in the area systematically destroyed up to 164 homes and approximately 148 other buildings;
- the systematic plunder of Serb civilian property during and after the military operation in the Medak Pocket by elements of the Croatian forces, in conjunction with Croatian civilians.

Charges

The Indictment charges Mirko Norac on the basis of his individual criminal responsibility (Article 7(1) of the Statute) on the basis of his criminal responsibility as a superior for the acts of his subordinates (Article 7(3) of the Statute) with:

- One count of crimes against humanity (Article 5 of the Statute – persecutions on political racial or religious grounds), and
- Two counts of violations of the laws or customs of war (Article 3 of the Statute – plunder of public or private property; wanton destruction of cities, towns or villages).

The Indictment charges Mirko Norac on the basis of his criminal responsibility as a superior for the acts of his subordinates (Article 7(3) of the Statute) with:

- One count of crimes against humanity (Article 5 of the Statute – murder), and
- One count of violations of the laws or customs of war (Article 3 of the Statute – murder).”
