

Momčilo Perišić Trial to Begin Today

Press Advisory

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The trial of former Chief of General Staff of the Yugoslav Army, Momčilo Perišić, will commence today at 10:15 in courtroom III with the opening statement of the Prosecution and a statement by the accused following a pre-trial conference.

Perišić is the most senior officer of the Yugoslav Army (VJ) to go on trial for crimes committed during the conflicts in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia. He is charged with crimes against humanity and war crimes including murder, inhumane acts and attacks on civilians committed between 1993 and 1995 in Sarajevo, Srebrenica and Zagreb.

The Indictment alleges that Perišić, as the VJ Chief of General Staff, provided significant personnel, material and logistical assistance to the Army of Republika Srpska (VRS) in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Army of Serbian Krajina (SVK) in Croatia. According to the Indictment, the provision and payment of VJ officers serving in the VRS and the SVK was done secretly to hide the involvement of the government of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in the conflicts in Croatia and Bosnia. It is alleged that Perišić personally established two personnel centres within the VJ General Staff for this purpose.

Perišić is charged with aiding and abetting the planning, preparation, or execution of a military campaign of shelling and sniping in civilian areas of Sarajevo between August 1993 and November 1995, which resulted in the killing and wounding of thousands of civilians.

He is further accused of aiding and abetting the crimes of extermination, murder and persecutions in Srebrenica between July and November 1995, where his subordinates serving in the VRS, including General Ratko Mladić, captured and executed several thousand Bosnian Muslim men and subsequently engaged in a comprehensive effort to conceal the killings by reburying bodies exhumed from the original mass graves.

Perišić is also charged as a superior officer for failure to prevent or punish the criminal acts committed by his subordinates who served in the VRS via the 30th Personnel Centre. Several such persons named in the Indictment have previously been convicted by the Tribunal for crimes committed in Sarajevo and Srebrenica.

It is further alleged that Perišić bears criminal responsibility for the shelling of civilian areas of the Croatian capital, Zagreb, in May 1995. The Indictment states that he failed to initiate an inquiry into what role his subordinates serving in the SVK may have played in those crimes and failed to take necessary and reasonable measures to prevent such acts or punish his subordinates. The attacks on Zagreb allegedly resulted in seven civilian deaths and the wounding of at least 194 civilians.

The Indictment against Perišić was confirmed on 24 February 2005 and made public on 7 March 2005. The Prosecution filed the Second Amended Indictment on 5 February 2008.

Perišić was transferred into the Tribunal's custody on 7 March 2005 and granted provisional release on 9 June 2005. The Chamber ordered that during the period of provisional release the accused shall remain within the confines of the municipality of Belgrade, Serbia, in compliance with conditions set by the Tribunal.

On 27 August 2008, the Trial Chamber terminated the provisional release of Perišić and he was ordered to return to the Tribunal's Detention Unit on 18 September 2008.

The trial was originally scheduled to commence on 1 October but was postponed due to a procedural issue regarding the extension of mandates of some of the judges hearing the case. The trial was able to proceed after the Tribunal received notification from the Security Council of the extension of the terms of two ad litem judges, Michele Picard and Pedro David. Judge Bakone Justice is the presiding judge in the case.

An information sheet on the case can be found at
http://www.icty.org/x/cases/perisic/cis/en/cis_perisic_en.pdf

Full text of the indictment can be found at
<http://www.icty.org/x/cases/perisic/ind/en/per-sai080205e.pdf>

Courtroom proceedings can be followed on the Tribunal's website at www.icty.org

International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia

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