

General Mladic complained about health problems, but no one paid attention

Published: 18 November, 2011, 08:35

Artyom Rumyantsev (Zagreb)

Former Bosnian Serb military leader Ratko Mladic's attorney, Milosh Shalic, talks about the prospects of the general's involvement in the trial.

General Ratko Mladic, indicted for committing genocide and war crimes during the war in Yugoslavia, has undergone a full medical exam at The Hague prison, conducted by Serbian doctors from the Military Medical Academy. Information about the medical examination results and the trial process was shared with Izvestia by the detainee's Serbian attorney, Milosh Shalic.

Izvestia: Who examined Mladic?

Milosh Shalic: At the request of the defense, four doctors from the Serbian Military Medical Academy began their work at The Hague on November 15. They examined Mladic, took X-rays of the internal organs, and some blood samples for analysis. On November 17, they will head to Belgrade. The medical assessment report will be issued upon their return to Serbia.

Izvestia: How is the General feeling?

MS: Not well. He is practically unable to move without a wheelchair. Sometimes he stands up with the help of his cellmates, but cannot stay in this position for a long time. When Mladic is needed somewhere, he is carried in a wheelchair. He suffered from severe pneumonia; his lungs were full of water. A large amount of fluid – about 2.5 liters – was removed. He nearly choked.

For a long time, no measures had been taken. Mladic was brought to the hospital at the very last moment, where the fluid was drained. He was saved at the 11th hour. Today, he is in the process of recovery, though it is progressing quite slowly. You have to understand, that we are talking about a person who suffers from a number of other ailments. In addition to strokes, which have paralysed the right side of his body, he has diabetes, high blood pressure, cardiovascular disease (he suffered from a heart attack), and gastritis. Other chronic health problems have also been observed.

Izvestia: What are the conditions of his detention at The Hague prison? How did he get pneumonia?

MS: The conditions are the same for everyone. They are relatively acceptable. Mladic is well-accommodated. But, for him, even a slight cold, if neglected, is dangerous. Mladic had complained of health problems for a long time, but no one paid attention. The prison has only one doctor on-staff, who does not conduct in-depth medical examinations. He gave Ratko some cold medicine, and failed to notice that the problem was a dangerous pulmonary disease.

Izvestia: Does Mladic keep in contact with relatives?

MS: I communicate with his family every day. Starting December, Mladic's relatives will be able to visit him once again.

Izvestia: When will trial hearings resume?

MS: At present, we are in the preliminary phase – trial preparations. The two sides are presenting materials, which will be used in the trial. This phase will continue until at least the middle of next year.

We think that the trial will not start in 2012. In similar instances, the parties were given at least a year-and-a-half to prepare. But The Hague is trying to expedite the legal proceedings and begin the trial as soon as possible. But even so, it will not start earlier than July of 2012.

Izvestia: Is the General's family supported by the Serbian authorities?

MS: They act with restraint and are under a certain amount of pressure from the West. Therefore, it's hard to imagine that they will actively provide support to Mladic and his relatives. The only thing that they have been able to arrange is the medical group's arrival to The Hague.

But things are changing. Serbia will soon hold an election. We'll see what happens. Perhaps the new leadership will have a different view on things.

<http://rt.com/politics/press/izvestiya/mladic-trial-medical-izvestia/en/>