

From the AP

# Karadzic frustrates prosecution at ally's hearing

By MIKE CORDER – 18 minutes ago

THE HAGUE, Netherlands (AP) — Former Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic refused Wednesday to answer key questions about Serb atrocities during the Bosnian war when he appeared for the first time as a witness at the Yugoslav war crimes tribunal.

Karadzic testified at an appeals hearing for a friend and political ally that was seen as a preview of how the former fugitive will defend himself at his own war-crimes trial.

It was also seen as a chance for prosecutors to elicit incriminating evidence from Karadzic, who was arrested in July after 13 years on the run from international justice.

Karadzic faces charges including genocide and crimes against humanity for allegedly masterminding atrocities by Bosnian Serb forces throughout the war that left tens of thousands dead. The tribunal entered not guilty pleas on his behalf after Karadzic refused to enter pleas.

His ally Momcilo Krajisnik is appealing his 2006 conviction for helping orchestrate the murder or displacement of thousands of non-Serbs during the war.

Karadzic's American lawyer, Peter Robinson, prevented Karadzic answering some prosecution questions Wednesday, calling them "nothing more than a transparent attempt to use his answers against him at his own trial."

When Karadzic did give answers he went into a level of detail that prosecutor Alan Tieger suggested was intended to waste time. Tieger had only 90 minutes to question Karadzic.

"That is not an answer, that is a filibuster," a frustrated Tieger told Karadzic after one rambling response in which Karadzic told judges he would have to "expand his answer a little bit." He then said his attorney advised him not to answer such questions and then outlined who had written a document and insisted it was not drawn up or endorsed by his own party.

Karadzic's political mentor, former Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic, used lengthy monologues to spin out his own genocide trial for more than four years. Milosevic's trial was aborted without a verdict after he died of a heart attack in his U.N. cell in March 2006.

Like Milosevic, Karadzic intends to defend himself at his trial, which is likely to start next year, but for Wednesday's hearing he used a lawyer.

Tieger set the tone with his first question, when he asked Karadzic if he denied that Bosnian Serb forces were responsible for a campaign of ethnic cleansing that included "murder and extermination of Bosnian Muslims and Croats."

Robinson immediately asked judges to allow Karadzic not to answer, saying the issue would be addressed at Karadzic's trial.

"This is neither the time nor the place," Robinson said.

While Karadzic largely avoided any incriminating slips, he did acknowledge playing a key role in appointing Gen. Ratko Mladic as commander of the Bosnian Serb army.

"I heard he was a decent officer; strict but (he) had morality," Karadzic said of Mladic, who is still on the run more than 13 years after being charged along with Karadzic with masterminding Serb atrocities during the war.

Karadzic did go some way to sketching his likely trial defense when he told judges his political party had no policy of ethnically cleansing Muslims and claiming he did not hold absolute power in the Bosnian Serb republic.

"I was not number one; the (Bosnian Serb) assembly was number one," he said.