

U.N. Court Seeks Arrest of Croatian Journalist

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THE HAGUE, Sept. 29 - The United Nations war crimes tribunal in The Hague has issued an arrest warrant for one of five Croatian journalists it accused of repeatedly ignoring secrecy orders by judges.

All five were charged this year with "knowingly and willfully" publishing the name of a protected witness, and, the indictments added, with publishing excerpts from private testimony by that witness.

Four have come to The Hague to plead not guilty. The arrest warrant for the fifth, Josip Jovic, a former editor in chief of the Croatian daily Slobodna Dalmacija, was issued after he did not come to The Hague on Monday for a hearing. He told Croatian national radio that he would not appear because the court had no jurisdiction over his actions. A conviction for contempt carries a penalty of up to seven years in prison or fines of up to \$120,000.

The other four are Marijan Krizic, former editor of Slobodna Dalmacija; Ivica Marijagic, of the weekly Hrvatski List; and Stjepan Seselj and Domagoj Margetic, both of the weekly Hrvatsko Slovo at the time the information was published.

Although Mr. Jovic is the first journalist to be subject to arrest for not coming to court, the tribunal has had earlier friction with the press.

In the past, publications acting as political lobbies in [Serbia](#), [Croatia](#) and Bosnia-Herzegovina have deliberately revealed the names of secret witnesses they considered hostile, or published their testimony. The countries were at war from 1992 to 1995.

The court had also indicted a Serbian journalist on charges of disclosing the name of a protected witness. But the charges were dropped because the journalist died. In the past, court officials have complained that defense lawyers in Croatia and Serbia have leaked information.

At the tribunal, the issue of protecting witnesses has been taken seriously; some witnesses have been threatened after their names became known. Carla Del Ponte, the chief prosecutor, has said some witnesses for the prosecution have been too afraid to come to The Hague.

The case involving the five Croatian journalists appears to be linked to at least four court orders to stop publication of details about a witness who appeared at the trial of a Croatian general, Tihomir Blaskic. At the start, in 1997, two Croatian papers revealed the

identity of the secret witness, prompting the court to impose further protective measures. But in 2000, 2001, and 2004, the publications now cited in the indictments printed the court's order of silence as well as the name and testimony of the witness. The journalists who have been indicted wrote articles or were responsible for publishing them, according to court documents.

The indictment of Mr. Jovic said an editorial in Slobodna Dalmacija in 2000 described the court's order of silence as "arrogant and constituted meddling in the sovereignty of Croatia." In 2004, Hrvatski List published an additional set of court documents about the witness under the headline, "World Exclusive - The Secret Document That Shows Carla Del Ponte's Plot Against Croatia."

The indictments of the five journalists raise several questions. Why did the court ignore the earliest revelations of the name of the witness in two other publications? And why is the court issuing indictments now? In 1997, the court itself published a ruling on its Web site in which it used the name of the secret witness.

The identity of the witness has become a public secret in Croatia and the prosecution has described him in official documents as "a high-ranking politician who holds important state responsibilities." But the court orders still prohibit the mention of his name or disclosure of his testimony in the context of the Blaskic case.