

Milosevic May Have Hastened Death by Refusing Medication

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A [United Nations](#) investigation into the death of [Slobodan Milosevic](#) found no evidence of foul play or suicide, but the former Serbian president may have hastened his death by refusing to take prescribed drugs and smuggling in unauthorized medicines, according to a report issued today.

Mr. Milosevic appeared to have abused the privileges given by prison authorities overseeing his trial at the International Tribunal at The Hague, the tribunal said in the report, citing the discovery in his cell and prison office of pills and even of a bottle of whisky that had been given a plastic cap to evade metal detectors. Because Mr. Milosevic had decided to act as his own lawyer, he was allowed special confidential visits and communications.

Mr. Milosevic was found dead in his cell on the morning of March 11. An autopsy conducted by the Dutch authorities concluded in April that he had "severe cardiac anomalies," in the words of the report issued today, and that the cause of death was a serious heart attack.

Citing that autopsy report, medical records and interviews with medical and prison personnel, the report by Judge Kevin Parker, the court's vice president, said that "nothing has been found to support allegations reported in some sections of the media that Mr. Milosevic had been murdered, in particular by poisoning."

Judge Parker called the charges "absolutely false" and said that the former leader had received adequate care.

The report's review of Mr. Milosevic's medical history paints a picture of a prisoner who arrived in poor health and had a contentious relationship with the many doctors and cardiologists who at one time or another were called in to treat him.

Mr. Milosevic had arrived in The Hague to face war crimes charges stemming from the break-up of Yugoslavia already suffering from serious heart disease and hypertension, the report said. His trial was repeatedly halted to give Mr. Milosevic time to rest, and at the time of his death the court was hearing his case only three times a week.

"On a number of occasions Mr. Milosevic refused to accept the advice of his treating doctors," the report said. "He refused to take some prescribed medications and varied prescribed dosages of others. He also self-medicated as evidenced by the finding on

occasions of non-prescribed medications in his privileged office and his cell, and the presence of non-prescribed medications in his blood tests."

One unauthorized drug found in Mr. Milosevic's blood in January, rifampicin, is known to weaken one of the blood pressure drugs he was taking, the report said, although it did not seem likely that rifampicin by itself played a role in the fatal heart attack.

Three days before his death, Mr. Milosevic sent a letter to the Russian Embassy in The Hague charging "ongoing, deliberate actions to damage my health," and citing the discovery of rifampicin in his blood. Mr. Milosevic had earlier unsuccessfully asked the court that he be released to seek medical care in Moscow.

Judge Parker appeared to suggest, however, that Mr. Milosevic could have taken the rifampicin in order to worsen his condition to help boost his case for release, as some Dutch doctors have contended. "Nothing discovered in the course of this inquiry provides any support for the allegations that Mr. Milosevic was the victim criminal activities and of deliberate action to damage his health," the report said. "The factual circumstances revealed by the inquiry are entirely to the contrary."

The report did note that some of the many physicians who had been called in to consult during Mr. Milosevic's prison stay had recommended a surgical procedure to help his heart. But it noted that two independent cardiologists from France and Belgium had not agreed that the surgery was necessary or would have even been helpful.

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