

U.N. tribunal says preliminary tests show Milosevic had heart attack

Anthony Deutsch
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

THE HAGUE, Netherlands — A heart attack killed Slobodan Milosevic in his jail cell, the U.N. war crimes tribunal said, citing preliminary findings from Dutch pathologists who conducted a nearly eight-hour autopsy Sunday on the former Yugoslav leader.

The tribunal said pathologists had determined that "Milosevic's cause of death was a 'myocardial infarction'" — a medical term for heart attack.

Found dead in his cell Saturday morning, the 64-year-old Milosevic had suffered from heart ailments and high blood pressure, and his bad health caused numerous breaks in his four-year, \$200 million trial before the tribunal.

Some wondered if suicide might have been an out for the man accused of causing wars that killed 250,000 people during the breakup of Yugoslavia in the 1990s. And a legal adviser said Milosevic feared he was being poisoned.

A tribunal spokeswoman said it was too early to determine if poison could have caused the heart attack, saying a final autopsy report would be released in coming days.

Earlier, the chief U.N. prosecutor, Carla Del Ponte, had said claims that Milosevic committed suicide or was poisoned were "just rumors."

"You have the choice between normal, natural death and suicide," she told reporters at the tribunal, where Milosevic had been standing trial for more than

four years on 66 counts of war crimes and genocide in Croatia, Bosnia and Kosovo during Yugoslavia's violent breakup in the 1990s.

Milosevic's body was to be delivered to his family by Monday, according to the tribunal.

But there was disagreement among relatives about whether he should be buried in his homeland of Serbia or in Russia, where his wife and son live in exile.

In Serbia, Milosevic loyalists burned candles in memory of their fallen hero at branches of his Socialist Party. Elderly women sobbed and kissed his photographs adorned with black cloth, while nationalists signed condolence books declaring him a defender of "Serb honor."

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice would have none of that, calling Milosevic "one of the most malign forces in Europe in quite a long time."

"Some feel that they wish there had been the opportunity to bring him to justice and to have the final verdict of history be in the courts, but I think the final verdict of history about Milosevic is pretty clear," Rice said after visiting Chile.

A pathologist sent by Serbia observed the autopsy at the Netherlands Forensic Institute, an agency of the Dutch Justice Ministry.

Tribunal spokeswoman Alexandra Milenov said the autopsy revealed Milosevic had been suffering from two heart conditions. Asked if poisoning could have caused the heart attack, Milenov said it was too early to draw



Amel Emric / The Associated Press

A Bosnian man reads a newspaper headlined, "Milosevic dies in the Hague" in a cafe in the Bosnian town of Tuzla, Bosnia, on Sunday. Slobodan Milosevic, the former Serbian president who orchestrated the Balkan wars of the 1990s and was on trial for war crimes, was found dead in his prison cell.

conclusions.

She said the inquiry into Milosevic's death was continuing, with a final report expected to be released within days.

"I think we should also wait for that until we come to any final conclusions," she said.

Outside the tribunal's offices, Milosevic's legal adviser showed reporters a letter that he said the former leader wrote the day before his death claiming traces of a powerful drug

used to treat leprosy or tuberculosis had been found in his bloodstream.

Zdenko Tomanovic said Milosevic was seriously concerned. "They would like to poison me," he quoted Milosevic as telling him.

A Dutch state broadcaster, NOS, said later that an adviser to the tribunal confirmed such a drug was found in a blood sample taken in recent months from Milosevic. The report said the adviser,

who was not identified, said the drug could have had a "neutralizing effect" on Milosevic's other medications.

Doctors found traces of the drug when they were trying to determine why Milosevic's medication for high blood pressure was not working, the NOS report said.

Milosevic had appealed unsuccessfully to the war crimes tribunal last December to be allowed to go to a heart clinic in Moscow for treatment. He repeated the request as late as last month.

Milosevic's older brother, Borislav, suggested to Serbia's Beta news agency that he should be buried "in his own country, as he's a son of Serbia."

But the late leader's wife, Mirjana Markovic, and their son, Marko, could be arrested if they returned to Serbia for a funeral. They want Milosevic buried in Moscow, where they live, Beta said.

Milosevic's daughter, Marija, disagreed with both sites. She said the burial should be in Montenegro, at the family grave in the town of Lijeva Rijeka. "He's not a Russian to be buried in Moscow," she told Beta, adding that she would not attend a Moscow funeral.

Milosevic, the first sitting head of state to be indicated for war crimes, was arrested early in 2001 after being forced from power when Serbs grew tired of the hardships brought by the Balkans conflicts.

His death means there will be no judicial verdict on his alleged crimes.

"It is a great pity for

justice that the trial will not be completed and no verdict will be rendered," Del Ponte said. His death "deprives victims of the justice they need and deserve."

In Serbia's U.N.-administered Kosovo province, Ferdone Qerkezi, 52, wept with rage, cursing Milosevic for eluding justice by dying. Her husband and four sons died in a 1999 crackdown by Serb forces.

"He should have been dragged through streets of towns and thrown into a bottomless pit so no one could ever find him," she said. "For what he has done to us, there is no punishment on earth that befits him."

While some Serbs spent Sunday mourning Milosevic; others marked the third anniversary of the slaying of a key Milosevic foe: the charismatic Zoran Djindjic, who headed the pro-democracy movement that toppled Milosevic and engineered his handover to the U.N. court for trial.

Hundreds gathered in the northern Serbian city of Novi Sad handing out recordings of Djindjic's speeches and urging passers-by to "remember the best Serbia ever had."

Milosevic was the sixth war crimes suspect from the Balkans to die at The Hague. A week earlier, convicted Croatian Serb leader Milan Babic killed himself in the same prison. He had been a star prosecution witness against Milosevic.

Milosevic's trial was the longest and most expensive of the cases before the tribunal, which has spent about \$1 billion in total, experts say.



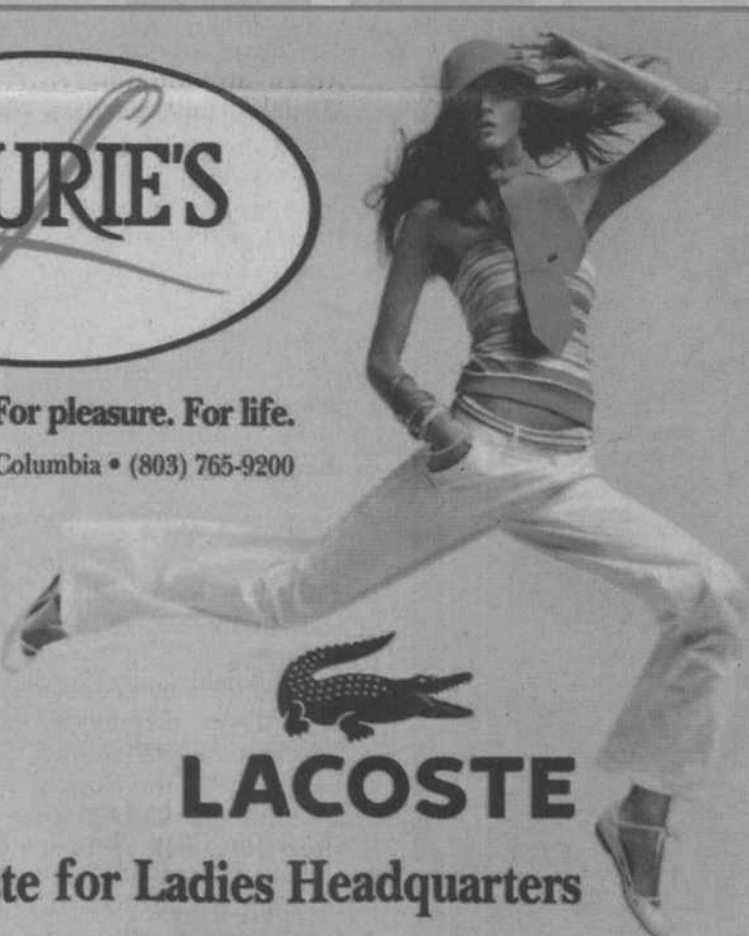
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