

US Defense Secretary accused of War Crimes in a German Court Rumsfeld cancels trip to Germany after accusations

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US Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld cancelled a planned visit to Germany after a US human rights organisation asked German authorities to prosecute him for war crimes, Deutsche Presse-Agentur (dpa) has learned.

Rumsfeld has informed the German government via the US embassy that he will not take part in the Munich Security Conference in February, conference head Horst Teltschik told dpa on Thursday.

The New York-based Centre for Constitutional Rights filed a complaint in December with the Federal German Prosecutor's Office against Rumsfeld accusing him of war crimes and torture in connection with detainee abuses at Iraq's Abu Ghraib prison.

Rumsfeld made it known immediately after the complaint was filed that he would not attend the Munich conference unless Germany quashed the legal action.

German legislation violations

The organisation alleges violations of German legislation, which outlaws war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide independent of the place of crime or origin of the accused.

The prosecutor's office in Karlsruhe reportedly is examining the roughly 170-page complaint to see whether an investigation is warranted.

The Centre for Constitutional Rights said it and four Iraqis allegedly tortured in US custody filed a complaint with German authorities against Rumsfeld, former CIA director George Tenet and eight other senior military and civilian officials over abuses at Abu Ghraib and elsewhere in Iraq.

The organisation said it had turned to German prosecutors "as a court of last resort" because the US government "is unwilling to open an independent investigation" and had "refused to join the International Criminal Court".

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