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## Croatian president wins suit against Minnesotan

A little more than a year ago, North Oaks businessman Boris Miksic ran for president in his native Croatia and came up short, though he finished a surprising third.

Boris Miskic says he was joking when he suggested Croatian President Stipe Mesic had a mansion in France given to him by French secret service officials. Mesic didn't laugh. Instead he sued Miksic, a North Oaks resident, for slander.

Mesic won his suit against Miksic on Thursday for the comments that were made during last year's presidential campaign. Miksic finished a surprising third in that race.

He was sentenced to one year of probation in a Samabor, Croatia, court. He will serve a two-month jail term if he makes similar comments against Mesic in the next year.

At the start of the proceedings Thursday, a judge asked Miksic, who holds dual U.S. and Croatian citizenships, whether he was ready to befriend Mesic.

"Absolutely, if the other side agrees," Miksic said. "I'd be ready to say to him I was sorry."

Later, Mesic told journalists after leaving the court that "the message of this trial is that lies about presidential candidates should not be allowed."

Said Miksic after he left: "President Mesic obviously does not accept jokes about him."

He also said he'll contest the ruling.

Miksic, a native of Zagreb, fled what was then part of Yugoslavia in 1973. In Minnesota, he formed a business called Cortec Corp.

In the initial round of voting in January 2005, which pared the 13-candidate field to two, Miksic received 17.8 percent of the vote and claimed he was cheated during the vote count. Mesic, who finished first in the initial round with 49 percent, went on to win the runoff with 66 percent of the vote.

MYRON P. MEDCALF

Freelance writer Ivo Scepanovic contributed to this article.

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