

Courtside: General Galic Trial

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By Vjera Bogati in The Hague (TU No. 288, 4 - 8 November, 2002)

The decision not to evacuate the capital, according to the defence, meant that the authorities must take the blame for any civilian victims of the shelling, and not Galic, who was corps commander of the besieging forces.

Defence witness Izo Golic, a commander of a Bosnian Serb artillery unit during the siege, said the troops "did not know how many civilians had remained in town".

He added that while Serb civilians had been evacuated from places close to the front line, Serb commanders had no clear idea about whether the Bosnian government had done the same, or had "left them close to the military targets for some special purpose".

Galic commanded a unit of 120-mm mortars based at Mount Trebevic, overlooking Sarajevo valley.

The witness claimed that his unit only responded to artillery attacks from the Bosnian Muslim (Bosniak) side and never targeted civilians.

He said civilian casualties were unintended "collateral damage" which may have been caused by poor quality mortar shells and unskilled artillery crews.

A protected defence witness, identified only as DP-11, said such deaths may have been caused by bullets and shrapnel ricocheting off concrete walls.

DP11 said he was a member of the First Sarajevo Brigade of the Bosnian Serb Army, and was involved in fierce fighting for the control of the area around the Jewish cemetery.

He said bullets from these battles could have rebounded against the concrete walls of the cemetery in the direction of inhabited areas.

The witness also claimed that Bosnian government troops used poison gas when they attacked Serb positions at the cemetery in June 1992, and claimed he was the only one to survive the attack in his position. He did not give casualty figures. The defence wants to prove that the forces under Galic's control simply defended their positions in and around Sarajevo and were not trying to enforce a blockade of the city.

Asked about particular sniper incidents described in the indictment, the witness claimed it was impossible for Serb troops to see clearly into the areas affected as high buildings blocked their view of the front line.

The indictment charges the accused on the basis of individual criminal responsibility and superior criminal responsibility with crimes against humanity (including murder and inhumane acts) and violations of the laws and customs of war (unlawfully inflicting terror upon civilians and attacks on civilians).

It is alleged that Galic assumed command of the Sarajevo Romanija corps on or about September 10, 1992, and remained in that position for almost two years.

Another Bosnian Serb officer, Dragomir Milosevic, replaced Galic as the commander of the corps and is also charged with similar offences committed in the second part of the war.

Vjera Bogati is an IWPR special correspondent in The Hague and a journalist with SENSE news agency.

Focus: International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia

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