

Omarska Camp Trial

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Zigic admits to being prone to violence

Lawyers representing Zoran Zigic, a "camp visitor" accused of crimes at Omarska, began presenting the defence case last week.

Although his lawyers said initially their client would testify under oath in his own defence, they later abandoned the idea, saying he "might not have good answers" for cross-examining prosecutors or judges.

Zigic is accused in two indictments for alleged crimes at the Omarska and Keraterm camps because the prosecution claims he was active at both facilities during the summer of 1992.

Indeed all the prosecution witnesses in the Keraterm trial last week mentioned Zigic in their testimonies.

But because Zigic arrived at the tribunal some time before the Keraterm defendants Dusko Sikirica, Damir Dosen and Dragan Kolundzija, his case was joined to the four accused of crimes at Omarska - deputy commanders Miroslav Kvočka and Dragoljub Prcac, and guard shift chiefs Mladjo Radic and Milojica Kos.

Rather than give evidence in person, Zigic opted to present a statement.

Earlier in the trial, during his opening statement, Zigic's defence counsel, Slobodan Stojanovic, described his client as having a "split personality". He also said that under the influence of alcohol and soft drugs, Zigic was prone to "excesses... independent of any ideology".

Zigic repeated this line in his statement. He said that he "is temperamental by nature", that he "loses it easily", especially when he "has had a drink". He said that in those circumstances he "makes a noise, swears, and even beats" those who "happen to be at hand" irrespective of their ethnic origin.

He then went through each count of the indictment, which accuses him of individual murders, beatings and participation in the Room 3 Massacre.

Zigic claimed he "did not know" or "never saw in the camp" the majority of victims attributed to him in the indictment. On the night of July 24-25, 1992, when around 150 prisoners in Room 3 were gunned down, Zigic claims he was at a party with friends and went to bed around midnight because he was "wasted".

However, the accused admitted participating in one incident - the beating of a detainee known as "Tzar" who died as a result of his injuries. Zigic admitted he had forced Tzar to run in circles carrying a heavy gun and that he "once kicked him in the butt", not to hurt him, but to humiliate him.

Zigic said he went to a restaurant afterwards and only learned of Tzar's death when he read the indictment.

When he finished reading the statement, Zigic offered to answer the judges' questions. They refused to ask any.

Focus: International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia

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