

Sarajevo Shelling "Intensified" Under General Milosevic Command

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Witnesses at the trial of a Bosnian Serb commander speak of terror inflicted on Sarajevo during the last two years of the Bosnian war.

The trial of Dragomir Milošević continued this week, with prosecution witnesses taking the stand to describe the scenes of horror in Sarajevo during the forty-four month siege.

Their testimonies also seemed to have supported the prosecution claims that the attacks intensified once the accused took over command of Serb forces deployed around the city.

Milosevic succeeded Stanislav Galic as commander of the Sarajevo Romanija Corps in August 1994, having served as his chief of staff from March 1993, and is suspected of having commanded 18,000 military personnel to shell, shoot at, terrorise and kill tens of thousands of Sarajevo civilians whilst they went about their everyday lives.

Dr Milan Mandilovic, a surgeon originally from Serbia who worked in a Sarajevo hospital throughout the war, told the court that "not a week passed by without there being persons brought in due to sniping or shelling", adding that there were only three hospitals in the town providing surgery.

He said that the ratio of patients admitted was 80 per cent civilian and 20 per cent military personnel, and explained that in Sarajevo there were two main types of injuries - from shell shrapnel and gun fire, with the difference easily visible.

He told the judges that the state hospital in Sarajevo, where he was based, was itself often a target of Serb shelling and sniper fire, although there were no military objects or army barracks nearby. He added that as a result of those attacks, not a single window on a 12-storey hospital building remained in one piece. According to Dr Mandilovic, even patients at the hospital were sometimes hit by bullets from sniper positions.

Mandilovic also recalled the day of the Markale market massacre, when dozens of civilians were killed and wounded after a shell fired from Serb positions around Sarajevo exploded in an open market in the centre of the city. The witness said that shortly after a strong explosion in the morning of August 28, 1995, cars started flowing in to the hospital, bringing large numbers of seriously wounded people with shell shrapnel wounds.

He told the court his hospital was 1,000 metres from the bomb blast, and most of the injured were civilians. "As the vehicles brought in the injured, we were overcrowded in the emergency room, and resorted to the principles of war time surgery, dealing with large numbers of wounded in a short time," said Mandilovic.

Major Thorbjorn Overgard from the Norwegian Airforce also took the stand as a prosecution witness this week. He served with UN mission in Sarajevo from 1994 until November 1995, analysing craters and investigating incidents of shelling and bombing.

He said that during the time he spent in Sarajevo, sniping and shelling were taking place daily.

The witness also talked of the use of modified air bombs, explaining that "these were not guided missiles, so there was no guarantee where they would explode".

Overgard described the impact of one such bomb - launched from a truck, instead from a plane - which hit a densely populated residential area in Sarajevo on April 7, 1995. He said a bomb razed one house to the ground, causing damage to other buildings in a radius of several hundred metres.

"When we arrived, we found the building totally demolished into small bits and pieces. I saw one or two legs coming out from some piles of stones, and they were not moving, " said Overgard.

According to the prosecution, just a day earlier - on April 6 - General Milosevic issued an order to his forces to prepare an aircraft bomb launcher for immediate use and to select a target which would cause "the greatest death toll and physical damage".

The trial will continue next week.

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Location: Serbia

Topic: Courtside

Focus: International Criminal Tribunal for the former
Yugoslavia

Source URL: <https://iwpr.net/global-voices/sarajevo-shelling-intensified-under-general>