

## **Witness Tells of Serb Paramilitary Payments**

**Author:** [Rachel Irwin](#)

He says some units were funded by Bosnian Serb officials.

A Bosnian Serb reserve police commander testified this week in the trial of Radovan Karadzic that feared paramilitary units operating in Serb-claimed areas were paid by Bosnian Serb officials.

"Whether [the paramilitaries] were invited I wouldn't know," said Petko Panic, assistant commander for the reserve police station in the northeast Bosnian town of Zvornik in 1992. He has testified in one other trial at The Hague tribunal.

However, he maintained that at least some units were paid for their services by municipal and police officials.

One infamous paramilitary group, Arkan's Tigers, was led by Zeljko Raznatovic, otherwise known as Arkan. This group was active in the takeover of Zvornik in April 1992 and became known for abusing and murdering non-Serb civilians and then looting their property.

"[Arkan] had the reputation of a bad tempered man," Panic told the court. "His name alone put the fear of God in everyone."

Arkan was gunned down in Belgrade hotel in 2000 before he could stand trial in The Hague. However, he is named in Karadzic's indictment as a member of an alleged joint criminal enterprise, along with the accused and other members of the political and military leadership.

The witness also spoke about what happened to Bosniak men who were detained in surrounding areas and taken to the Karakaj Technical School.

"Did you hear whether any killings took place at the technical school?" prosecuting lawyer Susanne Elliot asked.

"It was rumoured that paramilitary units went there and mistreated and beat people, but whether they killed them or not I really didn't know," Panic responded.

He said that he heard from another police officer that paramilitary groups were taking groups of prisoners to a nearby slaughter house and executing them.

"There were rumours and talk about it in the town," the witness reiterated.

Prosecutors allege that Karadzic, the president of Bosnia's self-declared Republika Srpska from 1992 to 1996, is responsible for crimes of genocide, persecution, extermination, murder and forcible transfer which "contributed to achieving the objective of the permanent removal of Bosnian Muslims and Bosnian Croats from Bosnian Serb-claimed territory".

He is also accused of planning and overseeing the 44-month siege of Sarajevo that left nearly 12,000 people dead, as well as the massacre of some 8,000 men and boys at Srebrenica in July 1995. Karadzic was arrested in Belgrade in July 2008 after 13 years on the run.

When it was Karadzic's turn to cross examine the witness, he asked if the municipality had resources to pay the paramilitaries.

Panic responded that the municipality didn't have the funds for this, and "where [it] managed to get them I don't know".

The accused also asked if police guarding detention facilities were able to prevent paramilitaries and ordinary citizens from coming in.

The witness said that regular citizens "never went in" to the prisons, but the police force was unable to keep paramilitaries out because they were "not strong enough".

"The paramilitaries were always stronger," Panic said. "They had combat experience from earlier wars, whereas the police were regular people who had done regular police work before the conflict."

Karadzic also contended that paramilitaries would "threaten" policemen with "knives and guns" in order to gain access to the prisons, which the witness confirmed happened on occasion.

In order to deal with the problem, Karadzic said that the police tried to “reinforce the locks and boost the security in the prison ... to stop paramilitaries from going into the prison and mistreating inmates, correct?”

“Yes,” responded the witness.

Karadzic later asked if there were “occasions where paramilitaries would force the police to go to the front line”.

“They themselves would remain in town and harass Serbs and non-Serbs,” Karadzic contended.

“Yes that was especially the case in the beginning,” Panic responded.

The court also heard evidence this week about events in Bosnian municipalities from three other witnesses, one of whom testified entirely in closed session. The trial will continue next week.

**Rachel Irwin is an IWPR reporter in The Hague.**

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