

## **Zigic 'Released Into Custody'**

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Tribunal Update 72: Last Week in The Hague (13-18 April 1998)

It was neither a usual surrender nor a usual arrest. For the accused who are still at large, it is rather difficult to "surrender voluntarily" without the consent of the authorities, while "voluntary surrender" for those who are in prison has been practically impossible. Zoran Zigic was serving a sentence in the Banja Luka prison for offenses unrelated to those for which he has been indicted by the ICTY. Over the past few weeks, he repeatedly expressed his readiness to surrender voluntarily to the Tribunal.

According to Prosecutor Louise Arbour's press statement, acting on that information and backed by SFOR troops, investigators of the Office of the Prosecutor entered the Banja Luka jail and produced a copy of the arrest warrant to the prison authorities. After that, the prison authorities "released the accused into the custody of the ICTY investigators."

The phrase "released ... into the custody" was chosen to avoid saying that the Republika Srpska authorities had "extradited" Zigic to the Tribunal, that is, performed an act that is banned by their constitution (that particular provision of the constitution of Republika Srpska obviously conflicts the "Dayton" constitution of Bosnia-Herzegovina). In any case, the Tribunal officials have been careful not to expose the newly cooperative authorities in Republika Srpska to superfluous and unpleasant attacks on the domestic front.

Zoran Zigic is one of the six accused Bosnian Serbs against whom two indictments were issued at The Hague. The group also includes Radovan Karadzic, Ratko Mladic, and three other lesser-known Bosnian Serbs accused of being "regular visitors" at the Omarska and Keraterm camps. Zigic also stands accused of alleged war crimes committed in those two camps in the vicinity of Prijedor.

According to the indictments, issued respectively in February and July 1995, Zigic had not held any commanding position or been on guard duty at Omarska or Keraterm. He went there as a "regular visitor," allegedly to kill, beat, or otherwise abuse Muslim and Croat inmates.

Zigic faces particularly grave accusations in the Keraterm indictment, which charges him with 17 counts of grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions; 17 counts of violations of the laws and customs of war; and 20 counts of crimes against humanity.

He is also accused of participation in the killing of at least 140 inmates from the region of Brdo (near Prijedor), who were detained in "room 3" of the Keraterm camp on 20 July 1992.

In the early evening of 24 July, machine guns were set up in front of the rooms, and that night, soldiers were brought into the camp and formed a semicircle around "room 3." According to the indictment, later that night, the guards and soldiers, including Zoran Zigic, began firing at the room from machine guns and heavy-caliber guns. The fire continued off and on over a period of several hours, alternating between continuous fire and short bursts, until at least 140 people were killed and some 50 wounded.

Zoran Zigic was to enter his plea of guilty or not guilty on this and other counts of the two indictments during his initial appearance before the judges scheduled for Monday, 20 April.

**Location:** [Bosnia and Herzegovina](#)

**Focus:** [International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia](#)

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