

Zupljanin Holds Off on Plea

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Defendant says identity change while on the run was meant to put would-be assassins off his trail. When former Bosnian Serb police commander Stojan Zupljanin made his first appearance in front of tribunal judges in The Hague this week, he refused to enter a plea in relation to the charges read out to him.

However, he did indicate that he would contest the charges, saying that he would “prove all the untruths in the indictment”.

Zupljanin was arrested outside Belgrade on 11 June, eight years after he was indicted by the Hague tribunal.

Although he initially claimed he was not Stojan Zupljanin and that the Serbian authorities had arrested the wrong man, a DNA analysis confirmed his identity and he was transferred to The Hague last week.

A former head of the Banja Luka Security Services Centre and aide to Bosnian Serb wartime leader Radovan Karadzic, the accused faces charges of crimes against humanity and violations of the laws and customs of war. The allegations include persecution, murders, extermination and deportation, all committed against civilians in northwestern Bosnia between April and December 1992.

Tribunal rules allow Zupljanin 30 days after his initial appearance to enter a plea.

The former security chief informed the judges of his reasons for changing his identity while on the run from the tribunal. He claimed that Serbian president Boris Tadic and Prime Minister Vojislav Kostunica, wanted to “eliminate” him, together with three other top Bosnian Serb fugitives, “in the interests of Serbia and Republika Srpska”.

He was one of the four senior Bosnian Serb leaders indicted by the tribunal who have evaded capture until now. Karadzic, Bosnian Serb military commander Ratko Mladic, and Goran Hadzic are still at large.

Zupljanin told the court that in his bid to evade assassination he underwent “enormous suffering” and made “superhuman efforts to survive”. He said he had “long sleepless nights”, and would sometimes “wish to be taken to the Hague tribunal”.

He told the court he hoped his fellow fugitives do not follow him to The Hague.

“I wish that they remain at large forever,” he said.

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Location: [Serbia](#)

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