



U.S. Immigration
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News Release

Former Bosnian prison guard charged with unlawfully applying for naturalization

Almaz Nezirovic failed to disclose his military service

ROANOKE, Va. — A former guard at the Rabic detention camp in Derventa Municipality of Bosnia and Herzegovina, who allegedly committed abuses against Serb civilians detained at the camp, was indicted on Friday for unlawfully applying for naturalization. This case is being investigated by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's (ICE) Homeland Security Investigations (HSI).

“Human rights violators frequently seek to evade justice by seeking shelter in the United States using fraudulent identities or omitting information about their background,” said John P. Torres, special agent in charge of ICE HSI in Washington, D.C. “HSI places a high priority on targeting these serious offenders through its partnerships with local, state, federal and international law enforcement agencies to identify these individuals and apprehend them.”

In an indictment returned under seal on June 9 and unsealed June 24 following his initial court appearance, the grand jury charged Almaz Nezirovic, 52, of Roanoke, Va., with one count of submitting an unlawful application for naturalization, and one count of making a false statement at a naturalization interview. If convicted, the maximum penalty is 10 years incarceration on count one and five years incarceration on count two.

According to the indictment, between June 1992 and December 1995, the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina was in a state of war. During that war, Nezirovic, was a member of the Croatian Defense Council (HVO) where he served as a guard at the Rabic camp, which detained Serb citizens. As a guard, Nezirovic is alleged to have beaten and inhumanely treated detained Serb citizens.

When he applied to enter the United States as a refugee in 1997, Nezirovic failed to disclose that, while serving with the HVO, he assaulted and inhumanely treated Serb civilians. These facts would have likely prevented him from being granted refugee status into the United States. On or about Aug. 11, 1997, Nezirovic entered the United States as a refugee.

On or about April 19, 1999, Nezirovic filed an application to register for permanent residence with the Immigration and Naturalization Service. Again, the defendant did not disclose his military service with HVO. He declared under penalty of perjury that he did not knowingly commit any crime of moral turpitude in or outside the United States.

By not disclosing his military service with HVO and his crimes against Serb civilians, Nezirovic cut off any further inquiry that would have elicited information about his actions while serving with HVO, which would have negatively impacted his eligibility for the immigration benefit sought.

U.S. Attorney Timothy J. Heaphy, Western District of Virginia, and Sarah Pacheo, senior attorney for the ICE HSI Washington field office, are prosecuting this case.

For more information, visit www.ice.gov.

ICE

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