

Planned Parenthood Shooting Rampage Suspect Will Undergo Evaluation

The man accused of killing three people and wounding nine others in a Nov. 27 shooting rampage at a Planned Parenthood clinic in Colorado was ordered on Wednesday to undergo a psychiatric evaluation after he insisted on acting as his own lawyer.

Judge Gilbert Martinez ordered the examination to determine whether Robert Lewis Dear, 57, is fit to represent himself against charges of murder and other offenses. During the court hearing, Dear said he distrusted his lawyers and demanded to serve as his own attorney.

In a courtroom outburst two weeks ago, Dear declared he was guilty and a “warrior for the babies,” prompting his lawyer to suggest his client may not be competent to stand trial.

The defendant, a South Carolina native who once earned a living as a self-employed art salesman, stands accused of 179 felony counts, including charges of first-degree murder, attempted murder and assault.

“I want to be my own attorney,” Dear told the judge at the outset of Wednesday’s hearing in El Paso County court.

Martinez urged Dear to trust his attorney, but Dear replied, “How can I trust him when he says in the newspaper that I’m ‘incompetent?’”

After a 10-minute recess to discuss the matter with Dear and his attorneys, Martinez resumed the proceedings and ruled that Dear must submit to examination at a state hospital to determine whether he is mentally competent to serve as his own

attorney.

Dear strenuously objected, telling the judge he would refuse to cooperate with “your forced psychiatric evaluation,” adding “I am not going to say one word to them.”

The judge proceeded to recite legal requirements for competency evaluations in such proceedings, as Dear went on to periodically interject.

“It’s your whim ... to take away my constitutional rights to represent myself,” he blurted out at one point. He later said, “They’re poisoning me.”

Dear has been held without bond since surrendering at the end of a bloody five-hour siege at the Planned Parenthood clinic in Colorado Springs, which police said began when he opened fire with a rifle outside the building and then stormed inside.

Killed in the rampage were a U.S. Army veteran and a mother of two who happened to be in the clinic’s waiting area, as well as a police officer.

It was the first deadly attack on a U.S. abortion provider since 2009. Dear has not formally entered a plea.

Prosecutor Donna Billek said officials at the state hospital where Dear is to be examined told her they have case backlog that could delay his proceedings by nine months. The judge set a status hearing for Feb. 24.

Authorities have not publicly discussed a suspected motive for the Planned Parenthood assault. But executives for the organization, whose clinics offer a wide range of reproductive health services, including abortion, have said the assailant was driven by anti-abortion sentiments, an assertion reinforced by Dear’s courtroom comments earlier this month.

Planned Parenthood came under renewed criticism from anti-

abortion activists and congressional conservatives this year
over donations of aborted fetal tissue for research.{eoa}

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