

A Canadian police officer accused of accessing a national police database and passing information to the Rwandan government has denied being a spy, saying the search was made while trying to help locate a missing housekeeper.

Const. Eli Ndatuje, who was stationed in Red Deer, Alberta, is facing charges under Canada's Criminal Code and Security of Information Act. He has pleaded not guilty in a judge-alone trial at Red Deer's Court of King's Bench.

The Crown alleges that Ndatuje searched the Canadian Police Information Centre (CPIC) database in April 2022 and passed information from the search to the Rwandan government.

The allegations were examined through recorded interviews played in court on Friday as prosecutors finished presenting their evidence.

"I was never a spy," Ndatuje told investigators during questioning.

An investigator told him that police did not believe he was acting as a spy, but were concerned that he may have been influenced by someone at the Rwandan High Commission.

"The whole issue is foreign interference," the investigator said during Ndatuje's arrest in early 2024.

Ndatuje did not testify during the trial. His lawyer, Robb Beeman, has argued that the CPIC search was intended to help a family friend at the Rwandan High Commission locate a housekeeper who worked at the Rwandan ambassador's residence in Ottawa.

In the recorded interview, Ndatuje said he checked CPIC to see whether the person had been reported missing. He said there was no record showing the person was missing and that the individual was later found safe.

"I queried him because I was curious. He didn't ask me to," Ndatuje said.

The Crown also presented cellphone records showing calls and text messages between Ndatuje and an official at the Rwandan embassy around the time of the database search. The records do not indicate what was discussed.

The defence said those communications related to travel-document issues involving

Ndatuje's wife before a planned family trip to Rwanda.

Const. Nathan Ashley, the lead investigator with the RCMP's Integrated National Security Enforcement Team, told the court that investigators questioned why Rwandan diplomatic officials had not reported the missing housekeeper directly to Ottawa police.

Ashley said investigators twice sought statements from officials at the Rwandan High Commission, but the Rwandan government declined the requests.

Ndatuje's former supervisor, Melissa Joan Russell, described him as an eager and hardworking officer. She told the court she did not see signs of deception in his conduct.

Closing arguments are scheduled for Tuesday at Red Deer's Court of King's Bench.