

Statesman

Jury recommends 99 years for Eric Robertson in assault

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A Travis County jury on Friday recommended a total of 99 years in prison for Eric Robertson on four felony offenses in the attack of a housekeeper last year at a downtown Austin hotel.

Robertson, 21, was found guilty of burglary of a habitation with intent to commit sexual assault, attempted aggravated sexual assault and two counts of aggravated assault. Jurors asked that he be sentenced to 60 years in prison on the first offense, and 18 years in prison, 10 years in prison and 18 years in prison, respectively.

Judge Jim Coronado is weighing their recommendation and is expected to make an official ruling Monday.

In court this week, prosecutors said the young man attacked a woman cleaning an empty guest room at the Courtyard Marriott hotel at 300 E. Fourth St. The woman, who testified under the pseudonym Claudia Rojas, said Robertson, whom she had never seen before, had asked if she could open another room for him.

She thought he had left after she told him she did not have the authority to do so and advised him to check with the front desk. But he surprised her from behind and squeezed her neck with his arm. She elbowed her way out of his grasp and tried to use the phone to call for help, she told jurors, but he lunged at her again and strangled her until she lost consciousness.

In closing arguments Thursday, defense lawyer Mark Westenhovover argued that Robertson was not guilty of all the charges levied against him. But Assistant District Attorney Kelsey McKay pointed to photos of Rojas, her face bloody and

swollen, as the prosecutor said her injuries were consistent with a sexual assault and that his DNA had been found in her underwear.

He then tried to assault another housekeeper, McKay said. "We do not know what happened in those 18 minutes that (Rojas) was unconscious, but we have enough evidence to convict him," she said.