

9/11 retrial denied key witness

BBC ONLINE

The US says it will not allow its al-Qaeda suspects to testify at the retrial of a man charged with helping to plot the 11 September 2001 attacks.

The decision was announced as Moroccan Mounir al-Motassadek appeared in court in Hamburg, Germany, yesterday.

The stance is seen as a major blow for the prosecutors.

They had hoped to use testimony from Ramzi Binalshibh, an al-Qaeda suspect in US custody, to reverse the quashing of Motassadek's earlier conviction.

A letter from the US Justice Department read in court said terror suspects in American custody would not be allowed to testify.

The letter cited security concerns, as well as the need to protect secret information.

The Justice Department also said an FBI agent would be sent to give evidence at the retrial.

DANISH COLONEL SAYS

UK troops systematically abusing Iraqis

AFP, Copenhagen

British forces in Iraq are systematically violating the Geneva Conventions in their treatment of prisoners, Danish Colonel Henrik Flach claimed in a daily paper here yesterday.

Flach was head of the Danish contingent of 500 soldiers deployed in southern Iraq, serving under British command around Basra, until he was replaced last week over ill-treatment of Iraqi prisoners at the hands of Danish troops.

"The British treat their prisoners in a manner which does not, as we think in Denmark, conform with the Geneva Conventions," Flach told the independent Information daily.

He added that he remained concerned that the Danish forces were obliged to hand over Iraqi captives to the British forces in charge of southern Iraq.

The British methods of interrogation were "significantly more severe than what went on at Camp Eden", the Danish military base at Al-Qurna, where Iraqis were ill-treated according to a Danish interpreter and freed prisoners.

'Imran Khan missed PM post for ditching ruling party'

AFP, Islamabad

Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf said in an interview yesterday that cricket-hero-turned-politician Imran Khan had missed out on becoming prime minister because he turned against the ruling party.

"Imran knows nothing, despite the fact that I went to his hospital and helped him a lot," Musharraf told The News daily, referring to the cancer hospital Khan set up and runs as a charity.

Khan, 50, initially backed Musharraf after he led a bloodless coup against the elected government of Nawaz Sharif in October 1999, saying he believed the army chief could stamp out corruption - one of Khan's top policy platforms.

But in the past two years he has turned against Musharraf, accusing him and the army of backing corrupt tycoons to stand as civilian proxies in a breakaway faction of Sharif's party, the Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid (PML-Q).



PHOTO: AFP

Activists of Jaffria Student Organisation (JSO), a body of Pakistani Shia Muslim students, shout anti-US slogans as they set a US flag on fire during a demonstration in front of the United Nations office in Islamabad yesterday. The demonstrators demanded immediate withdrawal of US and its allied troops from Iraq.

Delhi sets conditions for talks with Kashmir rebels

Separatists say no

AFP, Srinagar

India said yesterday it would press ahead with peace discussions with Kashmiri separatists but only within the constitution, prompting moderates to reject further participation in the pathbreaking talks.

"We're always ready for dialogue. But the dialogue will be under the Indian constitution," Indian junior home minister Siprakash Jaiswal told reporters in Srinagar, summer capital of Indian Kashmir where a deadly insurgency against New Delhi's rule has raged since 1989.

The statement by the minister of the Congress government elected in May, marked a major shift from the previous ruling Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party's support for unconditional dialogue.

Moderate separatists who held two rounds of talks earlier this year with former deputy prime minister Lal Krishna Advani, the first since the revolt began, said there could be no more talks until New Delhi changed its stand.

"Conditional talks are unacceptable and unrealistic," said the moderate wing of the main separatist alliance, the All Parties Hurriyat (Freedom) Conference.

"Talks should be meaningful, result-oriented and unconditional," Maulana Abbas Ansari, a leading moderate, told AFP.

Ansari and other moderate separatists took part in the talks against a backdrop of easing tensions between nuclear rivals India and Pakistan which have fought two of their three wars over the Himalayan region of Kashmir.

Political analysts said moderate separatists had no choice but to reject conditional talks as it would mean New Delhi could offer Kashmiris nothing new.

Hardliners who split with the moderate

over the talks, branding the dialogue a sellout, would have only stepped up their criticism, they said.

"If they accepted such talks, critics would have called them traitors," said analyst Tahir Mohiuddin, editor of the Srinagar-based weekly read Urdu weekly 'Chattan.'

"There was no need for such a statement (by the national government). It was the last nail in the coffin," he said.

The hardliners, supported by armed rebels who are seeking Kashmir's merger with Pakistan, oppose the talks to bring peace to the region where the revolt has left at least 40,000 dead by India's tally and at least 80,000 dead by the separatists' count.

The leftist-backed Congress government had said after the election it would resume talks but had set no date.

MUSHARRAF SAYS

No Pak troops for Iraq now

Islamabad claims '90 pc' success in war on terror

REUTERS, Islamabad

President Pervez Musharraf has ruled out sending Pakistani troops to Iraq for now, despite repeated requests from the interim government there, but he said the option had not been ruled out forever.

"Our forces will never go to Iraq under the present environment," Musharraf, a key ally in the US-led war on terror, told The News daily in an interview published yesterday.

"We, however, are not shutting our doors, as the situation might change," he added.

The issue of sending troops to Iraq is an explosive one in the world's second largest Muslim nation, where many people are wary of Musharraf's role in the war on terror waged after the September 11 attacks on the United States in 2001.

The issue has become more sensitive since the execution of two Pakistani migrant workers in Iraq last month, which critics say could have been avoided if the government had made a public undertaking not to send troops.

Musharraf reiterated three conditions Pakistan has made before sending its soldiers. He said it required an invitation from the Iraqi government, a commitment of troops from other Muslim nations and domestic support.

"Policy is never constant, only national interest remains constant. Policy will change with the change in environment."

Musharraf said he had made Pakistan's position known to President Bush, Secretary of State Colin Powell and UN Secretary General Kofi Annan.

He said Iraqi Prime Minister Iyad Allawi had phoned him twice requesting troops for Iraq.

"I told him the same, though he is my friend and we have good rapport."

Pakistani Prime Minister Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain discussed sending troops to Iraq as part of an Islamic force with Saudi leaders last month.

Saudi Arabia suggested a joint Muslim protection force for Iraq during a visit by Powell in July, but Annan said last week that the proposal had failed to take off.

Pak President said "90 percent" of Islamic militants in the country had been captured after a four-week crackdown that uncovered key al-Qaeda suspects and plans to strike targets abroad.

In the interview, Musharraf said terrorist groups in the country operated on a three-tier system -- mastermind, planner and executor.

In al-Qaeda's case, its top leader Osama bin Laden is either in hiding or dead. US officials say he is most likely to be somewhere along the Afghan-

Pakistan frontier.

But key lieutenants like Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, the alleged mastermind of the September 11, 2001 attacks, have been seized.

"We have to kill the mastermind, arrest the planner," Musharraf said. Later in the interview, he added: "We have to eliminate al-Qaeda, which is (the) ultimate objective."

He made no reference to bin Laden by name.

Musharraf described a strategy to rid his country of extremism altogether through reforming the education system while continuing to wipe out militants.

"Now everyone, even the Western press, has accepted the effectiveness of our intelligence network, which has marked 90 percent success in achieving the goal of nabbing terrorists," said Musharraf, a key ally in the US-led war on terror.

Singapore PM

Goh resigns

Transition underway

AFP, Singapore

Singapore Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong submitted his resignation yesterday, paving the way for his deputy Lee Hsien Loong to take over as part of a carefully engineered political transition.

Goh, 63, will remain in the cabinet with the title senior minister when the new government is sworn in on Thursday, continuing a tradition started by his predecessor Lee Kuan Yew, the father of the incoming leader.

The elder Lee, 81 next month, will also stay in his 52-year-old son's government but his exact role was to be announced later Tuesday as part of the entire cabinet list.

In Singapore's political system, the senior minister does not hold a traditional portfolio running a ministry, but is second only to the prime minister in protocol, outranking the two deputy prime ministers.

He is regarded as the most influential adviser to the prime minister as well as a roving representative of Singapore, a role that would suit Goh, who has said he wants to concentrate on foreign affairs after stepping down.

PAKISTANI INTELLIGENCE SAYS

al-Qaeda plots attacks to influence US polls

AFP, Islamabad

al-Qaeda operatives captured in Pakistan were plotting terrorist attacks aimed at influencing the US presidential elections in November, a senior Pakistani intelligence official told AFP yesterday.

One of the top operatives had been contacted by al-Qaeda's chief Osama bin Laden as recently as last year, but the elusive figurehead was not involved in the fresh terror plots, the official said.

The terrorist network was looking to pull off major attacks in the United States, Britain or Pakistan in the run-up to the polls but its capacity has been crippled by recent arrests in Pakistan, said the official.

"The network was looking to strike a major blow ahead of the elections. al-Qaeda was looking to strike in the United States or its chief allies Great Britain and Pakistan," said the official, asking to remain anonymous.

"The period before the US presidential elections was very critical," said the official, who has played a key role in a crackdown against al-Qaeda in Pakistan over the past month which has netted over 20 suspected operatives.

The alleged head of a British-based al-Qaeda cell, Abu Eisa Al Hindi, who was arrested last week after a tip-off from Pakistan, was probably involved in the plots against the United States, said the official.

Information extracted by Pakistani investigators from al-Qaeda suspects detained in recent weeks has led to a spate of arrests in Britain and caused a major terrorism alert in the United States.

Most of the information came from 25-year-old Pakistani computer whizz Naeem Noor Khan, who was arrested in a house near Lahore airport on July 12, said the official.

"The arrest of Naeem Noor Khan opened up a floodgate of information," he said.

Khan's computer files contained detailed photos and surveillance records of key financial institutions in New York, Newark and Washington as well as London's Heathrow airport.

His capture led to the July 25 arrest of a Tanzanian suspect in the 1998 East Africa US embassy bombings, Ahmed Khalfan Ghailani, another key terror planner in Osama bin Laden's network.

"This group in Pakistan was in close contact with the network in Britain, run by Abu Eisa Al Hindi," the official said.

"Al Hindi was probably helping in targeting the United States."

Cook now trying to rally British Muslims to Blair's side

AFP, London

Robin Cook, who quit British Prime Minister Tony Blair's cabinet in protest over the Iraq war, says he now is trying to rally Muslim support for Blair's governing Labour Party in the run-up to a general election.

In an interview with the Guardian newspaper, published yesterday, Cook said the "appalling" occupation of Iraq has only deepened his opposition to the US and British invasion of Iraq in March last year.

But he added that Labour -- which Blair hopes can win a third straight term in power in elections likely to come next year -- still has a "strong case" to pitch to Britain's estimated two million Muslims.

"There is a general recognition that we have pursued policies that have been fair to the ethnic (minority) communities," said Cook, a former foreign secretary and leader of the House of Commons.



PHOTO: AFP

Turkish officials search for evidence after a bomb attack in Sultanahmet, Istanbul yesterday. Two bombs exploded at hotels in tourist areas of Istanbul early yesterday, killing two people and injuring seven others in an apparent terrorist attack.



PHOTO: AFP

Students in chains dressed as suffering people under military dictatorship, with a portrait of presidential candidate Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (L), former army general demonstrate in front of Parliament in Jakarta yesterday. The student demonstrators protested against presidential candidate Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, former army general, who will fight President Megawati Sukarnoputri to win the presidential election.

WAR ON TERROR

HRW accuses UN of disregarding abuses

AFP, New York

Human Rights Watch Monday accused the UN Security Council of disregarding human right violations committed by countries combating "terrorism."

"Governments around the world are using the global campaign against terrorism to crack down on human rights," said Joanna Weschler, Human Rights Watch's UN advocacy director.

"The UN Security Council has been conspicuously silent about this dangerous trend," Weschler added in a statement.

In a 17-page briefing paper, the New York-based international organisation says countries "as diverse as Egypt, Uzbekistan, Malaysia, Morocco and Sweden have violated human rights in their efforts to combat terrorism," Human Rights Watch said in a statement.

The document is titled "Hear No Evil, See No Evil: The UN Security

Council's Approach to Human Rights Violations in the Global Counter-Terrorism Effort."

The international organisation urged the United Nations to "immediately appoint at least one human rights expert to the staff of the newly created Counter-Terrorism Executive Directorate."

Countries should also report to the Security Council's Counter-Terrorism Committee "in a more systematic, complete and timely way," Human Rights Watch said.

"The Security Council should pay particular attention to governments conducting mass arrests of terrorism suspects," the rights group said.

"Either those states face an alarming terrorist threat and need immediate international assistance, or counterterrorism legislation is being used excessively, inappropriately and perhaps opportunistically."