

SEPT 11 CONSPIRACY

## Moussaoui sentenced to life in prison

AP, Alexandria

Zacarias Moussaoui claimed victory over America after a jury rejected the government's effort to put the Sept. 11 conspirator to death and instead decided to lock him away in prison for the rest of his life.

Moussaoui, who spent much of his two-month trial cursing America, blessing al-Qaida and mocking the suffering of 9/11 victims, offered one more taunt after the jury reached its verdict Wednesday: "America, you lost. ... I won," he proclaimed, clapping his hands as he was escorted from the courtroom.

# UK, France introduce Iran resolution

AP, United Nations

Over Chinese and Russian opposition, Western nations circulated a UN Security Council resolution that would demand Iran abandon uranium enrichment or face the threat of unspecified further measures, a possible reference to sanctions.

Britain and France, backed by the United States, hope to wrap up negotiations on the legally binding resolution before a meeting of foreign ministers in New York on Monday. However, diplomats acknowledged that resistance from China and Russia may prolong talks well beyond that.

The resolution, presented Wednesday, is the latest in weeks of negotiations over how to confront suspicions about Iran's nuclear programme, which Tehran insists is for peaceful purposes. The United

States and France accuse the country of secretly trying to build nuclear weapons.

"Once again, the key to this lies in Iran's hands," US Ambassador John Bolton said. "If they give up the pursuit of nuclear weapons, a lot of things are possible. If they continue to bluster and to threaten and obfuscate and try to throw sand in our eyes, then we're onto a different circumstance."

The resolution mandates that Iran suspend enrichment and warns the council would "consider such further measures as may be necessary to ensure compliance" language that opens the door to sanctions.

It calls on Iran to stop construction of a heavy-water reactor and demands that nations "exercise vigilance" in blocking the transfer of goods and technology that could help Iran's uranium reprocessing and

missile programmes. The council would also seek a report back from the UN nuclear watchdog, the International Atomic Energy Agency, on Iran's compliance.

No timeframe has been set for that report but France's UN Ambassador Jean-Marc de La Sabliere said he wanted it no later than early June.

The resolution was written under Chapter 7 of the UN Charter, which makes any demands mandatory and allows for the use of sanctions and possibly force if they are not obeyed. Any sanctions would require another resolution.

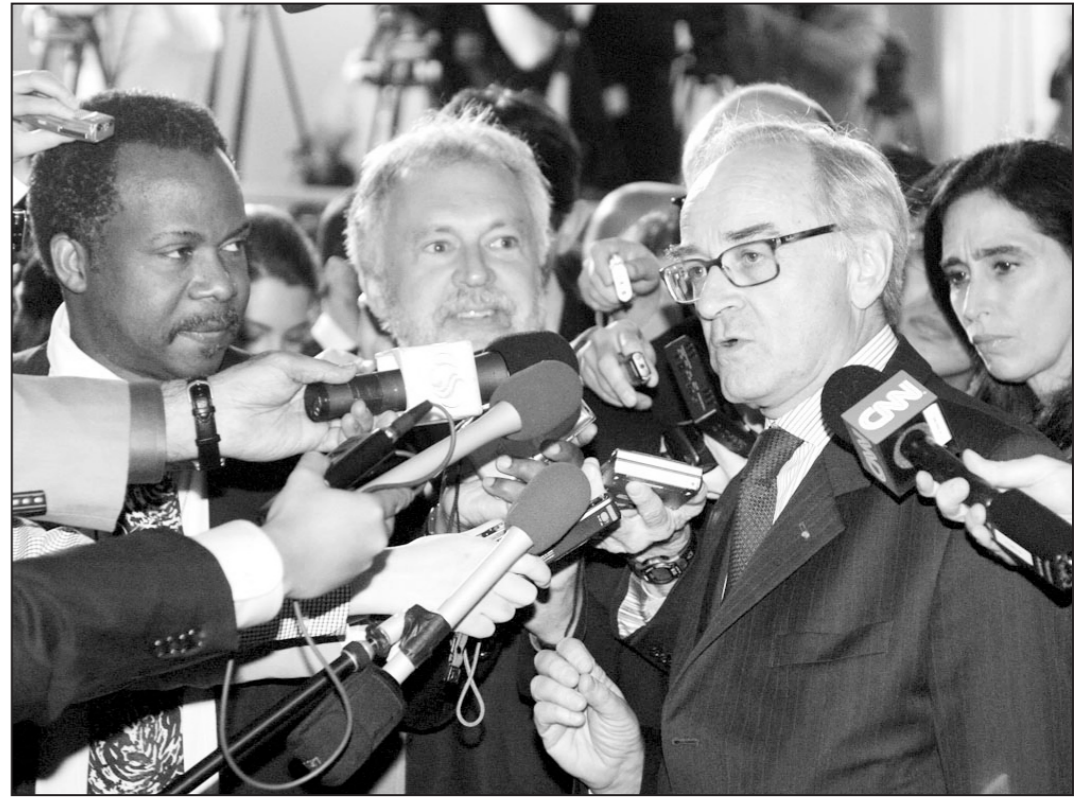
That could force a showdown with Russia, which has arms and technology deals with Iran, as well as China. Both nations have said they adamantly oppose tough council action, including sanctions, and the two could use their veto power on the

council to block it.

"I don't think this draft as it stands now will produce good results," China's UN Ambassador Wang Guangya said as he emerged from the Security Council meeting where the draft was introduced. "I think it's tougher than expected."

The resolution was drafted by Britain, France and Germany, the three European Union nations that have led negotiations with Iran. Ambassadors said discussions between the three EU nations, the United States, China and Russia were only beginning over the resolution.

Ambassadors said the Chapter 7 element was the core of the resolution, suggesting that other language, like the threat of further measures and blocking technology transfers, could be scrapped.



French ambassador to the United Nations, Jean-Marc de La Sabliere, speaks to reporters outside the Security Council chambers Wednesday prior to talks over Iran's nuclear programme at UN headquarters in New York.

## Massive Pacific quake sparks tsunami panic

AFP, Wellington

A massive earthquake with a magnitude of 7.8 rocked the island nation of Tonga on Thursday, triggering a panic evacuation in a New Zealand town after tsunami warnings were briefly issued for the South Pacific.

Although the warnings were withdrawn within two hours, hundreds of people in the New Zealand coastal town of Gisborne, more than 2,200 kilometres (1,375 miles) from the quake's epicentre, fled their homes.

"Most of the coastal communities in Gisborne evacuated," regional civil defence controller Richard Steele told national radio.

"Things got a bit out of control." But while there was panic in New Zealand, the 110,000 residents of Tonga were unaware a tsunami warning had been issued.

"Due to a breakdown in an internal communications' system, the

Tonga authorities received no warning at all. Also, there seemed to be no internal mechanism for warning," said Kevin Vang of the Australian-Pacific Centre for Emergency and Disaster Information.

The US Geological Survey (USGS) said a "great" quake, initially measured at magnitude 8.0, struck at 4:26 am (15:26 GMT Wednesday) in the middle of the islands that make up Tonga.

The epicentre was recorded 160km northeast of Tonga's main island of Nuku'Alofa and 16km below the Earth's surface, a relatively shallow distance which increases the likelihood of a tsunami.

It was the largest earthquake recorded by the USGS since a 8.6 temblor off the Indonesian island of Sumatra in March 2005, and immediately sparked fears of a repeat of the 9.0 Asian tsunami which killed 220,000 people in December 2004.

## Abbas calls for 'immediate negotiations' with Israel

AFP, Ramallah

Palestinian leader Mahmud Abbas is ready for "immediate negotiations" with Israel and urges its new government to abstain from any unilateral action in the West Bank, a spokesman said yesterday.

"President Abbas has expressed the readiness of the Palestinian Authority and the PLO (Palestine Liberation Organisation) to resume immediate negotiations with Ehud Olmert's new Israeli government to implement the roadmap and establish a Palestinian state," Nabil Abu Rudeina told AFP.

The roadmap peace plan, which has made next to no progress since its launch three years ago, had sought to pave the way to an independent Palestinian state living side by side with Israel by 2005.

Abu Rudeina said Abbas would oppose any unilateral measures planned by Israel in the occupied West Bank seeking to redraw the borders of the Jewish state by leaving large parts of the territory and holding on to key settlements.

"We call on Mr Olmert to abstain from any unilateral solution because such measures feed violence and anarchy in the region," chief Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erakat told AFP.

He was speaking as Olmert, whose

government is to be sworn in by parliament Thursday, pledged to fix the final borders of the state, unilaterally from the Palestinians if necessary.

Olmert said he would prefer to reach a negotiated settlement to the Middle East conflict with the Palestinian Authority but indicated that no progress in the peace process was possible while Hamas ran its government.

In an interview with Israel's Maariv newspaper, extracts of which were published on Thursday, the Palestinian Authority president also earlier called on Olmert to immediately resume peace negotiations.

"The position of the Hamas government is not a barrier to the opening of serious discussions. I believe that Ehud Olmert and I can find a common language," he said.

Israel has severed all ties with the Palestinian Authority since the rise to power of Hamas, which refuses to recognise Israel's right to exist nor renounce the use of violence.

However former prime minister Shimon Peres, a deputy premier in the incoming government, said in an interview this week that Olmert was likely to meet with Abbas after returning from a summit with US President George W. Bush in Washington at the end of the month.

## US air assault kills 13 in restive Iraqi city

### 10 others killed in Baghdad courthouse bombing

AFP, AP, Ramadi/ Baghdad

At least 13 people were killed in an air assault by US forces on a house in Iraq's restive city of Ramadi while 10 other Iraqis were killed in suicide bombing at a Baghdad courthouse yesterday.

"US planes bombed a house in Azziziyah area of Ramadi city centre, killing 13 civilians," Ali al-Obeidi, a medic at the Ramadi hospital told AFP, adding that four people were wounded.

The US military confirmed it had conducted the assault but did not give casualty figures.

Last month, US marines waged a fierce firefight with rebels who attacked government headquarters in Ramadi with car bombs, rockets and machine guns.

A suicide bomber blew himself up

in front of a Baghdad courthouse on Thursday, killing 10 people, in the second suicide attack to cause multiple deaths in Iraq in less than 24 hours.

The bombing came as Iraq's dominant Shia alliance said it would retain the crucial interior ministry in the next government but political horsetrading continued with the former Sunni elite demanding at least five cabinet posts.

A medic from Baghdad's Al-Kindi hospital said that among the nine killed in the courthouse attack were two women and a child, while another 50 people were wounded.

The bomber struck near Baghdad's Sadr City, an impoverished district of the capital that is the stronghold of radical Shia cleric Moqtada al-Sadr.

On Wednesday, at least 18 people were killed Wednesday when a suicide

bomber blew himself up amid dozens of police recruits in a queue outside police headquarters in the former Sunni rebel bastion of Fallujah west of Baghdad.

Meanwhile, the US military on Thursday announced the death of a soldier killed Wednesday in a non-combat incident.

The latest fatality took the US military death toll in Iraq since the March 2003 invasion to 2,408, according to an AFP count based on Pentagon figures.

A US civilian was killed and two others were wounded Wednesday when their vehicle hit a roadside bomb near the southern Iraqi city of Nasiriyah, a British military spokesman said.

### Picasso portrait fetches \$95m

REUTERS, New York

Picasso's 1941 portrait of his mistress, "Dora Maar with cat," sold for an astounding \$95 million at Sotheby's on Wednesday, becoming the second most expensive painting in auction history.

The vibrant, large-scale work depicts Maar, the surrealist photographer Picasso was romantically involved with for a decade, seated in a chair with a small cat perched on the back.

It had been expected to sell for upwards of \$40 million, but the winning bid of \$95,216,000, including commission, caught even Sotheby's officials by surprise.

"I was hoping for 70-plus," said David Norman, Sotheby's co-chair of Impressionist and modern art, after the sale. "We thought it was worth more, and we were right."