



Bombing suspect study in differences

BY TOM HAYS
ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEW YORK — His hair and beard are wild and woolly, his eyes dark and hollow, his frame bony. Though 40, he claims he's a college freshman living in the 1970s and can't remember his wife and children. He managed a tire shop in Texas suburbia but has trotted the globe, with stops in Somalia, Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Meet Wadih El-Hage — U.S. citizen and one of four men going on trial Monday in the bombings of two U.S. embassies in Africa.

Prosecutors say El-Hage was a personal secretary to wealthy Saudi exile Osama bin Laden, the alleged engineer of the attacks that killed 224 people, including 12 Americans, in Kenya and Tanzania. If convicted, he could face life in prison.

All the defendants have been portrayed as militants willing to go to any extreme to carry out bin Laden's holy war against the "enemies of God."

But El-Hage stands apart.

For one, he is the only U.S. citizen among the defendants. Former co-workers and neighbors in Arlington, Texas, described him as a hard-working family man.

He also has distinguished himself since his 1998 arrest by complaining loudly and constantly that he is an innocent victim of guilt-by-association, jailhouse abuse and, most recently, mental illness and amnesia. Frustrated by conditions in a federal lock-up, he jumped up in court last summer and dashed at U.S. District Judge Leonard

Sand before being tackled by federal marshals.

Sand ordered El-Hage to undergo psychological examinations after defense attorneys told him that more than two years of solitary confinement and strip searches had left their client too distressed and disoriented to aid in his own defense. They produced a copy of a rambling, handwritten letter in which El-Hage asked his wife whether she was "part of the game that is being played on me and other foreign students. ... I was kidnapped from my school and brought here against my will."

But prosecutors portray El-Hage as a calculating malingeringer whose U.S. citizenship only made him more dangerous. He was "chosen by bin Laden to work for him because he had a United States passport and could travel more freely," Assistant U.S. Attorney Patrick Fitzgerald said.

At a recent hearing, two psychiatrists and a psychologist agreed that El-Hage doesn't have a major mental disorder. Fitzgerald told the judge the defendant "should just knock it off, work with his counsel and proceed."

El-Hage was born in Lebanon in 1960 and raised as a Catholic. In the late 1970s, he enrolled in the University of Southwestern Louisiana.

His sister has said it was around that time that El-Hage surprised the family by announcing his conversion to Islam. "He just said it was a better religion," the sister, Samia, said in a 1998 interview.

After receiving a bachelor's degree in urban planning in 1986, El-Hage worked a variety of jobs in Tucson, Ariz.

He married a woman named April Ray, who also converted to Islam, and became a U.S. citizen in 1989.

By the time of his arrest nearly 10 years later, he was living with his wife and seven children in a drab, three-bedroom apartment in Arlington, managing Lone Star Wheels & Tires.

Co-workers recall his religious devotion, with one saying El-Hage knelt in the tire shop to pray five times a day.

The couple's landlord remembered them as "nice, ordinary people." He was on the board of the local mosque; she was a regular at Parent-Teacher Association meetings.

El-Hage's attorney, Sam Schmidt, has described his client as a "respected and uncontroversial member of the Muslim community." The defense concedes he worked for bin Laden, but only in the millionaire's legitimate businesses — not his Al Qaeda terrorist organization.

Prosecutors allege that as early as 1990, El-Hage was circulating in a shadowy world where militant Muslims, once united behind rebels fighting the Soviet Union in Afghanistan, were locked in a bloody power struggle over the direction of their holy war.

El-Hage had a habit of being "in the immediate vicinity of a remarkable number of violent acts and plots, yet makes the highly dubious claim of a blissful ignorance as to all that happens around him," prosecutors said.

In late 1992, El-Hage left the country with his family to work for bin Laden in the Sudan and Kenya. By 1997, El-Hage had returned to the United States and settled in Arlington.

Harrier crashes during landing; 2 die in wreck

ASSOCIATED PRESS

CHERRY POINT, N.C. — A Marine Corps Harrier jet crashed Saturday as it neared touchdown on a base runway. The two crew members were killed, a spokesman said.

The jump-jet crashed while approaching the runway about 4 p.m., said 1st Lt. John Caldwell, spokesman at Cherry Point Marine Corps Air Station. The jump-jet design allows the Harrier to take off and land vertically; it redirects its thrust to fly.

The area where the Harrier crashed was clear of trees or other obstructions, Caldwell said. The victims' names were withheld.

The Cherry Point station is home

to one Harrier training squadron and three squadrons that are deployed on missions accompanying Marines from nearby Camp Lejeune. Cherry Point is also home to four squadrons of radar-jamming Prowler aircraft, Caldwell said.

In 1999 and 2000, the Marines temporarily grounded its Harrier jets, as well as other aircraft, because of safety concerns.

During the 2000 budget year, 30 deaths resulted from Marine aviation accidents, including an MV-22 Osprey crash in Arizona in April that killed 19 Marines and the crash of a CH-46 Sea Knight helicopter off the coast of San Diego in December that killed six Marines and one sailor.

University officials suspend fraternity for racial incident

BY ALEX LYDA
ASSOCIATED PRESS

DALLAS — The University of North Texas has suspended a fraternity chapter for five years after members allegedly used racial slurs and waved a Confederate battle flag at a group of mostly black football recruits.

Kappa Alpha's suspension, issued Friday, is the longest ban the school has ever handed out. The fraternity must vacate the house and withdraw from activity at the university until the suspension ends, officials said.

"Five years is the most we've given anybody," said university spokesman Roddy Wolper. "Five years of no activity ensures a whole different group."

UNT concluded that Kappa Alpha violated the student code and that members gave misleading information about the incident, Wolper said. Larry Wiese, head of the fraternity's national office, called the confrontation unfortunate.

"I think the incident is not reflective of the entire chapter up there.

It is certainly not reflective of the alumni from that chapter or the 94,000 living alumni," Wiese told KTVT-TV in Dallas.

Telephone messages left for the UNT chapter president were not immediately returned Friday.

Witnesses said the fraternity brothers used racial slurs and waved a Confederate battle flag at recruits who were touring the Denton campus, northeast of Dallas. "The flag is not a symbol of the organization and should not be used," Wiese said.

The suspension comes after several questionable incidents involving the chapter. In 1990, the fraternity served probation for alcohol violations and in 1996 was placed on probation when a notebook containing racist comments was found in the fraternity house. The fraternity recently completed a two-year probation.

Hundreds of UNT students have protested against the fraternity chapter, whose members say the organization's roots are in traditions of the Old South.

NEWS BRIEFS

McAuliffe takes over as Democratic Party chairman

WASHINGTON (AP) — Promising an aggressive and harder-working Democratic Party, the man who once wrestled an alligator for a campaign donation won election Saturday as chairman of the Democratic National Committee. Terry McAuliffe, known as a prolific fund-raiser for Bill Clinton, said Democrats would waste no time in beating Republicans in local elections before the year is out. "That's my mission: to win elections. And to win elections, we must create the best-run, the best-managed, the best-organized and the best-funded political party in America," he said in his acceptance speech.

Bush, Democrats try to define budget

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Bush and his Democratic congressional rivals are dueling over who gets to define this year's budget battle to the public. At stake are trillions of dollars in projected federal surpluses. For Bush, the goal is to portray Democrats as wanting to carve money out of his budget centerpiece, a big tax cut, to feed their habit of wasteful spending. The president plans to send Congress an outline of his proposal on Thursday. He said in his weekly radio address Saturday, "It is broad and responsible. It will help our economy, and it is the right thing to do." The plan is expected to closely track the \$1.6 trillion, 10-year reduction in income and other taxes that he campaigned on.

Israelis to elect leader this week

JERUSALEM (AP) — A dejected Israeli electorate faces a stark choice this week between Prime Minister Ehud Barak and his push for a final peace deal with the Palestinians, and front-runner Ariel Sharon, who won a boost Sunday when he was endorsed by Israel's ultra-Orthodox bloc. The deck seems stacked in favor of Sharon, a 72-year-old ex-general who promises to quash the four-month Palestinian uprising and cede no more land. He has led in all the polls for weeks by about 20 points — a massive spread in a country that for decades has been deeply divided down the middle.

LATE NIGHT Carolina

February 9, 2001

10pm - 2am

Russell House University Union
2nd Floor

• Sports Night

Speed Pitch
Ping Pong
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• Wax Hands

• Free Billiards in Gameroom

• 1am - 2am free breakfast bar

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Non-technical Positions in Technical Companies

Monday, February 5th • 5-6pm
Career Center • BA Bldg • Rm. 602B
A panel of hiring authorities will discuss career opportunities for non-technical candidates.

Careers in the Corporate Sector

Tuesday, February 6th • 4-5pm
Career Center • BA Bldg • Rm. 602B
Find out what types of positions liberal arts graduates hold in the "business world."

Careers in Government Agencies

Wednesday, February 7th • 2:30-3:30pm
Career Center • BA Bldg • Rm. 602B
Gain an understanding of the diverse career options in government agencies for all majors.

Is Graduate School for You?

Wednesday, February 7th • 4-5pm
Career Center • BA Bldg • Rm. 602B
Whether to go, where to go, & how to prepare.

Careers in the Non-Profit Sector

Thursday, February 8th • 2-3pm
Career Center • BA Bldg • Rm. 602B
What is the non-profit sector & what types of positions can liberal arts students pursue?