

Top bin Laden lieutenant threatens more attacks

BY SARAH EL DEEB
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

DUBAI, UNITED ARAB EMIRATES — Two audiotapes purportedly of Osama bin Laden's top lieutenant were broadcast on Arabic TV stations Tuesday, one taunting President Bush and threatening more attacks on the United States, the other criticizing France's decision to ban Islamic headscarves in schools.

The tapes, attributed to Ayman al-Zawahri, came as Pakistani forces backed by helicopters searched villages in a remote region between Pakistan and Afghanistan where bin Laden and Taliban suspects are believed hid-

ing. Al-Zawahri, an Egyptian-born physician, is thought to be with bin Laden in the rugged mountains.

In the past, U.S. intelligence officials have noted that some tape releases have been preludes to attacks. On an April 7 tape, a speaker believed to be bin Laden exhorted Muslims to rise up against Saudi Arabia and foreshadowed suicide attacks against U.S. and British interests. Suicide bombers struck Western housing compounds in the Saudi capital of Riyadh on May 12.

The latest audiotapes aired a few hours apart on Al-Arabiya and Al-Jazeera networks, competing Arabic TV stations.

Officials at both stations said

they broadcast only newsworthy excerpts and that their full recordings were different. Both stations said they received the material Tuesday.

Events mentioned in the tapes indicate only that the recordings were made no earlier than last month.

Al-Arabiya and Al-Jazeera said they were confident the voice was al-Zawahri's, with Al-Arabiya also saying its confidence in the au-

thenticity stemmed from the source of the tape, which officials would not identify. The voice on

both tapes sounded identical, with the tone and rhetoric similar to previous videotapes as well as audiotapes believed to be from al-Zawahri.

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CAIRO BUREAU CHIEF OF THE PAN-ARAB DAILY NEWSPAPER

on radical Islamic groups and the Cairo bureau chief of the pan-Arab daily newspaper Al-Hayat.

Dia'a Rashwan, an expert on radical Islam for Egypt's Al-Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies, said issuing both tapes almost simultaneously "requires logistical ability ... and also a central decision."

"This is not insignificant organizational capabilities," Rashwan added. "They seem to signal that (Zawahri) is still connected."

In Al-Jazeera's tape, the voice believed to be al-Zawahri challenges Bush's claim to have liberated Iraq and indicates al-Qaida — the group blamed for the Sept. 11 attacks on the United States —

is still running operations from Afghanistan.

"Bush, fortify your targets, tighten your defense, intensify your security measures," the tape recording warned, "because the fighting Islamic community — which sent you New York and Washington battalions — has decided to send you one battalion after the other, carrying death and seeking heaven."

The audiotape aired by Dubai-based al-Arabiya criticized France's decision to ban religious symbols in public buildings, including headscarves worn by Muslim women. The law is expected to go before the French Senate early next month.



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Pentagon charges bin Laden associates

BY ROBERT BURNS
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — The Pentagon brought war crimes conspiracy charges Tuesday against two men alleged to be associates of terror leader Osama bin Laden and said they will face the first U.S. military tribunals convened since World War II.

Government prosecutors ruled out seeking the death penalty against the two.

Ibrahim Ahmed Mahmoud al Qosi, of Sudan, was a paymaster for bin Laden's al-Qaida network, and Ali Hamza Ahmed Sulayman al Bahlul, of Yemen, was a propagandist for bin Laden, according to an official list of charges released by the Pentagon.

Neither is accused of assaulting Americans.

"These are not trigger men," said Eugene Fidell of the National Institute of Military Justice. He is an attorney for James Yee, an Army chaplain accused of mishandling classified information

from the Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, detention center where more than 600 terror suspects are held.

Trial dates have not been set for al Qosi or al Bahlul. The two could face maximum sentences of life in prison if convicted.

The government had said previously it would not seek the death penalty against David Hicks of Australia, one of six Guantanamo Bay detainees whom President Bush said last July are subject to trial by military tribunal. Of the six, only al Qosi and al Bahlul have been charged.

The Pentagon's decision not to seek the death penalty against al Qosi or al Bahlul "tells me that those making the decisions are alert to worldwide sensitivities," Fidell said. "If they had sought the death penalty, there would have been a tremendous hostile response around the world."

Charging papers released Tuesday assert the two men were war crimes conspirators but provide no documentation to support the claim. Air Force Maj. Michael

Shavers, a Pentagon spokesman, said the charges are based on information obtained from intelligence and interrogations of the two suspects.

The papers, similar to indictments in the civilian court system, lay out more than a dozen "general allegations" that describe some of the history and structure of al-Qaida but do not mention either al Qosi or al Bahlul. They list terrorist acts attributed to al-Qaida, including the Sept. 11, 2001, hijackings and attacks, the 1998 bombing of U.S. embassies in Africa and the Cole bombing, but they do not allege the two men played any role in any of them.

The documents do not say how or where the men were captured or how long they have been at Guantanamo Bay.

William F. Schulz, executive director of Amnesty International USA, the human rights organization, said the announcement of conspiracy charges against the two men

"confirms fears that (the Bush administration) seeks to operate unbound by due process."

"These military tribunals fall short of the standard for fair trials, out of step with American values of justice and in violation of international law," Schulz said. He called the tribunals an "incestuous process" ruled over by a small group in the executive branch at every stage.

Military tribunals, used during times of war, are similar to peacetime military trials known as courts-martial but share some features of civilian trials as well.

Suspects are entitled to defense lawyers and to put on a vigorous defense, although rules of evidence are more favorable to the government. All verdicts are subject to automatic review by a kind of appeals court known as a Military Commission Review Panel; the review panel's members are civilians who are commissioned major generals in the Army during their term of service.

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