

Teenager sentenced to 6 years in first trial for Madrid bombing

By MARIA JESUS PRADES
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

MADRID, Spain — The first trial stemming from the Madrid terror bombing ended after only 25 minutes Tuesday with a Spanish teenager pleading guilty to charges he helped transport dynamite used in the attack.

The 16-year-old, who said he acted unknowingly, accepted the prosecutor's request for a six-year term in a juvenile detention center, followed by five years of probation.

The trial had been scheduled to last three days at the National Court, but the boy pleaded guilty right after the charges from prosecutor Blanca Rodriguez were read out by a court clerk.

The boy was asked if he understood the charges, confessed to them and accepted the prosecutor's jail-term request. All three times he answered simply, "yes."

The March 11 attack killed 191 people and was blamed on Muslim militants linked to al Qaeda.

Amid a frenzy of media coverage, the boy went into the courtroom accompanied by his mother and a court-appointed lawyer.

He initially faced a jail term of eight years, but the prosecutor lowered it to six because Spanish law stipulates

that after age 23, a juvenile has to go into an adult jail. Counselors said this would have harmed the youth.

Prosecutors say he collaborated with a gang that sold drugs and explosives in northern Spain. The group sold the dynamite used in the backpack bombs planted on four trains March 11.

In exchange for an undisclosed amount of money, the teenager allegedly took a Madrid-bound bus from the northern city of Oviedo and carried with him a gym bag sealed with a padlock and containing 33 to 44 pounds of dynamite stolen from a mine.

Authorities say an estimated 440 pounds of dynamite exploded on the trains.

The boy has said he did not know what was in the bag. He is then said to have delivered it to a Moroccan named Jamal Ahmidam, the alleged buyer of the dynamite.

Ahmidam was one of seven suspects in the attacks who blew themselves up in an apartment outside Madrid on April 3 as police prepared to arrest them.

Sixteen adults have been jailed on preliminary charges of terrorism or mass murder.

The teenager was brought to trial quickly because under Spanish law, a juvenile suspect cannot be held for more than six months without being tried.

Rumsfeld urges Latin American countries to cooperate in efforts against drug trafficking, terrorism

By JOHN J. LUMPKIN
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

QUITO, Ecuador — Latin American countries must work together to defeat drug trafficking and international terrorism as they have done in working to keep the peace in Haiti, Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld said Tuesday.

Rumsfeld, in South America for a conference of Western Hemisphere defense ministers, told reporters he hopes to strengthen regional security agreements aimed at stopping narcotics and terror organizations.

He and other U.S. officials held up the peacekeeping force in Haiti, which draws heavily from Latin countries, as an example of such cooperation.

But despite Rumsfeld's calls for cooperation across Latin America, significant differences exist between the policies of the United States and many of the largest countries in Latin America.

Many opposed the U.S.-led war in Iraq and push a U.N.-based multilateral foreign policy. Only a few sent troops to Iraq, and just one Western Hemisphere country, El Salvador, still has troops with the United States in the coalition fighting the insurgency.

In other areas, though, U.S. officials say cooperation is strong, pointing to the sharing of intelligence and law enforcement information, joint naval exercises and efforts to track drug shipments.

Still, Rumsfeld's calls for cooperation are not universally celebrated given the unpopularity of U.S. foreign policy in some quarters.

On Tuesday, he met with Ecuador's embattled president, Lucio Gutierrez, and Defense Minister Nelson Herrera.

In a press conference with Rumsfeld, Herrera repeatedly emphasized Ecuador's sovereignty in dealing with international terror, drug trafficking and

other problems that trouble the region.

Asked about the civil war in neighboring Colombia, Herrera responded, "The problem of Colombia is the problem of Colombia. The problem of Ecuador is the problem of Ecuador."

President Gutierrez has faced demands for his resignation in recent months amid allegations of corruption, but efforts to impeach him fizzled last week in Ecuador's legislative body. He also faces domestic criticism for fostering such close ties with the United States.

Rumsfeld said the American delegation "expressed our strong support for constitutional democracy" in Ecuador.

On drugs, terrorism and organized crime, Rumsfeld said, "In the 21st Century, we are finding these problems are increasingly global and regional. They are not problems that affect only one country, and as such they cannot be solved by only one country."

In truth, Colombia and Ecuador cooperate to some degree, and Rumsfeld praised their efforts. A senior Colombian rebel leader, Simon Trinidad, was captured in Quito in January and turned over to the Colombian government. Ecuador, fearful that Colombia's civil war might spill over the border, patrols its frontier extensively with the aid of U.S.-supplied communications equipment and



PAUL J. RICHARDS/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS
Ecuadorian Brig. Gen. Jorge Andrade, Vice Minister of Defense, left, welcomes U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld as he is received at the Ecuadorian Minister of Defense on Tuesday in Quito, Ecuador. Rumsfeld is in South America for a conference of Western Hemisphere defense ministers.

vehicles. On Haiti, a senior U.S. defense official said the United States, Brazil and Argentina worry that the United Nations has provided too few soldiers and police for the peacekeeping job. More than 8,300 are authorized; but only 5,700 are in-country, according to U.N. figures.

Ecuador, Brazil and Argentina are considering sending more troops to assist the force, which is led by Brazil, the official said, briefing reporters on the condition of anonymity. The U.S. government may also begin providing further humanitarian aid and surveillance information to the peacekeepers.

Political and criminal violence, coupled with natural disasters, left thousands of Haitians dead this year. Fighting has continued since the arrival of the U.N. force.

Rumsfeld also met Tuesday with his counterparts from Argentina, Brazil and the Central American countries. He discussed a new environmental and security surveillance network in Brazil, and how its information could be shared with other countries in the war against drugs, officials said. The Central American leaders were expected to discuss the problems of gangs in their countries, and fears that their foreign contacts, in the United States and in Colombia, could develop into a transnational threat. The problem of international terrorist organizations operating in the region are on the agenda of the conference, which begins today. Rumsfeld has previously acknowledged fears that international terrorist organizations would send operatives into the United States through holes in the U.S. border.

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