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Terror suspect's trial in war crimes delayed

The trial of David Hicks, an Australian accused of fighting for the Taliban and training with al Qaeda, has been delayed until March. GUANTANAMO BAY

By CAROL ROSENBERG
The Miami Herald
November 4, 2004

GUANTANAMO BAY NAVY BASE, Cuba -- The war-crimes court hearing charges against David Hicks, an Australian captured in the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan, Wednesday delayed his trial until mid-March. Hicks is accused of fighting for the Taliban and training with al Qaeda.

Defense attorneys are still seeking permission from the U.S. Embassy in Pakistan to interview prospective witnesses there, Hicks' Pentagon appointed lawyer said.

Defense lawyers are also making arrangements to question other detainees at the Guantánamo prison camp and interrogation center, added Marine Maj. Michael Mori.

SPOKE BRIEFLY

Hicks, 29, spoke briefly at Wednesday's court session, mostly responding with "yes sir." He has spent nearly three years in U.S. captivity, about half of it in solitary confinement.

Hicks' trial was scheduled to begin Jan. 10, only the second U.S. war crimes trial since World War II. A Yemeni captive who worked as al Qaeda founder Osama bin Laden's driver is scheduled for trial on Dec. 7.

Mori has already traveled to Kosovo to interview witnesses in anticipation of Hicks' trial, in which a conviction could bring life imprisonment. Hicks' charge sheets allege he fought alongside the Kosovo Liberation Army, once a U.S.-supported militia.

DEFENSE MOTIONS

The three-colonel panel hearing the case also met briefly Wednesday and deferred decisions on several defense motions that sought to dismiss charges and disqualify the court in a series of challenges to the legality of the Military Commissions that President Bush ordered created after the Sept. 11 attacks.

The same judges will next hear pretrial arguments in the case of Salim Hamdan, 34, the Yemeni who could also face a life prison sentence if he is convicted.