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U.S. Wins Adjournment in Extradition Case

ASSOCIATED PRESS

March 3, 2005

LONDON (AP) -- Lawyers for the United States in its bid to extradite a British man on terrorism charges won an adjournment Thursday to investigate whether the suspect might be handed over to a military tribunal if delivered to American authorities.

Computer expert Babar Ahmad, 30, is accused of running U.S.-based Web sites soliciting support for terrorism and of trying to set up a terrorist training camp in Arizona.

His lawyers argued that any appearance before a military tribunal would be a flagrant denial of his right to a fair trial. They also claimed he could face the death penalty or be sent to the U.S. detention camp at Guantanamo Bay in Cuba as an "enemy combatant" if handed over to the U.S. authorities.

British law forbids the extradition of suspects who could face capital punishment, which is outlawed in Britain.

John Hardy, a British lawyer representing the U.S. government, said the risk of Ahmad being handed to an American military tribunal was unknown.

"We are all looking forward and we do not know what may happen," Hardy said. He asked for a two- to three-week adjournment so his legal team can look into the issue.

"We do not concede at this juncture that a transfer to military jurisdiction would constitute a flagrant denial, but we do accept that it is strongly arguable," Hardy said.

Judge Timothy Workman agreed to adjourn the case until April 18.

Ahmad was indicted in Connecticut in October on charges of supporting terrorism, conspiring to kill Americans and laundering money. U.S. authorities are seeking to have him extradited to stand trial in the United States.

Ahmad is accused of running several Web sites, including Azzam.com, which investigators say was used to recruit al-Qaida, Taliban and Chechen rebel fighters and to outfit them with gas masks, night-vision goggles and camouflage gear.

In an interview with The Associated Press on Wednesday, Hardy alleged that Ahmad had tried to set up a terrorist training camp in Arizona, where he met with Islamic radicals who claimed ties to Osama bin Laden.

Hardy said Ahmad met in Phoenix in 1998 with Yaser Al Jhani, a member of the Islamic mujahedeen militia, and others who claimed to have access to bin Laden. "He expressed an interest in developing a training system in Arizona," Hardy said. "That is, a training system, in effect for the mujahedeen to visit and train to fight abroad." He said there was no evidence the camp had ever been established.