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US Citizen Charged with Plotting to Assassinate Bush

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A U.S. citizen who spent time in Saudi Arabia has been accused of conspiring with the al-Qaida terrorist network and taking part in a plot to assassinate President Bush. A six-count indictment against the man was unsealed in a federal court outside Washington.

The indictment contends that Ahmed Omar Abu Ali, 23, a one-time resident of Virginia, pursued religious studies in Saudi Arabia in 2000 and returned to the kingdom in 2002 to aid and join forces with the al-Qaida network.

The document says Mr. Abu Ali discussed plans to assassinate President Bush with several unidentified co-conspirators. The indictment said the accused man received a religious blessing to carry out the alleged plot that involved shooting the president or detonating an explosive.

The indictment also says the defendant received weapons training and instruction in document falsification from known al-Qaida figures.

Saudi authorities detained Mr. Abu Ali in 2003 and held him until earlier this month, when he was transported to the United States to face charges.

The defendant did not enter a plea in his initial court appearance, but said he had been tortured while detained in Saudi Arabia, even offering to show the judge scars from alleged mistreatment. The judge told Mr. Abu Ali he would not be tortured in any way while in federal custody.

Supporters of the defendant jeered and laughed when the charges were read in court. Speaking with reporters afterward, one supporter characterized the

charges as the latest in a coordinated campaign by U.S. authorities against Muslim citizens.

"This [indictment] is as bogus as it can be and the government knows that it is lying through its teeth. Unfortunately, this [U.S.] Justice Department has really lost our respect as a community," he said.

News reports quote family members of the defendant as saying they believe he was held for an extended period of time in Saudi Arabia so that abusive interrogation methods could be used against him that would be illegal in the United States.

U.S. officials have not commented on the matter.

If convicted, Mr. Abu Ali could face up to 80 years in prison.

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Russia has cited the importance of relations with the United States, but expressed some concern a day after President Bush criticized democracy in Russia. Russia's ambassador to the United States, Yuri Ushakov, says the two nations must make concerted efforts in the nuclear field, and also share goals in the energy sphere. Writing in The Washington Post newspaper, Mr. Ushakov also said it is inadmissible to move in the direction of demonizing Russia...

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The British government has introduced new anti-terrorism legislation that would give the

cabinet's law-and-order minister sweeping power to put suspects under house arrest and monitoring. Opponents say civil liberties could be trampled in the process. The Home Secretary, Charles Clarke, unveiled the proposal in Parliament, saying he needs extraordinary anti-terrorist powers because of the ongoing threat Britain faces. "Let no one be in any doubt that there...

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President Bush says America's commitment to NATO is strong, and vows to listen to the concerns of alliance members. European commentators refer to the president's European tour as a charm offensive. Mr. Bush uses another term. "You might call this a listening tour," he said. Those were words critics of his Iraq policy have been waiting to hear. At a news conference at NATO headquarters, Mr. Bush said he strongly believes he did the...

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Police in Brussels have clashed with several hundred demonstrators protesting President Bush's visit to the Belgian capital. Police arrested several demonstrators during the sometimes violent clashes but there are no reports of serious injuries. Authorities used trucks to push demonstrators back from European Union headquarters, where Mr. Bush was meeting with EU leaders. Demonstrators carried signs and chanted slogans criticizing what they called Mr. Bush's ...