

Many see bin Laden tape as damning

WASHINGTON (AP) — Among Americans and their allies, Osama bin Laden's satisfied and knowing musings about the Sept. 11 attacks hardened attitudes already set in stone.

In the video shown to the world, bin Laden betrayed — indeed, boasted about — his advance knowledge of the suicide hijackings and spoke about how the destruction had exceeded even his "optimistic" calculations.

U.S. legal experts called the tape devastating, a "virtual confession," in the words of one.

Even so, some skeptics abroad remained unconvinced that bin Laden did anything more than express pleasure at the success of attacks that killed more than 3,000 people. There was even a suggestion America cooked up the video using a stand-in.

In an even, low voice, with the occasional chuckle, bin Laden recounted at length his reaction to the attacks on New York City and Washington. The apparently candid video, which was shot at an Afghan guest house before U.S.-backed forces overran the Taliban,

was released Thursday by the Pentagon.

"We calculated in advance the number of casualties who would be killed," bin Laden said, according to the U.S. translation.

But he said he had not figured that the World Trade Center twin towers would come down entirely, instead believing only floors at and above the planes' impact sites would be destroyed.

On the operation's planning, he said "we did not reveal" to the hijack crews the details of what they were expected to do until just before they boarded the planes.

They knew only that they were preparing for a martyrdom operation, he said.

For all his familiarity with the Sept. 11 events, bin Laden did not explicitly take responsibility for directing the operation. He said he received notification of the Tuesday attacks the previous Thursday, indicating that the timing, at least, might have been left to others.

The Pakistani government said the tape vindicated its decision to back the U.S. war in Afghanistan despite the heated opposition from

many of its citizens.

And in Washington, a Muslim group that has been critical of aspects of U.S. policy in the anti-terror campaign found the tape convincing.

"Bin Laden clearly spoke as someone who had foreknowledge of the attacks," the Council on American-Islamic Relations said in a statement. The group found particularly "sickening" bin Laden's claim that the attacks advanced the cause of Islam.

Imad Hamad, director of the Dearborn, Mich., regional office of the American Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee, said the translation provided by the government with the help of outside experts seemed accurate.

"It's clear in the tape that he had the prior knowledge," Hamad said. "And he was happy about it. This is insane."

Outrage spread across the United States.

Mark Finelli, an investment banker from Tucson, Ariz., who was on the 61st floor of one of the twin towers on Sept. 11, said the tape made him feel "very violent and enraged. ... I just want-

ed to punch the screen."

"Whenever I saw it on television I changed the channel," said Anthony Gambale, whose daughter, Giovanna, was killed at the World Trade Center.

"It is frightening and shocking to sit there and listen to him invoke the name of the almighty to defend murder, to defend evil," Secretary of State Colin Powell said.

U.S. officials could hardly claim that the tape convinced them of bin Laden's guilt, because they had asserted his guilt was beyond question already. But they hoped influential doubters in the Middle East would be swayed.

"I don't see how any rational person could come away thinking, anywhere in the world, that Osama bin Laden had nothing to do with the 9-11 events," said Sen. Richard Shelby, R-Ala.

"That clinches it for the world," said Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison, R-Texas.

Yet some Arabs held out the possibility that bin Laden was making a colossal, empty boast before a gathering of supporters who shared his delight in the results.

Man indicted in Sept. 11 attacks will stand trial

NEW YORK (AP) — Four men who quickly became FBI targets in the days following the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks appeared before judges, but only one was facing faces charges related to terrorism.

In one courtroom Thursday, a Virginia man whose phone number was found inside a car registered to one of the hijackers pleaded guilty to forgery. In another, two men arrested with boxcutters on a train the day after the attacks were charged with conspiring to commit credit card fraud.

Only Zacarias Moussaoui, a 33-year-old Frenchman who has been jailed since August, stands charged in the attacks. He was denied bail Thursday and ordered sent to Alexandria, Va., for trial.

Moussaoui walked into U.S. District Court in Manhattan in handcuffs and shackles. He didn't enter a plea and only nodded in the direction of Judge Barbara Jones when she asked if he understood his rights.

After Moussaoui's indictment Tuesday on six conspiracy charges, four of them punishable by death, Attorney General John Ashcroft described him as an "active participant" in the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon that left 3,200 people dead or missing.

The indictment said Moussaoui's activities mirrored those of the 19 hijackers as he attended flight school, opened a bank account with cash, bought flight deck videos and looked into crop dusting planes. He was detained Aug. 17 on immigration charges after he aroused suspicion trying to pay cash for flight lessons in Minnesota.

Jones denied him bail, saying: "There are no conditions or combination of

conditions that would safeguard the community."

Moussaoui's court-appointed lawyer, Donald DuBoulay, accused the government of failing to properly identify his client, declining to pay a \$40-per-day material witness fee to his client and improperly videotaping his attorney-client conferences. His client wanted to donate the daily material witness payments to the orphans of Chechnya, he said later.

Moussaoui's arraignment was scheduled for Jan. 2 on conspiracy charges for terrorism, aircraft piracy, destruction of aircraft, use of weapons of mass destruction, murder and destruction of property. The indictment says Moussaoui worked with 23 co-conspirators to murder thousands.

In another courtroom, in Alexandria, Va., Mohamed Abdi, whose first name and phone number were found on a map in a hijacker's car left at Dulles International Airport, pleaded guilty Thursday to forgery for signing his landlord's name on a \$220-rental subsidy check.

In the case of the two men detained Sept. 12 after they were found with boxcutters on an Amtrak train in Fort Worth, a law enforcement source told The Associated Press on condition of anonymity Wednesday that investigators no longer believe they were connected to the attacks.

The two were charged Thursday with conspiring to commit credit card fraud. The criminal complaint identifies one as Syed Gul Mohammed Shah, with an alias of Ayub Ali Khan, the name that has appeared in published reports.

He and the other man, Mohammed Azmath, had been roommates in Jersey City, N.J.

Afghan commander claims to have bid Laden surrounded

TORA BORA, Afghanistan (AP) — A top Afghan commander claimed today to have located and surrounded a cave in which he believed Osama bin Laden could be hiding.

Eastern alliance defense chief Hazrat Ali also said his fighters had surrounded a large number of bin Laden's al-Qaida guerrillas on a mountain ridge in the Tora Bora area in eastern Afghanistan — near to the cave.

Ali did not say why he thought bin Laden might be inside the cave, one of several in a gorge where his tribesmen were fighting al-Qaida forces amid heavy U.S. aerial bombing.

Meanwhile, in Afghanistan's south, scores of U.S. Marines in a land

convoy and helicopters took control of the battle-scarred Kandahar airport, a one-time stronghold of al-Qaida and the now-vanquished Taliban militia. The runway was littered with unexploded ordnance and pocked by bomb craters.

The airport is to become a major arrival point for humanitarian aid that will be desperately needed as the bitter Afghan winter sets in.

The location of bin Laden — the prime suspect in the Sept. 11 terror attacks in the United States — remains the focus of the fierce conflict near the Pakistan border. Some U.S. officials believe he might be hiding there under seige. However, others say he is more likely holed up in another part of Afghanistan or may have

even left the country.

A \$25 million U.S. bounty for the Saudi millionaire has heightened the hunt for him. There have been several unconfirmed sightings of bin Laden in the Tora Bora area in recent days.

Ali's description of the fighting could not be independently verified as journalists have been barred from that area.

Several hours earlier today, Ali quoted running radio reports from the battlefield as saying that his men had captured, entered and searched the cave. However, later he said they only located it and were trying to capture it.

"There is one cave surrounded by my forces. I think there is one place inside where Osama is," he

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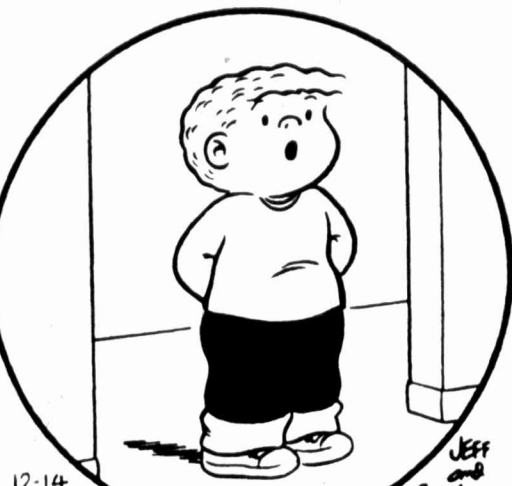
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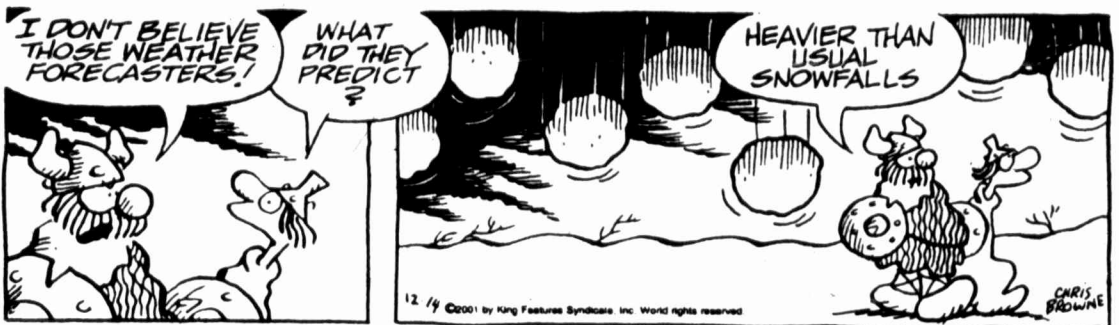
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THIS DATE IN HISTORY

The ASSOCIATED PRESS Today is Friday, Dec. 14, the 348th day of 2001. There are 17 days left in the year. Today's Highlight in History: On Dec. 14, 1799, the first president of the United States, George Washington, died at his Mount Vernon home at age 67. In 1819, Alabama joined the Union as the 22nd state. In 1861, Prince Albert, husband of Queen Victoria, died in London. In 1911, Norwegian explorer Roald Amundsen became the first man to reach the South Pole, beating out an expedition led by Robert F. Scott. In 1939, the Soviet Union was dropped from the League of Nations. In 1946, the U.N. General Assembly voted to establish United Nations headquarters in New York.

In 1962, the U.S. space probe Mariner 2 approached Venus, transmitting information about the planet. In 1975, six South Moluccan extremists surrendered after holding 23 hostages for 12 days on a train near the Dutch town of Beilen. In 1980, fans around the world paid tribute to John Lennon, six days after he was shot to death in New York City. In 1981, Israel annexed the Golan Heights, which it had seized from Syria in 1967. In 1986, the experimental aircraft Voyager, piloted by Dick Rutan and Jeana Yeager, took off from Edwards Air Force Base in California on the first non-stop, non-refueled flight around the world. Ten years ago: President Bush and Mexican President Carlos Salinas de Gortari, meeting at Camp David, Md., renewed their commitment to conclude quickly the North American Free Trade Agreement. Today's Birthdays: Jazz musician Clark Terry is 81. '60 Minutes' executive producer Don Hewitt is 79. Actor-playwright George Furth is 69. Actor Hal Williams is 63. Actress Patty Duke is 55. Pop singer Joyce Vincent-Wilson (Tony Orlando and Dawn) is 55. Entertainment executive Michael Ovitz is 55. Actress Dee Wallace Stone is 53. Rock musician Cliff Williams (AC/DC) is 52. Rock singer-musician Mike Scott (The Waterboys) is 43. Singer-musician Peter 'Spider' Stacy (The Pogues) is 43.

Newsday Crossword

- ACROSS 1 Fizzling-out sound 5 Actress Merkel 8 Suited to the plow 14 Droxie rival 15 Fairy queen 16 Hardy pal 17 Very 19 Central part, in part 20 Cairo EMTs? 22 Presidential nickname 23 Groom oneself 24 Provide for a while 26 Cosmetics name 28 Turkish title 31 _ la la 33 Caspian feeder 34 WWII craft 35 Fashionable Saudis? 38 "Eureka!" 40 Chan rejoinder 41 Poetic verb 42 Prates 44 _-porridge hot... 48 Buck ender 49 Bring joy to 53 Sleep cycle 54 How Bing and Bob got to the set? 58 First Wives Club star 59 Best in brainpower

MIRAGES by Bob Lubbers

- 7 Bottomless pit 8 Hebrew letter 9 Pealed 10 Relating to hearing 11 In a bold way 12 Producer Hayward et al. 13 Annex 18 Like Napoleon's posture 21 Puccini genre 25 Morse morsel 27 Ordinal ending 29 Casino game 30 '20s free spirits 32 Yearn 33 ET craft 35 Kit's partner 36 Caucasus native 37 Comb maker 38 Atty. group 39 Cross-country runner 43 Strove for 300 45 Pinball palace 46 Clandestine 47 Schems the scenery 50 Plunders 51 Entertain 52 Backpacker, for one 55 Eliel's son 56 Prohibitionists 57 Leave out 58 End of the 12th century

