

Only 'enemy combatant' in U.S. charged

by UPI

PEORIA, Ill. - The only "enemy combatant" being held without trial on U.S. soil has lost that status after being indicted on terror charges unsealed Friday in Illinois.

Ali Saleh Kahlah al-Marri's case as an enemy combatant was scheduled to be heard by the U.S. Supreme Court in April, but the Obama administration said it would move to have that case dismissed.

Al-Marri, a dual citizen of Qatar and Saudi Arabia, entered the United States and was living in Peoria, Ill., and studying computer science at Bradley University when he was arrested in 2001 on charges that included credit card fraud.

In 2003, just before his trial was to begin, President George W. Bush had the criminal charges dismissed and Marri transferred to the naval brig in Charleston, S.C., describing him as a sleeper agent for al-Qaida and a material witness in the Sept. 11, 2001 terror attacks.

A federal appeals court upheld the president's right to hold enemy combatants without trial, but said al-Marri should be given an additional opportunity to challenge his detention.

President Barack Obama ordered a review of al-Marri's case by a number of Cabinet departments Jan. 22, the U.S. Justice Department said. After the sealed indictment charging material support of al-Qaida was returned

Thursday, Obama ordered the Defense Department to transfer al-Marri's custody to the Justice Department once the Supreme Court dismisses his case at its level.

Human Rights Watch hailed the legal move as a step forward. "Al-Marri is ending up in federal court, right back where he started and where he belonged all along," Jennifer Daskal, senior counter-terrorism counsel at Human Rights Watch, said in a statement Friday. "President Obama is telling the world that U.S. federal courts are fully capable of prosecuting terrorism cases."

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