

Accused al-Qaida sleeper in U.S. court

by UPI

CHARLESTON, S.C. - An accused al-Qaida sleeper agent said he understood the charges against him Tuesday in his first U.S. court appearance after more than five years in custody.

Ali Saleh Kahlah al-Marri faced a federal magistrate in Charleston, S.C., for his initial appearance on two counts of providing material support for the terrorist organization and conspiring with others to do the same.

Al-Marri did not enter a plea and will next face a March 18 detention hearing, WCIV-TV, Charleston, reported.

Al-Marri has been in custody since 2003, but was not formally charged until he was indicted in Illinois last month. ABC News said President Obama had opposed the indefinite detention of U.S. citizens as enemy combatants without filing charges.

Al-Marri is not an American citizen and allegedly entered the United States legally prior to the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. He was allegedly tasked with assisting other al-Qaida operatives and trying to hack into U.S. banking computers.

The U.S. Marshal Service said in a written statement it took custody of al-Marri early Tuesday at the Navy brig where he had been held.

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