

Alleged al-Qaida trainee on trial in Miami

by UPI

MIAMI - Terror suspect Jose Padilla faced trial Monday on charges he and two co-defendants provided material support to radical Islamic groups the world over.

Federal prosecutors characterized Padilla and the others in their opening statement as ardent believers in "violent jihad," having spent nearly a decade raising money and providing military equipment and recruits to terror groups in Somalia and Lebanon, as well as the breakaway Russian province of Chechnya.

Defense attorneys denounced the allegations and accused federal authorities of manipulating the evidence to ensure a conviction of the defendants, who they claimed had no violent intent while aiding Muslims caught in conflicts like the Bosnian-Serb war during which tens of thousands of were killed during the 1990s.

Referring to evidence set to be presented to the jury in the weeks and months ahead, prosecutors alleged the 36-year-old Padilla, along with Adham Amin Hassoun, 45, and Kifah Wael Jayyousi, 44, had belonged to the so-called "South Florida Support Cell" that facilitated the transfer of money and aid to terrorists abroad.

Padilla was arrested at O'Hare International Airport in Chicago five years ago for allegedly being a potential "dirty bomber."

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