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Rudy: Death if he's traitor

Says evidence suggests Taliban Yank's guilty

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Mayor Giuliani said yesterday the U.S. should consider the death penalty for captured American Taliban fighter John Walker.

Giuliani's strong comments came as a new report surfaced that Walker admits he trained to be a bomb-planting terrorist in an Al Qaeda camp — and even met with enemy No. 1, Osama Bin Laden.

"I believe the death penalty would be an appropriate remedy to consider," Giuliani said of the man who fought with the terrorists who killed thousands of innocent people at the World Trade Center. "But I don't know all the legal issues involved."

Giuliani, a former U.S. prosecutor, said he thought that the facts suggest Walker, 20, is guilty of treason.

"Any time treason is committed against the U.S. — especially in a time of peril — it should be dealt with seriously," the mayor said.

Meanwhile, Walker's startling confession — in which he claimed to have met with Bin Laden and trained at one of his terrorist training camps — has left U.S. officials troubled as they mull his fate.

"He was no innocent bystander," an official knowledgeable of Walker's interrogation told Newsweek magazine in an article hitting newsstands today.

"This wasn't like learning to be a soldier in [Gen. George] Patton's Army. He was training to commit terrorist acts."

Until now, Walker has been described by most U.S. officials as a confused young man who somehow wound up fighting for the Taliban in Afghanistan. Even President Bush called him a "poor fellow."



John Walker

Tales of terror camp

But the Newsweek account paints a picture instead of a dedicated terrorist.

The one-time Catholic-turned-Muslim reportedly told his interrogators that he attended an Al Qaeda terrorist training camp — learning about explosives and how to spread poison there.

The California turncoat — who is being held on a Marine amphibious ship in the Arabian Sea — said his work in the terrorist school caught the attention of Bin Laden, who personally met with the young man.

U.S. officials previously have said that Bin Laden would sometimes make it a point of meeting with Western recruits to his terrorist network.

Walker also bragged of learning the key elements of plotting an airline ambush, including how to keep a low profile at airports so as not to alert police, according to the magazine.

U.S. troops captured Walker with other Taliban fighters near the Afghanistan town of Mazar-i-Sharif this month.

Walker, who adopted the name Abdul Hamid, was initially interrogated by CIA agent Johnny (Mike) Spann, who was subsequently killed in an uprising at the prison where Walker was being held. It remains unclear what role, if any, Walker had in the deadly prison uprising.

Charges pending

Attorney General John Ashcroft has ordered Justice Department lawyers to research which crimes to charge Walker with. The possible charges range from treason to conspiracy to murder U.S. government employees.

But officials also believe Walker, if his confessions are true, could be a valuable witness in prosecuting Al Qaeda leaders, perhaps Bin Laden himself.

Walker's lawyer, James Brosnahan, said the young man's claims are just questionably obtained "rumor."

"They've been interrogating him for nine days, which is a long time to go without allowing him to have counsel," Brosnahan told Newsweek. "Our position ... is that all U.S. citizens have the right to counsel."

Walker's parents, Marilyn Walker and John Lindh, have asked people to "withhold judgment until we know what the facts are."

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