

# Former soldier sought in sniper probe

**Shannon McCaffrey, Tony Pugh and Kristi Heim**  
Knight Ridder Newspapers (KRT)

ROCKVILLE, Md. — Authorities late Wednesday said they are seeking a former Army soldier and a juvenile believed to be his teenage stepson in connection with the sniper shootings that have left 10 dead in a three-week rampage in the Washington area.

A federal arrest warrant was issued for John Allen Muhammad, also known as John Allen Williams, for federal firearms charges, said Montgomery County, Md. Police Chief Charles Moose. Williams, a black male 6'1" tall, weighing 180 lbs., is believed to be traveling with a juvenile identified in several media reports as John Lee Malvo, a 17-year-old Jamaican citizen.

"We believe Mr. Muhammad may have information material to our investigation," Moose said. "He should be considered armed and dangerous."

In yet another cryptic message to

the sniper, Moose said, "We have caught the sniper like a duck in a noose." Moose said the sniper had insisted that he broadcast precisely that message.

He cautioned against concluding that Muhammad is the sniper.

Muhammad served in the U.S. Army at Fort Lewis, near the Tacoma, Wash., home where federal agents Wednesday searched a backyard and dug up a large tree stump that may have served as a target for shooting practice.

The base, home to several special forces units, conducts sniper training.

Authorities also executed a warrant at a paramilitary training facility outside Marion, Ala., and FBI agents visited Bellingham High School, 90 miles north of Seattle, on Wednesday.

The apparent break in the case came after a day of fast-moving developments in which the manhunt for the sniper spread to the West Coast. Federal agents descended on a Tacoma, Wash.,

rental home with metal detectors.

Agents carrying chainsaws and using heavy construction equipment uprooted a large tree stump and took it away, apparently to search for ammunition or other ballistic evidence. They also performed a grid search of the backyard with metal detectors.

FBI spokeswoman Melissa Mallon said the property owner consented to the search but would not say why authorities were there.

Neighbors said they believed authorities were focusing on a prior tenant who rented the home. He moved out in early spring.

Neighbor Christopher Waters, 23, stationed at Fort Lewis, said in January he heard gunshots about every other night for at least two weeks. He said they sounded like high-powered gunshots from a military rifle. The police investigated but nothing came of it, Waters said.

Officials at Fort Lewis, a U.S. Army

base said federal officials had asked for their help, leading to speculation that the home's prior occupant may have been a Fort Lewis soldier.

The dramatic developments occurred at the end of a day in which the sniper's death toll rose to 10 and leaders of the manhunt defended themselves against allegations that they'd made grave missteps in communicating with the killer.

"Everything possible is being done in this case," said Special Agent Michael Bouchard of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms. "We're all parents, and we're certainly concerned about the safety of our kids."

Citing unnamed law enforcement officials, two local newspapers reported that the sniper, in an angry letter to police seeking millions of dollars, wrote that he had tried to contact police six times but was "ignored."

One official told The Washington Post that an FBI trainee didn't realize

an incoming tip-line call was from the sniper, and cut the conversation short. "Five people had to die" because of it, the sniper's letter reportedly claimed.

According to several news reports, authorities spent so much time trying to collect forensic evidence from the letter, which was retrieved from Saturday night's shooting site in Ashland, Va., that they missed a deadline the sniper had imposed.

The mistakes probably emboldened the shooter, said forensic scientist Brent Turvey, author of the book "Criminal Profiling."

"If I'm the sniper, I'm thinking to myself the only way to communicate with these people is bodies," Turvey said. In addition, "He feels he's not going to get caught."

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# U.S. to U.N.: 'Not a lot' of time to act on Iraq

**Diego Ibarguen, Jonathan S. Landay and Ron Hutcherson**  
Knight Ridder Newspapers (KRT)

UNITED NATIONS — The United States presented a draft resolution on Iraq on Wednesday to the full 15-nation U.N. Security Council in an apparent effort to pressure the council to vote soon or risk watching Washington act on its own.

After several days of closed-door negotiations among the Security Council's five permanent members

had yielded no visible progress toward compromise, White House press secretary Ari Fleischer said that the end of debate was "in sight" and that it was possible that the Security Council could fail to reach agreement. President Bush has also turned up the heat on the United Nations to act this week, emphasizing in speeches that it risks becoming irrelevant if it does not confront Iraq.

It remained uncertain Wednesday when the issue might come up for a

formal vote. The White House strategy could be part diplomatic bluff to pressure France, Russia and China to compromise on terms of a U.N. resolution outlining how to handle Iraq. Along with the United States and Great Britain, those three powers are permanent members of the Security Council and hold veto power. All three have refused to go along with the Bush administration's preferred wording. Britain supports the U.S. position.

Bush's pressure tactics on the U.N.

present large domestic political risks for him and his Republican Party. If the U.N. refuses to follow his lead, he risks being perceived as a warmonger on the eve of congressional elections Nov. 5 that could give Republicans control of the legislature. Opinion polls show most Americans prefer to have U.N. backing for any U.S. confrontation with Iraq.

However, Washington's moves Wednesday also could signal that the Bush administration is losing patience with the United Nations and is prepar-

ing to abandon diplomacy and accelerate plans to lead its own coalition into a military confrontation with Iraq, as Bush has threatened.

"They have some amount of time left, but not a lot," Fleischer said.

Bush signed a \$355.1 billion defense-spending bill at the White House Wednesday, observing: "We've asked our military to prepare for conflict in Iraq if it proves necessary."

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# Gunmen rush Moscow theater, hold 1,000 hostage

**Alex Rodriguez**  
Chicago Tribune (KRT)

MOSCOW — Dozens of masked men and women, identified as "suicide commandos" and demanding an end to Russia's war against Islamic separatists in Chechnya, stormed a crowded Moscow theater during a popular musical Wednesday night and took as many as 1,000 people hostage.

As police and anti-terrorist troops surrounded the building, the assailants reportedly laid mines to deter an assault. Witnesses said about 15 Chechen women, described by a rebel Web site as "widows of Chechen fighters," had strapped explosives to their bodies and vowed to blow up the theater if police attacked.

At least 150 people were allowed to leave the theater — women, children and some Muslims, the Russian news agency Interfax reported. But the assailants threatened to kill other hostages if Russia refused to pull its troops from the southern republic and end a war that has dragged into a fourth bloody year.

A Chechen representative in Russia's parliament entered the theater to negotiate with the captors, who numbered between 40 and 50 and were armed with automatic rifles and grenades, police said. The negotiator, Aslanbek Aslakhanov, established initial contact with the gang, police said, but the communication was soon broken off for unknown reasons.

The raid, unprecedented in scope and brazenness, could deal a blow to Russian President Vladimir Putin, who rose to power largely on his vow to wipe out a Chechen separatist movement that the Kremlin deems terrorist. Even as the Kremlin claims to have Chechnya under control, rebel attacks claim the lives of scores of Russian servicemen a month, and public support for the war has slipped drastically.

Putin, who canceled a trip to Germany and went to the Kremlin for a crisis meeting, had not issued any statement by early morning Thursday in Moscow.

Inside the theater, frightened hostages were allowed to receive calls on cell phones. Her voice quavering,

Tatyana Solniskina, a musician in the orchestra, called Russia's NTV television network and reported that the gunmen had vowed to kill 10 hostages for every member of their group who was killed.

Solniskina issued a plea to the hundreds of Russian special forces troops and Federal Security Bureau officers surrounding the theater: "Please do not begin the siege, I beg you. We are treated well."

But Gennady Gutkov, a member of parliament's security committee, told NTV television that security forces would not storm the theater unless the rebels began killing hostages.

Nine hours into the siege, a hostage spoke to Russian radio by

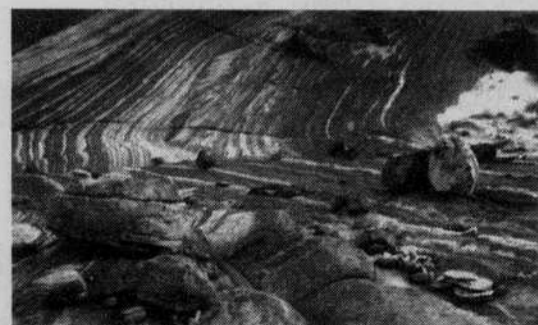
cell phone and reported that the captives were growing weary but were holding out hope that the incident would end peacefully.

Ivan Rybkin, former head of Russia's Security Council and a participant in recent talks with representatives of Chechen rebel leader Aslan Maskhadov, denounced the hostage-taking but urged the Russian government to try to end the crisis peacefully.

"Not only the president should show wisdom and patience, but the people of Moscow as well," Rybkin said. "We must be careful that this misfortune doesn't develop into a big tragedy."

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