

# Oregon terrorists plead guilty

The Attorney General says the Patriot Act helped catch the terrorists who admitted to seditious conspiracy

By Shannon McCaffrey  
Knight Ridder Newspapers (KRT)

WASHINGTON — Two members of an Oregon terrorist cell pleaded guilty Thursday to charges of seditious conspiracy, and Attorney General John Ashcroft credited the Patriot Act with helping to nab the pair.

Ashcroft's vigorous defense of the antiterrorism law came a day after U.S. senators — including several conservative Republicans — launched an effort to weaken some of its most controversial police powers.

"I believe that the Patriot Act has been one of the most important tools that we've had in our arsenal that has made it possible for us to keep America safe, and I thank God for the safety of this nation for the last two years," Ashcroft said at a news conference in Washington.

In federal court in Portland, Jeffrey Leon Battle and Patrice Lumumba Ford were charged with trying to travel to Afghanistan after the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks to fight with Taliban forces

against the U.S. military. They agreed to serve 18 years in federal prison. Both are American citizens.

Battle, 33, and Ford, 32, were among seven Portland Muslims charged with attempting to wage war against the United States. Ashcroft and others in the Justice Department have cited the case repeatedly as a victory in the war on terrorism.

Four of the others charged in the case already had pleaded guilty to other charges, including Battle's ex-wife, October Lewis. Her role was to wire more than \$2,000 to her husband overseas.

The seventh person charged in the case — Habis Abdu al Saoub — remains at large.

The men in the group flew to China but never made it to Afghanistan. They were stopped at China's border with Pakistan and returned to the United States.

Ashcroft said the case was helped by a provision in the Patriot Act that permitted nationwide search warrants to obtain e-mails from Internet service providers.

A new bill sponsored by Sens. Larry Craig, R-Idaho, and Richard Durbin, D-Ill., would put an expiration date on that new warrant authority.

Craig, a conservative Republican

like Ashcroft, warned that he would let certain powers in the Patriot Act expire in two years unless revisions were made to the sweeping law.

Other Republican senators pushing for revisions include Michael Crapo of Idaho and Lisa Murkowski of Alaska.

"I would like for individuals to understand how valuable these provisions are and for them to understand how profoundly these provisions respect the liberties of Americans," Ashcroft said when asked about growing Republican opposition to the Patriot Act.

Ashcroft also said progress was being made in the probe into who leaked the name of a CIA covert officer's name. He declined to provide details but said he had "every confidence" in John Dion, the veteran Justice Department counterespionage lawyer who's handling the case.

Ashcroft continued to leave open the possibility of appointing a special counsel in the politically charged case or recusing himself.

"I have not foreclosed in any option in this matter," he said.

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# Senate includes loan in Iraq aid

The Senate voted 51-47 on Thursday to make Iraq foot roughly half of the cost for reconstruction

By Jill Zuckman  
Chicago Tribune(KRT)

WASHINGTON — The Senate voted Thursday night to defy President Bush and require Iraq to repay approximately \$10 billion of a \$20 billion aid package to rebuild Iraq.

Eight Republican senators ignored lobbying by Vice President Dick Cheney and Secretary of State Colin Powell and joined 43 Democrats in a 51-47 vote to put their own stamp on the massive \$87 billion spending bill that will also pay for American military operations in Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere.

"I do not believe that it is in any way unfair to ask the Iraqi people to invest in their own future by repaying the American taxpayer some of the funding used to construct their infrastructure," said Sen. Susan Collins, R-Maine.

"It's very hard for me to go home and explain how you have to give \$20 billion to a country that's sitting on \$1 trillion worth of oil," said Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C. "And the net result of this policy we're pursuing is that the people who died to liberate Iraq are going to be left holding the bag."

Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist, R-Tenn., tried to stem the momentum for loans: "There is nothing in this amendment that will make the president's job easier or make our soldiers safer. Nothing in this amendment will save the taxpayers money or ease the burden upon the people of Iraq."

The setback to Bush's foreign policy came as both the House and Senate were poised to vote on the president's controversial spending request by Friday. Congressmen have agonized for days over the matter, with Republicans divided over giving the assistance outright, and Democrats split over whether to support the package at all.

The debate was fraught with political peril for both sides. Lawmakers said they worried about voter unhap-

piness with the cost of reconstruction in Iraq and the mounting deficit at home. And they worried how their opponents would depict their votes during next year's campaigns.

Ultimately, both chambers were expected to pass the \$87 billion package in some form, but it may come at a significant cost for the White House. Since formally asking for the money in early September, Bush's approval ratings have fallen significantly and the public's anxiety about Iraq has risen.

The debate Thursday was sharp on both sides. House Majority Leader Tom DeLay, R-Texas, framed the issue as a black-and-white measure of support for the war on terrorism.

"To those who have feigned offense at their patriotism being questioned, this isn't about your patriotism, it's about your judgment," DeLay said on the House floor. "That whole debating tactic about, 'I support the troops, but' — that isn't going to cut it this time. If you support the war and you support the troops, you must vote for this bill."

But even many Republicans in the Senate expressed anxiety about adding \$87 billion to the federal deficit, preferring to make at least a portion of the package a loan rather than giving it to Iraq outright as Bush has demanded.

The White House, however, issued a statement decrying the push to demand repayment, while stopping short of a veto threat.

Loans "would slow efforts to stabilize the region and to relieve pressure on our troops, raise questions about our commitment to building a democratic and self-governing Iraq, and impair our ability to encourage other nations to provide badly needed assistance without saddling Iraq with additional unsustainable debt burden," said a statement from the Office of Management and Budget.

And Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., cautioned senators against overreacting. "Things are not going as well as some people think and they're not going as poorly as some people allege," he said.

McCain said Iraqis will believe that Americans were only in their country for oil if the Senate requires them to

repay U.S. assistance.

Last week, Republicans on the House Appropriations Committee who were advocating for Iraqi repayment caved after Bush expressed his displeasure to them personally. On Thursday, the House voted 226-200 to reject loaning money to Iraq.

Democrats, meanwhile, have become increasingly outspoken in recent days, taking Bush to task for bungling the post-war planning that they contend has put U.S. troops in danger. This signals a political shift from earlier debates on the war, when Democrats were reluctant to challenge the president on any Iraq-related initiative.

"Initially there was a fear that a vote against the (bill) would be misinterpreted as a lack of support for the troops," said Rep. Jan Schakowsky, D-Ill., who opposed the measure from the beginning. "Nothing could be further from the truth. Every day, there is more and more evidence that this administration cannot be trusted to provide for the troops."

Schakowsky said many Democrats had feared the prospect of 30-second commercials blasting them for not supporting the soldiers in Iraq. But she said Republicans should be fearful, too.

"There's another 30-second spot which is more valid than theirs: Representative So-and-so said there's no money for schools, but voted to spend \$87 billion for rebuilding Iraq," she said.

A liberal grass-roots organization, MoveOn.Org, has already produced ads attacking the administration for its handling of Iraq, and plans to run more ads in key states.

"It's our intention to keep talking about the choice that Congress made here and to hold them responsible for their votes," warned Eli Pariser, campaign director for MoveOn.Org.

Even so, many Democrats said they would vote for the spending package, despite unhappiness with Bush's handling of the situation in Iraq.

"My vote for this bill is for one reason only: to give our troops the resources they need to carry out their mission," said Rep. Rahm Emanuel, D-Ill.

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