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# Muhammad to represent self in D.C. sniper shooting trial

By Matthew Barakat  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

VIRGINIA BEACH, Va. — Sniper suspect John Allen Muhammad won the right to serve as his own lawyer Monday in a surprise, last-minute request at his murder trial. He broke a year of stony silence by proclaiming his innocence in a rambling opening statement and asking a witness: "Have you ever seen me shoot anyone?"

It was not clear why Muhammad decided to fire his lawyers, who will serve as stand-by counsel in the first trial to come out of last year's sniper spree. Just last week, Muhammad told the judge that he was satisfied with his attorneys.

Muhammad's decision to represent himself in the death penalty case means he could end up cross-examining his accusers, perhaps survivors of the shootings.

In his 20-minute opening statement, Muhammad said nothing about the shootings except to deny involvement.

"I know what happened. I know what didn't happen. They're basing what they said about me on a theory. If we monitor (the evidence) step by step, it will all show I had nothing to do with these crimes," he told the jury.

Muhammad, 42, is charged in the slaying of Dean Harold

Meyers, a 53-year-old Vietnam veteran who was gunned down outside a northern Virginia gas station last October. He was the seventh victim in a three-week shooting spree that left 10 people dead in Virginia, Maryland and Washington, D.C.

Muhammad and Lee Boyd Malvo, 18, were arrested last Oct. 24 at a highway rest stop in Maryland. Prosecutors have said the shootings were part of a plot to extort \$10 million from the government.

Malvo was in the courtroom for about two minutes Monday to allow a prosecution witness to identify him.

Prosecutors say Malvo has made several statements to police and jail guards in which he confessed involvement in many of the attacks. But Muhammad barely spoke to investigators, and offered only terse, one-word answers to questions in many pre-trial hearings.

Muhammad spoke at length during his opening statement about the nature of truth, saying at one point, "Jesus said, 'Ye shall know the truth.'" He also said he hopes to be found innocent "by the grace of Allah."

"There's three truths. The truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. I always thought there was just one truth," he said. "The facts should help us identify what's a lie, what's not a lie."

He also spoke about his children, whom he said he "loves very much."

He said he once punished his daughter for eating chocolate

**"If we monitor (the evidence) step by step, it will all show I had nothing to do with these crimes"**

—John Allen Muhammad defendant

is on the line," apparently a reference to Malvo. Muhammad and Malvo, 18, are not related, but have referred to each other as father and son.

Later, a Manassas bank employee, Linda Thompson, testified she saw Muhammad and Malvo outside her bank near the shooting scene, shortly before Meyers was killed. Prosecutors brought in Malvo in an orange jumpsuit, for the woman to identify.

# Report: Princess Diana feared plot for her life

By Audry Woods  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

LONDON — A letter reportedly written by Princess Diana expressing fears that someone was plotting to eliminate her by tampering with the brakes of her car brought the painful story of her death back to the front pages Monday and prompted a call for a public inquiry.

The Mirror tabloid said Diana wrote the letter to her butler Paul Burrell in October 1996 — some 11 months before the Paris car crash that killed the princess, her companion Dodi Fayed and the car's driver, Henri Paul.

Fayed's father, Mohammed al Fayed — who has long contended the crash was part of a plot to kill the couple and not an accident — called on Prime Minister Tony Blair to hold a full and independent public inquiry or stand accused of colluding in a cover-up.

The letter confirmed "the suspicions I have so often voiced in public and which have thus far been ignored," al Fayed, the owner of Harrods department store, said in a statement.

A French judge has ruled that the driver's use of drugs and alcohol and the car's high speed caused the accident Aug. 31, 1997 in a Paris road tunnel.

There has never been an inquiry in Britain. A Surrey county coroner said in August he would hold an inquest into Dodi Fayed's death, but no date has been set for it. Buckingham Palace has said there will eventually be a British investigation of Diana's death, since the law requires one, but no date has been announced.

The letter was included in excerpts from Burrell's forthcoming book "A Royal Duty," published Monday in the Mirror. The paper printed a photograph of part of the letter.

The excerpts quoted the princess as writing to Burrell that "this particular phase in my life is the most dangerous."

She reportedly wrote that someone was planning "an accident in my car, brake failure and serious head injury in order to make the path clear for Charles to marry."

The newspaper said Diana named the person she believed was plotting against her but that it could not reveal the identity for fear of a lawsuit. The name was blacked out in the photo of the letter.

The Mirror quoted Burrell as saying that in the letter containing the allegation she told him, "I'm going to date this and I want you to keep it ... just in case."

# NEWS IN BRIEF Bush administration condemns Malaysian prime minister

BANGKOK, Thailand (AP) — The White House on Monday condemned Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad's statement that Jews rule the world, inserting President Bush into a simmering controversy at an international economic meeting.

Bush's national security adviser, Condoleezza Rice, signaled the president's disapproval shortly before he sat down in the same room with Mahathir and 19 other leaders to open the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit. It is the last of the annual forums that Mahathir will attend before retiring Oct. 31 after 22 years in power.

Mahathir, Asia's senior statesman in Asia whose pugnacious, articulate speeches against globalization and U.S. policy in the Middle East have a strong following, triggered an uproar last week at a summit of Islamic countries by stating that "Jews rule the world by proxy. They get others to fight and die for them."

The thrust of his address was that the world's 1.3 billion Muslims had been outmaneuvered by "a few million Jews" and needed to give up violence in favor of using greater unity and improved education to defend their interests peacefully.




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