

WAR AGAINST TERROR

[COMPLETE COVERAGE](#) | [FRONT LINES](#) | [AMERICA AT HOME](#) | [INTERACTIVES »](#)

Ambassador: Pakistani nuclear secrets are safe

Scientist did not share secrets with al Qaeda, she says

March 3, 2002 Posted: 5:31 PM EST (2231 GMT)



Lodhi: Al Qaeda's "desperate search" for nuclear weapons failed.

WASHINGTON (CNN) -- A Pakistani nuclear scientist suspected of being linked to Osama bin Laden could not have passed on nuclear secrets to al Qaeda, Pakistan's ambassador to the United States said Sunday.

Ambassador Maleeha Lodhi disputed a report in Sunday's Washington Post that identified Bashir uddin Mahmood as a past chairman of the Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission.

Lodhi said Mahmood did not have the knowledge of or access to sensitive nuclear material.

"He was a very junior official in our nuclear establishment and therefore would never have the kind of knowledge or capability to frankly share or impart to anybody," Lodhi said on CNN's "Late Edition with Wolf Blitzer."

Pakistan has had no incidents of nuclear theft, leakage of nuclear material or unauthorized access to nuclear research, the ambassador said.

Pakistani authorities arrested Mahmood and Abdul Majeed, one of his former colleagues on the commission, on October 23 because of suspected links to al Qaeda and the Taliban.

They were released about one month later, only to be placed under house arrest the following week. Neither man has been charged. Both retired from Pakistan's nuclear program in 1999.

Lodhi said she did not know whether, as the Post reported, Mahmood failed a half-dozen lie detector tests.

Pakistani government officials said the two men met bin Laden twice during trips to Afghanistan on behalf of their charity organization. The group, Ummah Tammer-e Nau, helped farmers and students.

Documents found last January at Kabul's Intercontinental Hotel showed plans by the charity to explore the mining of minerals such as uranium, expand an artificial limb factory and set up a bank with Barakat General Trading and Contracting Co., which is on the U.S. list of groups suspected of aiding terrorists.

The documents were among a host of materials found by media outlets and U.S. and allied authorities indicating al Qaeda had plans to develop an advanced weapons program that would include a nuclear device.

The material indicated plans to build "dirty bombs" -- conventional explosives that disperse radioactive material.

But Pakistani and U.S. officials, including Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, have said that there is no "hard evidence" al Qaeda actually possessed weapons of mass destruction.

"The kind of stuff that's been found in Afghanistan leads to the conclusion that the al Qaeda people were in desperate search for nuclear material, as well as for weapons of mass destruction, but actually they failed in that quest," Lodhi said.

WAR AGAINST TERROR

CNN.COM SPECIAL REPORT

VIDEO/AUDIO

- [Pentagon details 'Anaconda' deaths](#)
- [Homecoming for U.S. Marines](#)

MORE STORIES

- [More U.S. deaths reported in Afghanistan](#)
- [UN resumes aid program for Afghan returnees](#)
- [Afghan liberation called top human rights triumph](#)

EXTRA INFORMATION

- [Expanding the War on Terror](#)

RESOURCES

- On the Scene: [Connie Chung: Pearl forced to read propaganda](#)

 [SAVE THIS](#)  [E-MAILTHIS](#)  [PRINT THIS](#)  [MOST POPULAR](#)

[For more World articles, search the TIME Magazine Archive.](#)

RELATED STORIES:

- [Al Qaeda documents outline serious weapons program](#)
January 25, 2002
- [Pentagon says WMDs not likely in Afghanistan](#)
January 17, 2002
- [Former Pakistan nuclear workers released](#)
November 1, 2001
- [Sources: 2 Pakistan atomic scientists held for alleged Taliban contact](#)
October 25, 2001

RELATED SITES:

[See related sites about World](#)

WORLD TOP STORIES:

- [Three Israelis killed in restaurant attack](#)
- [Split over Zimbabwe decision](#)
- [Australian camps face legal action](#)
- [Peru torture victims in secret graves](#)
- [Survey finds American distrust of Muslim world](#)

[\(More\)](#)

Search

CNN.com ▼

Find

[Back to the top](#)

© 2002 Cable News Network LP, LLLP.
An AOL Time Warner Company. All Rights Reserved.
[Terms](#) under which this service is provided to you.
Read our [privacy guidelines](#). [Contact us](#).