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## SAUDI IS INDICTED IN BOMB ATTACKS ON U.S. EMBASSIES

By BENJAMIN WEISER

A Federal grand jury in Manhattan returned a 238-count indictment yesterday charging the Saudi exile Osama bin Laden in the bombings of two United States Embassies in Africa in August and with conspiring to commit other acts of terrorism against Americans abroad.

Government officials immediately announced that they were offering two rewards of \$5 million each for information leading to the arrest or conviction of Mr. bin Laden and another man charged yesterday, Muhammad Atef, who was described as Mr. bin Laden's chief military commander.

Mr. bin Laden is believed to be living in Afghanistan under the protection of the Taliban, the Islamic fundamentalist movement that rules that country.

Mr. Atef's whereabouts are unknown.

It is uncertain whether Mr. bin Laden will ever stand trial in the United States. But if he does, prosecutors said, he could face life in prison or the death penalty if he is convicted.

Prosecutors also unsealed an earlier indictment, issued in June, that included similar but less detailed charges against Mr. bin Laden.

That indictment was returned before the embassy bombings and resulted from a two-year grand jury investigation of his activities in Somalia and Saudi Arabia, as well as reports that he had connections to a circle of Islamic militants in Brooklyn.

The new indictment, which supersedes the June action, accuses Mr. bin Laden of leading a vast terrorist conspiracy from 1989 to the present, in which he is said to have been working in concert with governments, including those of Sudan, Iraq and Iran, and terrorist groups to build weapons and attack American military installations. [Excerpts, page A8.]

But the indictment gives few details of Mr. bin Laden's alleged involvement in the embassy attacks. The indictment does not, for example, specify whether prosecutors have evidence that Mr. bin Laden gave direct orders to those who carried out the attacks.

Nothing in the document indicates why the original indictment was kept secret for months. But the secret charges were returned about the time that American officials were plotting a possible military attack into Afghanistan to arrest Mr. bin Laden.

Mary Jo White, the United States Attorney in Manhattan, said, "It's very common to have sealed indictments when you're trying to apprehend those who are indicted."

Both indictments offer new information about Mr. bin Laden's operations, including one deal he is said to have struck with Iraq to cooperate in the development of weapons in return for Mr. bin Laden's agreeing not to work against that country.

No details were given about whether the alleged deal with Iraq led to the development of actual weapons for

Mr. bin Laden's group, which is called Al Qaeda.

The Government said yesterday that Mr. bin Laden's group had made use of private relief groups "as conduits for transmitting funds" for Al Qaeda.

The groups were not identified.

Prosecutors also said Mr. bin Laden's group had conducted internal investigations of its members and their associates, trying to detect who might be acting as informants, and had killed those who had been suspected of collaborating with enemies of the organization.

The Government indicated earlier that its knowledge of Mr. bin Laden's activities stemmed in part from the cooperation of one such informant, who it said yesterday had worked for Mr. bin Laden, transporting weapons to terrorists, helping to buy land for his training camps and assisting in running his finances.

The June indictment against Mr. bin Laden suggested that the Government had a considerable amount of knowledge of his dealings in the months before the attacks on the embassies, one in Tanzania and one in Kenya.

But the new charges are an indication of how quickly the Government has worked to solve the embassy attacks, which occurred just three months ago.

Ms. White said that Mr. bin Laden was charged with "plotting and carrying out the most heinous acts of international terrorism and murder."

Citing the more than 250 people killed in the embassy attacks and the more than 1,000 wounded, she added, "In a greater sense, all of the citizens of the world are also victims whenever and wherever the cruel and cowardly acts of international terrorism strike."

The investigation of Mr. bin Laden is continuing, said Ms. White and Lewis D. Schiliro, assistant director of the F.B.I. in New York, whose agents have fanned out around the world to investigate the embassy attacks.

"Our investigative strategy is clear," Mr. Schiliro said.

"We will identify, locate and prosecute all those responsible, right up the line, from those who constructed and delivered the bombs to those who paid for them and ordered it done."

In charging Mr. Atef, the Government reported new details about what it called his role as Mr. bin Laden's military commander, referring to his "principal responsibility for the training of Al Qaeda members."

Mr. Atef was a member of a committee under Mr. bin Laden that approved all terrorist actions by Al Qaeda, the indictment said, and he also played a major role in coordinating attacks on United States and United Nations troops in Somalia in October 1993.

In those attacks, 18 American soldiers and hundreds of Somalis were killed. Americans were shocked by the images of the body of one of the Americans being dragged through the streets, and the violence provoked a furor over the United States role in Somalia as part of the United Nations effort to pacify the country and supply food and medicine to the Somalis.

At the time, the battle was seen as one with Somali warlords. But yesterday's charges made clear that the Government now contends that Mr. bin Laden had a critical role in instigating the fighting.

In late 1992 and 1993, when Mr. bin Laden's group was based in Sudan, Mr. Atef went to Somalia to

determine "how best to cause violence to the United States and United Nations military forces stationed there," and reported back to Mr. bin Laden at his headquarters in Khartoum, Sudan's capital, the indictment said.

Prosecutors said that in the spring of 1993, Mr. Atef and other members of Al Qaeda, including Haroun Fazil and Mohammed Saddiq Odeh, both of whom have been charged in the embassy attacks, traveled to Somalia and trained Somalis opposed to the United Nation's intervention.

On Oct. 3 and 4, 1993, in Mogadishu, Somalia's capital, Somali soldiers trained by Al Qaeda took part in the attacks on the soldiers, according to the June 10 indictment that was unsealed yesterday.