

# Vacco: Execute terrorists found with nuclear materials

By DAVID BAUDER  
Associated Press Writer

ALBANY, N.Y. (AP) — Attorney General Dennis Vacco has a message to terrorists: Don't even think about nuking New York.

The Republican, spurred by a magazine article about how terrorists could construct a nuclear bomb, said he wants anyone found with the raw materials for such a device to be executed.

Vacco said he would not wait until after a disaster that dwarfs the magnitude of the Oklahoma City bombing last spring to act.

"This is a really ripe area for us to take a look at using under the state law the sanction of the death penalty," Vacco said in an interview with The Associated Press this week.

A critic was puzzled by the idea. "This is way out," said Norman Siegal, executive director of the New York Civil Liberties Union.

The attorney general said he thought of the idea after an aide showed him a copy of the January 1996 issue of Popular Mechanics. Its cover story, "When Terrorists Go Nuclear," features an illustration of New York City under a mushroom cloud.

The article quotes experts discussing the availability of information for terrorists to build a nuclear bomb, presuming they got their hands on the plutonium or uranium necessary as raw ingredients.

Vacco said any unauthorized persons caught

with such fissionable material or specific triggering devices should be subject to the death penalty. His proposal has not been drafted into bill form and he didn't have a complete list of materials that would apply.

New York reinstated the death penalty under Republican Gov. George Pataki this year. It would apply to people found guilty of the murder of police officers, prison guards and judges, serial killings, murders committed with other felonies, such as rape, and slayings by terrorists.

Applying the death penalty to someone with raw materials for a nuclear bomb would be "a huge, huge stretch," Siegal said. People found possessing murderous devices such as machine guns aren't subject to capital punishment, he said.

"Not only would we strongly oppose it, but I don't think it's going to go anywhere," he said.

Like Siegal, anti-death-penalty activist Damaris McGuire laughed when first told about the proposal.

"This is just another example of trying to find a problem that doesn't exist," said McGuire, head of New Yorkers Against the Death Penalty.

But Vacco, citing Oklahoma City and the World Trade Center bombing in New York City, said the idea of terrorists constructing a nuclear device isn't so far-fetched.

"Maybe five years ago we would have thought that it was far-fetched that somebody would use the combination of fertilizer and fuel oil to blow up two buildings," he said.

# Capture of alleged terrorist announced

By LARRY NEUMEISTER  
Associated Press Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Saying 1995 has "not been a good year for terrorists," an FBI official announced Wednesday the capture of a man accused of conspiring to blow up U.S. planes over the Pacific Ocean.

A freshly unsealed week-old indictment charged Wali Khan Amin Shah with conspiring in the plot to bomb 11 Northwest Airlines and United Airlines planes in a single day this year as they headed for San Francisco or Los Angeles.

The plan was thwarted when a fire in a Philippines apartment that served as a bomb laboratory and headquarters for the plotters attracted the local police and eventually the FBI, authorities said.

At the apartment in Manila, police found an arsenal of bomb-making devices, including explosive chemicals, modified timing components and manuals

with bomb recipes. They also found computer files with flight numbers and departure times and times for the detonation of bombs on the commercial flights, the indictment said.

Shah, a close associate of accused World Trade Center bombing mastermind Ramzi Yousef, is the fourth man to be caught abroad and brought to the United States for trial this year, noted New York's FBI head, James K. Kallstrom.

The arrests, coupled with the September conviction of Sheik Omar Abdel-Rahman and nine other militant Muslims on charges that they waged a war of urban terrorism inside the United States, show that "1995 has not been a good year for terrorists," Kallstrom said at a Manhattan news conference.

"By now, the message should be abundantly clear," he said. "You will be identified. You will be located wherever you hide, and you will be held accountable."

Kallstrom said the plot to bomb planes carried the same aim as the Feb. 26, 1993, World Trade Center bombing that killed six people and injured more than 1,000 others and the urban terrorism plot that sought to bomb five Manhattan landmarks in a single day, including the United Nations.

They all meant to scare the United States into changing its Middle East policies and reducing support for Israel, he said.

That message was found in a letter on a computer in the Manila apartment, which had been shared by Yousef and Abdul Hakim Murad, the indictment said. Murad and Yousef also are charged with conspiracy in the airliner plot.

"The crimes charged in the indictment are chilling," said U.S. Attorney Mary Jo White, who watched an innocent plea entered on Shah's behalf at his arraignment. "Their objective was to kill innocent American passengers."

# Get-tough academic plan wouldn't save much

By KENNETH LOVETT  
Ontario News Service

ALBANY — The state, which spends more than \$650 million a year on its college tuition assistance program, would save only a small fraction of that by cutting off students who do not maintain a C average.

Gov. George E. Pataki is proposing that students be dropped from the TAP program if they don't keep up their grades by their third year in college. The federal government imposes a similar requirement on its tuition grants.

their TAP money next fall if Pataki's plan is adopted. The potential savings: \$8 million.

Administration officials defend the move.

"It's not about money," said Pataki spokesman Michael McKeon. "It's about academic standards."

The idea has sparked a debate over who goes to college and how much public support they should get.

Victor Mallison, president of the Student Association of the State University, said he is alarmed at what he sees as an attempt by the Pataki ad-

ministration to limit access to college.

"His sees the purposes of higher education as strictly economical," Mallison said. "He doesn't see the greater purpose, which is enlightenment."

Pataki, however, said that students who lose their grants because of poor grades can still attend college. They just can't do it at the expense of the taxpayers.

He believes economic incentives, both good and bad, encourage students to do better academically.

According to the governor's office, 300,000 New York residents receive money for college from the Tuition Assistance Program. About 4,000 of them risk losing

**For the record**

It is the policy of the Press-Republican to correct errors in fact. If you have personal knowledge of a mistake, contact the newsroom at 561-2300, extension 131, after 1 p.m.

In a story in Wednesday's edition, decimal points were misplaced for Essex County property-tax rates on the two towns not at full-value assessing. Newcomb should have been \$28.99 per \$1,000 of assessment, and North Hudson should have been \$31.13.

The Press-Republican regrets the error.

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AP Photo  
Firefighters battle smoke and flames during a three-alarm fire in Brooklyn Wednesday. Several firefighters were injured in the blaze, which did significant damage to the building, but no one inside was hurt.

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