

# Jury convicts Muhammad of killings

ROCKVILLE, Md. (AP) — John Allen Muhammad was convicted of six of the Washington-area sniper killings Tuesday after the prosecution's star witness, Muhammad's young protégé, portrayed him as the mastermind of an audacious terror scheme in which phase two would have been bombings against children.

Muhammad, 45, is already under a death sentence in Virginia for a killing there. The most he can get for the six murders committed in Maryland is life in prison without parole.

The jury took slightly more than four hours to convict him after a four-week trial in which he acted as his own attorney.

As the verdict was read, Muhammad stood grim-faced, his arms folded across chest. He was led out of the courtroom, pausing to ask the judge, "Your honor, may I speak?" The judge answered, "No, sir," and Muhammad was taken away.

Ten people in all were killed and three were wounded in Virginia, Maryland and Washington, D.C., in the string of shootings that had the metropolitan area gripped with fear.

The trial marked the first time Lee Boyd Malvo testified against the man prosecutors say was his mentor

and manipulator. And Muhammad's cross-examination of Malvo marked one of the most dramatic moments.

During two days of testimony last week, Malvo, 21, gave the first inside account of the shootings and described Muhammad's elaborate plans for a reign of terror.

According to Malvo, Muhammad had a two-phase plan — six shootings a day for a month, followed by a wave of bombings of schools, school buses and children's hospitals. Malvo said that when he asked Muhammad why, the older man replied, "For the sheer terror of it — the worst thing you can do to people is aim at their children."

Muhammad hoped to extort \$10 million from authorities and use the money to set up a school in Canada to teach homeless children how to use guns and explosives and use violence to shut down other cities, Malvo said.

One of the attorneys who helped Muhammad with his defense said he was disappointed but not surprised by the verdict. Muhammad was blocked from presenting evidence he thought proved he was framed.

"When you give the jury only one side of the story,



Convicted sniper John Allen Muhammad gestures as he addresses judge James L. Ryan during a preview for the media before the start of his murder trial in Rockville, Md.

you can't expect them to do anything other than what they have done," said attorney Jai Bonner.

Juror Scott Stearns, the White House correspondent for Voice of America, said Malvo's testimony was particularly compelling. He noted that Muhammad frequently ended his questioning of witnesses by asking if they had eyewitness knowledge of his guilt. That question was glaringly absent from Muhammad's cross-examination of Malvo, he said.

Muhammad was occasionally able to point out small inconsistencies in the

testimony of prosecution witnesses, but "did not successfully discredit the case the government built against him," Stearns said.

Maryland prosecutors said they needed to put Muhammad on trial as insurance in case his conviction in Virginia was overturned. Some of the victims' families had also sought a second trial, seeking an explanation for the random attacks on people as they went shopping, gassed up their cars and mowed lawns near the nation's capital.

After the verdict, Vijay Walekar, brother of sniper

victim Premkumar Walekar, said, "I wish they had the death penalty." Walekar said of Muhammad: "He stands up and denies everything up there. It was hard for us to take it."

Malvo's testimony came after he agreed to plead guilty in the Maryland killings. He gave detailed descriptions of each shooting, even pointing out parking spaces where the sniper team's car was parked.

Aside from Malvo's testimony, Muhammad's second trial followed much of the same blueprint as his first, with prosecutors telling jurors that Muhammad and Malvo roamed the area in a beat-up Chevrolet Caprice, firing .223-caliber bullets through a hole bored in its trunk.

The jury heard a torrent of evidence that linked Muhammad to the shootings — fingerprints, DNA evidence, and ballistics tests that connected the bullets used in the shootings to the Bushmaster rifle found in the car when Muhammad and Malvo were arrested.

Acting as his own lawyer, Muhammad claimed he and Malvo were simply roaming the Washington region looking for his children who had been taken away from him in a custody battle with his ex-wife. He implied that authorities framed him by planting

evidence. In an often testy four-hour cross-examination, Muhammad continued to refer to Malvo as his "son" even though the younger man tried to show during his testimony that he was no longer under the sway of his one-time father figure.

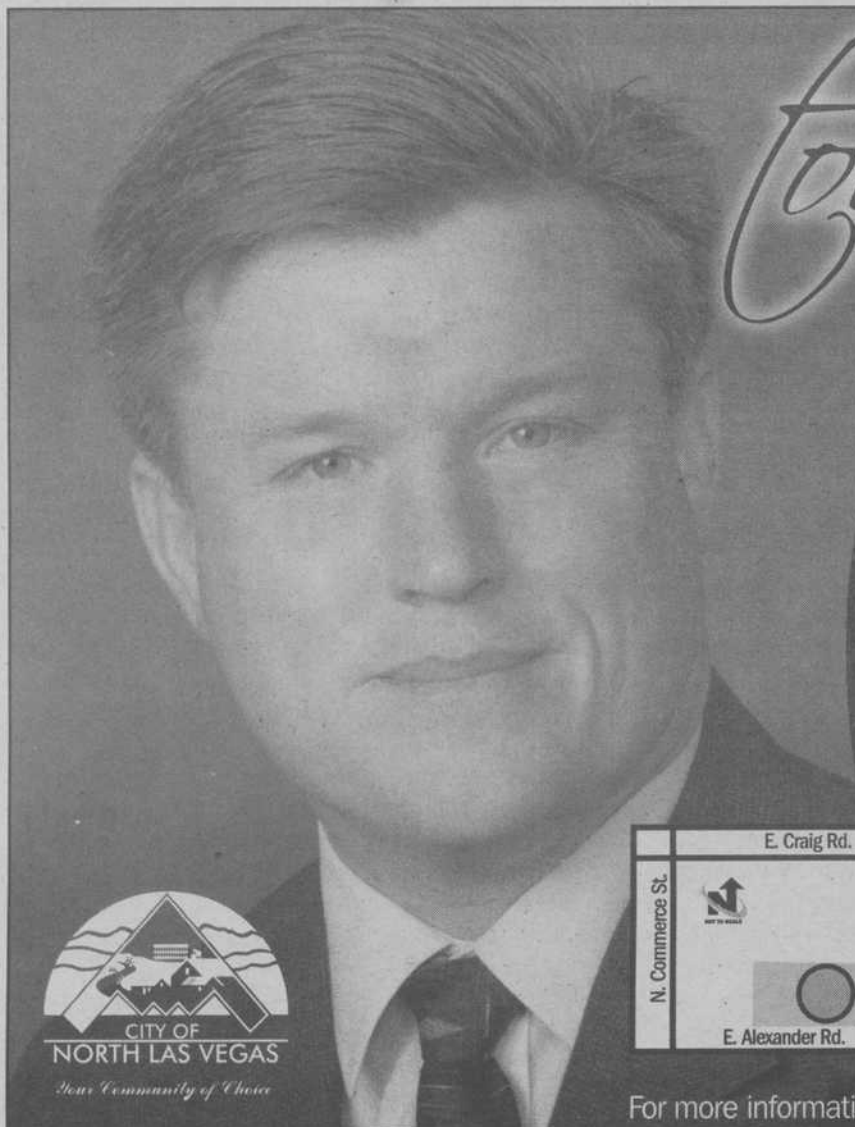
Malvo, who received no leniency in return for his testimony, told jurors he wanted to face the man who he said trained him to be a killer and coerced him to join his murderous schemes. Malvo called Muhammad a "coward" and, at one point, glared at Muhammad, saying, "You took me into your house and you made me a monster."

Malvo told jurors that he shot three of the 13 sniper victims, while Muhammad pulled the trigger on the rest. He said Muhammad was the shooter in all but one of the six Maryland murders.

In March, Muhammad persuaded Circuit Judge James Ryan to let him defend himself, despite statements from two psychiatrists who said he might be mentally ill.

During closing arguments, Muhammad grew wild-eyed and sometimes shouted as he quoted the Bible, Mark Twain and Groucho Marx.

He struggled to mount a defense, hampered by his (See Muhammad, Page 3)



*Town hall meeting*

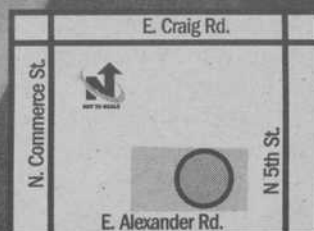
Hosted by Councilmember Robert L. Eliason

Date: Thursday, June 8, 2006

Location: Canyon Springs High School (Auditorium)  
350 E. Alexander Road  
North Las Vegas, NV 89031

Time: 6:00 pm

- Topics:
- Major Roadway Projects
  - Downtown Redevelopment
  - Water Reclamation Facility Update
  - Police Outreach Programs
  - Graffiti Abatement Program
  - Parks Update



For more information, please contact: Donna Gamble, 633-1007 or Michelle Bailey-Hedgepeth, 633-1178.