

GUANTANAMO

Pentagon: Detainee related to Sept. 11 terrorist hijacker

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The Defense Department confirmed late Friday that the latest man facing charges at the Guantánamo war court was related, by marriage, to a member of the hijack squad that slammed American Airlines 77 into the Pentagon on Sept. 11, 2001.

The military swore out charges Thursday against Ahmed Mohammed al Darbi, 32, of Saudi Arabia, accusing him of conspiracy and providing material support to terror.

He has been held at the U.S. Navy base in southeastern Cuba as an enemy combatant since March 2003.

"The accused, al Darbi, is

the brother-in-law of the Flight 77 hijacker [Khalid] al Mihdhar," said a Pentagon statement, formally announcing that charges had been sworn. "Flight 77 is the plane that hit the Pentagon on 9/11."

The Miami Herald first reported the charges — and the 9/11 link — on Thursday.

The kinship arose at a 2006 court martial in Fort Bliss, Texas, in which Darbi claimed by affidavit that American guards brutalized him while he was in custody in Bagram, Afghanistan, before he was moved to Guantánamo.

No military defense counsel has been assigned to represent Darbi at any upcoming

Military Commission trial before U.S. officers.

He already has seen civilian lawyers, according to Wells Dixon of the Center for Constitutional Rights in New York, which coordinates Guantánamo detainees' cases.

In his four-page charge sheet, Darbi is not tied to the Sept. 11 suicide mission. It alleges instead that he was "involved in planning attacks on vessels in the Strait of Hormuz and off the coast of Yemen" between 2000 and 2002.

The Pentagon said the war court will proceed "with the dignity, fairness and respect for law that defines American military justice."

