

UK & WORLD NEWS

Briton who hacked into US military nearer extradition

A BRITISH man accused of the "biggest military hack of all time" yesterday lost the first round of his battle against extradition to the United States.

Gary McKinnon (pictured) faces more than 50 years in prison if convicted in the US of sabotaging vital defence systems.

Lawyers for the 40-year-old had argued he could even be sent to Guantanamo Bay as a terrorist suspect – despite claiming to have only accessed Pentagon computers looking for information about UFOs.

But yesterday at Bow Street Magistrates' Court District Judge Nicholas Evans dismissed the objections as "fanciful", and ruled McKinnon should be recommended for extradition.

He now has six weeks to make representations before Home Secretary John Reid makes a decision on his fate, which can be appealed in turn.

After the hearing, McKinnon vowed to continue resisting attempts to remove him from the country, and portrayed himself as

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Jobless 40-year-old could be jailed 50 years if convicted abroad

an amateur hacker who used a dial-up modem to access sensitive government networks from his bedroom in Wood Green, north London. He said, "I was amazed at the lack of security and the reason I left not just one note but multiple notes on multiple desktops was to say, 'Look, this is ridiculous'."

"My intention was never to disrupt security. The fact that I logged on there and there were no passwords means there was no security."

Following indications during the case that he was likely to be tried at a federal court in Virginia, he said, "Vir-

ginia is famously conservative. I'm practically already hung (sic) and quartered over there."

US authorities claim McKinnon, who is unemployed, caused \$700,000 (£370,000) damage to their networks over the course of a year. Among the most serious charges are that he deleted system files and logs at US naval weapon station Earle in the immediate aftermath of the September 11 attacks, rendering the base's entire network of more than 300 computers inoperable.

McKinnon, who was released on conditional bail, said he "regretted"

his actions yesterday, but insisted he had been motivated only by curiosity and had not caused any damage.

He also made a direct appeal to Mr Reid to "do right by your subjects".

In a lengthy judgment, Mr Evans said he "readily" accepted that McKinnon was likely to get a harsher sentence in the US than if convicted of similar offences in the UK.

But he rejected the idea that McKinnon's right to private and family life under Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights should prevent his extradition.

He said, "It must be obvious to any defendant that if you choose to commit a crime in a foreign country, you run the risk of being prosecuted in that country."

He also dismissed the argument that US authorities might not honour diplomatic assurances that "Military Order Number One" – which allows the president to detain terror suspects indefinitely – would not be used in this case.

