**Abu Hamza terror trial set to begin in US**

**The hook-handed cleric faces 11 charges in New York court, including supporting al-Qaeda and advocating jihad in Afghanistan**

The trial of Abu Hamza, the hook-handed radical Muslim cleric who was extradited from the UK to America in 2012, is expected to begin in New York.

Hamza, who was indicted under the name Mustafa Kamel Mustafa, denies 11 terror charges – related to the taking of hostages in Yemen in 1998, supporting al-Qaeda, advocating jihad in Afghanistan and planning to set up a terrorist training camp in Bly, Oregon.

A jury will be selected today at the Manhattan federal court before US District Judge Katherine Forrest in New York.

Hamza, 55, has said he will give evidence in his defence and at a pretrial hearing last week told the judge: "I think I am innocent. I need to go through it, have a chance to defend myself."

The Egyptian-born preacher was jailed in the UK for seven years for soliciting to murder and inciting racial hatred in 2006 and first faced an extradition request from the Americans in 2004.

After a protracted eight-year legal battle he was extradited to the US in October 2012.

The radical cleric, who spread violent messages at the Finsbury Park mosque in north London following the attacks of September 11 2001, is expected to refer to Osama bin Laden and the World Trade Centre disaster during his testimony.

Three Britons and an Australian were killed in the 1998 Yemeni hostage incident, when the Yemeni military attempted to rescue kidnapped tourists.

It is believed that during the trial Feroz Ali Abbasi, 34, a former computer student from Croydon will be named as a key lieutenant of Hamza,

Saajid Badat, a British terrorist “supergrass”, will give evidence by live video link from London, if the judge grants the prosecution request for him to do so.

In the court papers, it is said that Mr Badat will claim that Hamza sent both him and Mr Abbasi to al-Qaeda camps in Afghanistan for jihad training in 2001.

Mr Abbasi denies the allegations against him.

Assistant US Attorney Ian Patrick McGinley said the government has plenty of evidence to sift through during the trial, including media interviews and recordings of Hamza's weekly speeches.

"We culled it down from thousands of hours to less than an hour's worth of recordings that we intend to play," Mr McGinley told the judge.

Jeremy Schneider, defending, said the statements were chosen by prosecutors "because these statements are the ones that are the most unduly prejudicial."

Mr Schneider also has belittled the government's portrayal of plans to open an al-Qaeda training camp on 360 acres in Bly, saying the effort in late 1999 and early 2000 resembled a retreat, with "just a few people shooting at targets, riding horseback, having fun at the farm."

Edward Kim, the Assistant US Attorney, has argued that Mr Schneider's description was false. He said guns found in the homes of participants in the Bly training "tends to disprove ... that this was all just a lark in the woods".

His colleague John Cronan said prosecutors planned to show jurors that Hamza supported acts committed by al-Qaeda such as the Cole attack and that he said the World Trade Center was a legitimate target.