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## **Chemist denies knowing of explosives: Egypt reluctant to extradite suspect El-Nashar**

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CAIRO - The Egyptian biochemist arrested in Cairo during the hunt for the mastermind behind the London bombings has admitted owning the keys of the Leeds flat used as a suspected bomb factory but claims he did not know it was to be used by terrorists.

British authorities said they found signs in Magdi El-Nashar's home that quantities of a compound called TATP, or triacetone triperoxide, had been converted into a powerful explosive.

The first revelations from the questioning of Mr. El-Nashar emerged yesterday after he was arrested on Friday. British officials were believed to have found him in a mosque and contacted the Egyptian authorities.

The authorities in Cairo are playing down his possible involvement as a bomb-maker for the London attacks, and appeared to be resisting pressure to extradite him.

The Egyptian general prosecutor, Maher Abdul Wahid, said he would not hand over Mr. El-Nashar unless he was guilty, and he stressed that the Egyptian constitution prohibited the extradition of any of its citizens to another country.

"El-Nashar has admitted to owning the keys to the flat, but says he did not know what the property was being used for," said a spokesman for the interior ministry.

Egyptian police said Mr. El-Nashar was arrested and held briefly in 1992 while in the company of a man later associated with the massacre of 58 tourists in Luxor five years later.

Mr. El-Nashar's brother, Muhammed, confirmed that his brother had once been arrested in connection with radical Islam. But the 28-year-old accountant insisted his brother had no involvement with the London bombing.

As British police ploughed through a growing series of international leads seeking those who planned the attacks, the government is preparing to introduce new laws to combat terrorism.

Ten days after the blasts ripped through three London Underground subway trains and a bus, killing at least 55 people and injuring around 700, the government is preparing to hurry

through the proposed laws.

Interior Minister Charles Clarke was scheduled to meet his opposition counterparts today to discuss planned offences such as indirectly inciting terrorism, which could apply to preachers who praise suicide bombers.

The government's legal affairs minister, Lord Chancellor Charles Falconer, denied that the measures were too late.

"We have got to learn the lessons and that is why we are bringing forward these new laws," he told BBC television.

Most British Sunday newspapers splashed the first image yet seen of the four suspected bombers together across their front pages.

Taken from a security camera at Luton station, north of London, the picture shows Hasib Hussain, 18, Shahzad Tanweer, 22, Mohammed Sidiq Khan, 30 and Germaine Lindsay, 19, toting large rucksacks as they prepared to take a train to the capital on the morning of July 7.

On Saturday, police formally named Khan and Lindsay -- whose identities had already been widely reported -- as the suspected perpetrators of two of the subway blasts. Hussain and Tanweer had previously been named.

Khan, Hussain and Tanweer were Britons with family roots in Pakistan, from the Leeds area in West Yorkshire, northern England, while Lindsay, a Jamaican immigrant to Britain, lived in Aylesbury, northwest of London.

Meanwhile, Israeli newspaper Maariv claimed yesterday that Khan had gone to Israel two years ago to help plan a suicide attack in Tel Aviv in which a young British Muslim killed three people when he blew himself up in a bar.

According to a report in Britain's Sunday Times newspaper, the country's domestic intelligence agency MI5 opened a file on Khan last year but closed it after ruling that he posed no threat.

Khan's name cropped up during an investigation into an alleged bomb plot on a London target in 2004, but security services decided not to put him under watch, the paper reported.

It was reported yesterday that Pakistani authorities had questioned an unidentified businessman whose mobile phone number was listed on the phone records of one of the four men.

