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Accused Fort Hood Killer Wants Death Penalty, Standby Attorney Alleges

By Corky Siemaszko
The murderous major on trial for the Fort Hood massacre is trying to fit himself for a noose. That accusation was levelled Wednesday by a military lawyer assigned to Maj. Nidal Malik Hasan, who has been representing himself in court. It is "clear his goal is to remove impediments or obstacles to the death penalty and is working toward a death penalty," Lt. Col Kris Poppe said. "We believe (that) is repugnant to defense counsel and contrary to our professional obligations." Hasan, who was shot in the back and paralyzed by officers responding to the Nov. 5, 2009, bloodbath, began squirming in his wheelchair. "I object," Hasan responded. "That's a twist of the facts." The judge, Col. Tara Osborn, ordered the court cleared for a closed-door hearing and recessed the trial until Thursday. Poppe appears to have a point. Of the five witnesses that have been called to testify, the 42-year-old Muslim fanatic cross-examined just two. Hasan got a former boss to admit that he once gave him an "outstanding" evaluation and just briefly questioned a fellow member of a local Islamic center who said the suspect was there on the morning of the massacre. But Hasan didn't ask a single question of Staff Sgt. Alonzo Lunsford, who gave a riveting first-hand account of a mass shooting at the base that left 13 dead. Nor did Hasan question the first two witnesses — a worker and a customer at the local gun shop where he had purchased guns and ammunition for the attack. Hasan, who is charged with numerous murder and attempted murder counts, was barred from pleading guilty because the military is seeking the death penalty against him. So when his trial opened Tuesday, Hasan quickly told the 13 officers on the jury "the evidence will clearly show that I am the shooter." A son of Palestinian immigrants who grew up in Virginia, Hasan also did not deny shouting, "Allahu akbar!" — Arabic for "God is great!" — before committing the deadliest mass shooting ever on a U.S. military base. He even identified the murder weapon in court as his. "Right from his opening statement that he was the shooter it became pretty clear what Major Nidal Hasan's agenda was for his trial," Greg Rinckey, a former military lawyer who is now managing partner at the Tully Rinckey law firm in Albany, N.Y., told The Daily News. "He has deliberately set out on the path of receiving the death penalty."