

PRESS RELEASE

March 14, 2006

CNN's Blitzer Failed To Challenge Gonzales Spin on Guantánamo

Summary: In an interview with Attorney General Alberto R. Gonzales, CNN's Wolf Blitzer failed to challenge Gonzales's dubious claim that "if the need were not there for the United States of America to detain people that we catch on the battlefield, then we would not be having to operate" the military prison at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba. Blitzer could have noted recent news reports pointing out that many -- if not a majority -- were not caught by American soldiers on the battlefield but turned over to the U.S. by third parties.

In an interview with Attorney General Alberto R. Gonzales on the March 9 edition of CNN's The Situation Room, host Wolf Blitzer failed to challenge Gonzales's dubious claim that "if the need were not there for the United States of America to detain people that we catch on the battlefield, then we would not be having to operate" the military prison at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba. Blitzer could have noted recent news reports, such as those by the National Journal and The New York Times, pointing out that many -- if not a majority, as the National Journal asserts -- were not caught by American soldiers on the battlefield but turned over to the U.S. by third parties.

Blitzer also allowed Gonzales to evade his question as to whether or not the treatment of one Guantánamo prisoner, Mohammed al-Qahtani -- as described in a February 27 New Yorker article -- constituted "torture." Rather than answer, Gonzales replied that there is "no way of knowing" the veracity of the report, even though the New Yorker's description of Qahtani's treatment is in line with the findings regarding his treatment contained in a June 2005 Army report by Lt. Gen. Mark Schmidt and Brig. Gen. John Furlow on detainee treatment at Guantánamo.

Blitzer asked Gonzales, "Should the Guantánamo base be shut down?" Gonzales replied: "[W]e operate Guantánamo because of necessity. And so, if the need were not there for the United States of America to detain people that we catch on the battlefield, then we would not be having to operate Guantánamo." Gonzales's rationale for the necessity of the Guantánamo prison echoes a similar assertion by Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld. On June 27, 2005, Rumsfeld said: "If you think of the people down there, these are people, all of whom were captured on a battlefield. They're terrorists, trainers, bomb makers, recruiters, financiers, [Osama bin Laden's] bodyguards, would-be suicide bombers, probably the 20th 9-11 hijacker."

But, as Media Matters previously noted, a February 3 National Journal report that documented the apparent lack of evidence against many of the detainees also reported, basing its account on military documents:

One thing about these detainees is very clear: Notwithstanding [Defense Secretary Donald H.] Rumsfeld's description, the majority of them were not caught by American soldiers on the battlefield. They came into American custody from third parties, mostly from Pakistan, some after targeted raids there, most after a dragnet for Arabs after 9/11."

According to the National Journal report, "most of the men at Guantánamo, or at least the 132 with court records and the 314 with redacted transcripts, came into American custody by way of third parties who had their own motivations for turning people in, including paybacks and payoffs":

Some of the men at Guantanamo came from targeted, U.S.-guided raids in Pakistani cities, and the cases against those men tend to be fairly strong. But the largest single group at Guantanamo Bay today consists of men caught in indiscriminate sweeps for Arabs in Pakistan. Once arrested, these men passed through several captors before being given to the U.S. military. Some of the men say they were arrested after asking for help getting to their embassies; a few say the Pakistanis asked them for bribes to avoid being turned over to America.

Others assert that they were sold for bounties, a charge substantiated in 2004 when Sami Yousafzai, a Newsweek reporter then stringing for ABC's "20/20," visited the Pakistani village where five Kuwaiti detainees were captured. The locals remembered the men. They had arrived with a larger group of a hundred refugees a few weeks after Qaeda fighters had passed through. The villagers said they had offered the group shelter and food, but somebody in the village sold out the guests. Pretty soon, bright lights came swooping down from the skies. "Helicopters ... were announcing through loud speakers: 'Where is Arab? Where is Arab?' And, 'Please, you get \$1,000 for one Arab,' "one resident told Yousafzai.

"The one thing we were never clear of was where they came from," [former CIA officer Michael] Scheuer said of the Guantanamo detainees. "DOD picked them up somewhere." When National Journal told Scheuer that the largest group came from Pakistani custody, he chuckled. "Then they were probably people the Pakistanis thought were dangerous to Pakistan," he said. "We absolutely got the wrong people."

In addition, as Media Matters has noted, a March 6 New York Times article reported that recently released Pentagon documents regarding the detainees "underscore[] the considerable difficulties that both the military and the detainees appear to have had in wrestling with the often thin or conflicting evidence involved." The article reported that, although there are those imprisoned at Guantánamo "who brashly assert their determination to wage war against what they see as the infidel empire led by the United States," there are "many more, it seems, who sound like Abdur Sayed Rahman, a self-described Pakistani villager":

But there are many more, it seems, who sound like Abdur Sayed Rahman, a self-described Pakistani villager who says he was arrested at his modest home in January 2002, flown off to Afghanistan and later accused of being the deputy foreign minister of that country's deposed Taliban regime.

"I am only a chicken farmer in Pakistan," he protested to American military officers at Guantánamo. "My name is Abdur Sayed Rahman. Abdur Zahid Rahman was the deputy foreign minister of the Taliban."

Blitzer could have also challenged Gonzales's evasion of his question regarding torture at Guantánamo. Blitzer quoted from a February 27 New Yorker article by staff writer Jane Mayer that described the treatment of al-Qahtani. According to the article, Qahtani "had been subjected to a hundred and sixty days of isolation in a pen perpetually flooded with artificial light. He was interrogated on forty-eight of fifty-four days for eighteen to twenty hours at a stretch. He had been stripped naked, straddled by taunting female guards in an exercise called 'invasion of space by a female'; forced to wear women's underwear on his head and to put on a bra; threatened by guards, placed on a leash, and told that his mother was a whore. ... Qahtani's heart rate had dropped so precipitately [sic], to thirty-five beats a minute, that he required cardiac monitoring."

Blitzer then asked Gonzales if this constituted "torture," to which the attorney general responded: "Wolf, I have no way of knowing whether any of that information that you've just read is, in fact, true, or how much of it is true. It's easy to make allegations about mistreatment in places like Guantánamo." Blitzer failed to challenge Gonzales despite the fact that a June 2005 Army report by Lt. Gen. Mark Schmidt and Brig. Gen. John Furlow on detainee treatment at Guantánamo reported many of these events. While the Schmidt-Furlow report is itself classified, there is an unclassified executive summary. Below are some examples in which the report documented the treatment the New Yorker described for "the subject of the first Special Interrogation Plan," who, a July 14, 2005, Washington Post article confirmed, is al-Qahtani:

Finding #15: From 23 Nov 02 to 16 Jan 03, the subject of the first Special Interrogation Plan was interrogated for 18-20 hours per day for 48 of the 54 days, with the opportunity for a minimum of four hours rest per day.

[...]

Finding #16a: That the subject of the first Special Interrogation Plan was separated from the general population from 8 Aug 02 to 15 Jan 03.

[...]

Discussion [for finding #16a]: The subject of the first Special Interrogation Plan was never isolated from human contact. The subject of the first Special Interrogation Plan was however placed in an "isolation facility" where he was separated from the general detainee population from 8 Aug 02 to 15 Jan 03. The subject of the first Special Interrogation Plan routinely had contact with interrogators and MPs while in the "isolation facility."

[...]

Finding #16b: On 06 Dec 02, the subject of the first Special Interrogation Plan was forced to wear a woman's bra and had a thong placed on his head during the course of the interrogation.

Finding #16c: On 17 Dec 02, the subject of the first Special Interrogation Plan was told that his mother and sister were whores.

[...]

Finding #16e: On 20 Dec 02, an interrogator tied a leash to the subject of the first Special Interrogation Plan's chains, led him around the room, and forced him to perform a series of dog tricks.

[...]

Finding #16g: On several occasions in Dec 02, the subject of the first Special Interrogation Plan was subject to strip searches. These searches, conducted by the prison guards during interrogation, were done as a control measure on direction of the interrogators.

Finding #16h: On one occasion in Dec 02, the subject of the first Special Interrogation Plan was forced to stand naked for five minutes with females present. This incident occurred during the course of a strip search.

[...]

Discussion: ... Particularly troubling is the combined impact of the 160 days of segregation from other detainees, 48 of 54 consecutive days of 18 to 20-hour interrogations, and the creative application of authorized interrogation techniques. Requiring the subject of the first Special Interrogation Plan to be led around by a leash tied to his chains, placing a thong on his head, wearing a bra, insulting his mother and sister, being forced to stand naked in front of a female interrogator for five minutes, and using strip searches as an interrogation technique the AR 15-6 found to be abusive and degrading, particularly when done in the context of the 48 days of intense and long interrogations.

From the March 9 edition of CNN's The Situation Room:

BLITZER: Let's talk a little bit about torture. It's a sensitive subject, one that I know you've studied thoroughly. The allegations are significant. I want to read to you from an article that appeared in The New Yorker magazine, the February 27th issue, referring to one Mohammed al-Qahtani, a detainee at the U.S. naval base at Guantánamo Bay, someone who is suspected of having been -- played a role in terrorism against the United States. "[Mohammed] al-Qahtani had been subjected to a hundred and sixty days of isolation in a pen perpetually flooded with artificial light. He was interrogated on forty-eight of fifty-four days for eighteen to twenty hours at a stretch. He had been stripped naked, straddled by taunting female guards in an exercise called 'invasion of space by a female'; forced to wear women's underwear on his head and to put on a bra; threatened by dogs, placed on a leash, and told that his mother was a whore." Eventually, he needed cardiac treatment because his health had deteriorated so significantly. Is that torture?

GONZALES: Wolf, I have no way of knowing whether any of that information that you've just read is, in fact, true, or how much of it is true. It's easy to make allegations about mistreatment in places like Guantánamo. What I can say is that we have worked very hard throughout the administration to ensure that everyone understands what the legal requirements are. And to the extent that people aren't meeting those requirements, there are investigations, and people are held accountable.

BLITZER: Should the Guantánamo base be shut down, as the United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan says? He says, "I think sooner or later there will be a need to close Guantanamo, and I think it will be up to the government to decide, hopefully, to do it as soon as possible." What do you think?

GONZALES: Well, we operate Guantánamo because of necessity, and so, if the need were not there for the United States of America to detain people that we catch on the battlefield, then we would not be having to operate Guantánamo. We are continually reassessing all of our activities in the war on terror, including operational facilities like Guantánamo, to ensure that they remain effective as a tool in the war against terror, and that they remain lawful. So this is something we are constantly reevaluating in terms of -- what is the appropriate way ahead to ensure the national security interest of our country, and to ensure that we're fighting this war against a deadly enemy in a lawful manner.

BLITZER: You were the White House counsel, now you're the attorney general. You know all the laws that have been enacted, the guidelines. Are you comfortable in saying that you would hope that American detainees held by a foreign government would be treated as foreign detainees are being treated by the U.S. government?

—R.S.K.

<http://www.cageprisoners.com/articles.php?id=12832>

SOURCE: MediaMatters.org

March 15, 2006

Moazzam Begg Describes Abuse at Bagram and Guantanamo and Witnessing the Killing of Two Fellow Detainees



The Associated Press yesterday sued the Defense Department for the release of records identifying all past and current detainees at the US-run prison camp in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. The AP's suit was filed after the Pentagon failed to respond to a Freedom of Information Act lawsuit filed by the AP in January. Last month, the military was ordered to turn over uncensored copies of transcripts from hearings for detainees held at Guantanamo. The transcripts were released, however they were censored, and names and other key details were blacked out. As international calls grow for the closure of the US-run prison camp at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, today we bring you a voice rarely heard in the US media, that of a former Guantanamo prisoner. In a Democracy Now broadcast exclusive, today we hear Moazzam Begg in his own words.

Moazzam is a British citizen born and raised in Birmingham. The story of his ordeal begins in mid-2001 when he moved to Afghanistan with his wife and three young children to work as an aid worker in education and water projects. After September 11th and the subsequent U.S. bombing of Afghanistan, he relocated to Pakistan.

In February 2002, Moazzam was seized by the CIA in Islamabad. No reasons were given for his arrest. He was hooded, shackled and cuffed and flown to the U.S. detention facility at Kandahar, then to Bagram airbase where he was held for approximately a year before being transferred to Guantanamo Bay. The U.S. government labeled him an "enemy combatant." He was never charged with a crime.

In all, Moazzam spent three years in prison, much of it in solitary confinement. He was subjected to over three hundred interrogations as well as death threats and torture. At Bagram, he witnessed the killing of two fellow detainees.

In January 2005, he was finally released from Guantanamo along with three other British citizens. He received no apology or compensation for his imprisonment.

Moazzam Begg has written a book about his experience that has just been published in the UK titled "Enemy Combatant: A British Muslim's Journey to Guantanamo and Back." It is the first book known to be published by a former Guantanamo Bay prisoner. The book is co-written by Victoria Brittain, a former associate foreign editor of the Guardian newspaper.

Last week, Victoria Brittain and Moazzam Begg held a public conversation and Q&A at the Institute of Contemporary Arts in central London. Democracy Now was there to cover the story. In this U.S. national broadcast exclusive, we bring you Moazzam's first comments to air in this country since he wrote his book. At the event, I had the chance to ask Moazzam about the abuse he suffered while in prison.

Moazzam Begg, former Guantanamo detainee and author of the book, "Enemy Combatant: A British Muslim's Journey to Guantanamo and Back"

AMY GOODMAN: Last week, Victoria Brittain and Moazzam Begg held a public conversation at the Institute of Contemporary Arts in Central London. Democracy Now! was there to cover the story. In this national broadcast exclusive, we bring you Moazzam's first comments to air in this country since he wrote his book. After he and Victoria Brittain spoke, I had a chance to ask Moazzam about the abuse he suffered while he was in prison.

AMY GOODMAN: Moazzam, though you are almost synonymous with Guantanamo, when people think about it, in your book you describe being tortured at Bagram. And I was wondering if you could talk about what happened to you there, who tortured and interrogated you, and if you saw other people or knew of other people at Bagram who were killed or abused.

MOAZZAM BEGG: Yeah. I think it's important also to note that when we are talking about Guantanamo Bay, in a sense, or in fact, it's not as bad as Bagram at all. People know about Guantanamo Bay, because it's in the news every day. You hear about it. You think it's this terrible place, and it is, because of the absence of the law. But what's worse than Guantanamo Bay are places like these black holes of detention, where you don't know what's going on, where there is no access to media, where the media doesn't know what's going on, and neither does anybody else, including the relatives and so forth. There is no communication. And it is a place that's – it's a military base, but the C.I.A. has complete and utter control of what takes place there. And no wonder in places like Bagram people are killed, and no wonder in Guantanamo Bay we haven't heard of any deaths yet, because in places like Bagram, they can try and justify themselves by the proximity, as they call it, towards the war zone.

While I was held in Bagram, it was probably one of the hardest periods of the whole of the incarceration. One particular month in May, I was subjected to some extremely harsh interrogation techniques, which included being -- or having my hands tied behind my back to my legs like an animal, as they call in America "hogtied," with a hood placed over my head so I was in a suffocating position, kicked and beaten and sworn at and spat at, left to rot in this position for hours and hours on end and taken again into interrogation, and this lasted over a period of over a month.

That wasn't the worst of it, of course. The worst of it, for me, was the psychological part, because all of this time I had no communication with my family at all. I didn't know what happened to my wife or my children. For all I knew, they could have done terrible things to them. And that was the biggest fear.

And I met the International Committee of the Red Cross, and they allowed me to write letters, but, of course, all of these letters had to be passed through the U.S. military censorship, and they must have read all of the letters, and in them I expressed my deep anguish about the state of asking where my wife was to my parents. In one of the interrogations, I remember quite clearly, they had this -- I heard the sounds of a woman screaming. And at the back of my mind, I thought, no, it can't be what I truly think it is. And as the screaming got worse and worse and the shouting to this woman got worse, my heart rate went up, and I started imagining the unimaginable. And certainly they were playing on this. It was, I believe, to this day it probably written on my file: if you want to get to this guy, do it through his family. And so, that was definitely one of the hardest parts. Many detainees, even, in fact, afterwards, when I was removed from that isolation unit, said that, you know, we were praying to God that it's not your wife. Well, thankfully, it wasn't.

And the worst situation, I think, that I saw there was the deaths of the detainees. I mean, you can see -- you can deal with your own abuse to some degree. What you can't do is to see somebody else's and then sit by and let it happen, and yet I was in such a impotent position that I saw a person who had been chained with his hands above his head like this, which is what they'd often do, which would often happen to me if I was just talking to the person next door to me, which was deemed punishable. This person was left suspended like this for hours, and eventually guards came and they beat him, dragged him upstairs, and we never saw or heard of him again.

A year-and-a-half later, internal investigators from the military came and asked me if I would look at a picture. They showed me a picture, and it was a man's body, and they said that he had been killed, could I describe any of the details that I had saw in Bagram at that time, and I described to them what I saw. And then they brought photographs of the people that they said were responsible -- could be responsible from the military units, the M.P.s, and I pointed out to the people who I believed had done it. And then, ironically, this was a time when I was in solitary confinement, also worried about facing a possible military commission by President Bush's order, they said, "Would you be ready to stand up as a witness in a trial against these perpetrators?" That was so ironic.

AMY GOODMAN: Who did it to you?

MOAZZAM BEGG: Oh, the interrogators at the time? Yes, it was a whole group of them. There were C.I.A., F.B.I., and Military Intelligence. Those were at least the three groups that were there during that interrogation.

AMY GOODMAN: Moazzam, you talked about one of the men who was killed at Bagram, and you described the guard at Guantanamo who talked about killing another. How did he kill that person?

MOAZZAM BEGG: What had happened, I think the detainee's number was 284, as I recall. This was said to be an escape attempt at the backs of the cells in Guantanamo -- in Bagram. They were all common [inaudible]. There was about seven or eight people in each cell. At the back of the cell was this barrel that they had cut in half, which was, you know, the toilet. That was surrounded by some barbed wire. He apparently had pushed the barbed wire through, pushed the barrel and tried to escape. The guards caught him, jumped on him and, in essence, threw Thai boxing-style strikes at him, as this guy told me. And I saw them dragging his body across the cell where I was held, in cell 6, into the medical room, right in front where we were. At that point, I wasn't sure whether he was dead, but he looked

completely battered and bruised, and all the dust that was on him. A while after that, after all the medics and the officers were running around this area, his body was carried out on a stretcher with the sheet covering his head.

AMY GOODMAN: And the sexual abuse at Guantanamo and at Bagram?

MOAZZAM BEGG: Umm...

VICTORIA BRITAIN: I don't think you need to go into that.

MOAZZAM BEGG: I would rather just not answer that here.

VICTORIA BRITAIN: I think we'll leave that.

AMY GOODMAN: Moazzam Begg, speaking last week in London at the Institute of Contemporary Art, just after the British release of his book, *Enemy Combatant*. It's coming to this country in the fall. These are his first national broadcast comments in this country. Imprisoned at Bagram Air Base, and then Guantanamo for over three years. When we come back we talk to his co-writer of the book, Victoria Brittain, the former Associate Editor of the Guardian, and we will also speak with his attorney, Gareth Peirce.

<http://www.cageprisoners.com/articles.php?id=12843>

SOURCE: Democracy Now!

Trial By Spin Machine

The innocence of British Muslims released from Guantánamo is a story no official wants told

Victoria Brittain

The coincidental release of Michael Winterbottom's prize-winning film about the young men from Tipton, Road to Guantánamo, and Moazzam Begg's book, *Enemy Combatant*, predictably brought the US and British spin machines into full swing last week - so that anyone reading the book or seeing the film would have got the idea that these men may have been badly treated, but they certainly were not innocent.

Last week the Daily Telegraph flagged an exclusive on its front page. "Begg told FBI he trained with al-Qaeda," was the headline over a full-page article by Con Coughlin, the paper's security correspondent, using an FBI report which, as Begg's book explains, was written by two FBI agents. After Begg had been tortured, threatened with death, offered a job undercover by the CIA, and come to believe he would never see his family again, he signed the "confession", confident that it was so illiterate and inconsistent that no court of law would accept it as having been written by an educated man such as himself. Coughlin had a copy of the book from the publishers, so - assuming he read it - knew all this as he prepared his piece, which has so damaged Begg.

Meanwhile, Colleen Graffy, the US deputy assistant secretary of state for public diplomacy, was in London last week on a propaganda offensive. Ms Graffy had visited Guantánamo and witnessed no unpleasant interrogation, no torture and plenty of sports facilities, she told Jeremy Vine on Radio 2. The imperturbable Vine was speechless when she drew from her bag a sample tube used for force-feeding prisoners and explained to him that it had no metal edges and was therefore humane.

The force-feeding at Guantánamo has been strongly condemned in a letter signed by 250 doctors in *The Lancet*. However, wider British audiences will have read not that, but "How Innocent is Moazzam Begg?" over Andrew Gilligan's interview in the *Evening Standard*, while in the *Daily Mail* a rant from Richard Littlejohn linked Begg and the Tiptons, claiming their stories don't stand up to "close scrutiny".

Five years ago, in the *British Journalism Review*, David Leigh reported on cases of intelligence services using journalists. One was the 1995 *Sunday Telegraph* story about the son of Libya's Colonel Gadafy and his alleged connection to a currency-counterfeiting plan. The story was written by Mr Coughlin, the paper's then chief foreign correspondent, and was originally attributed to a "British banking official". In fact - as emerged in a libel case brought by Gadafy's son - it had been given to him by an MI6 officer, who, it transpired, had been a regular contact for years.

Whatever the intentions of Coughlin and other journalists, the innocence of Begg, the Tipton Three and the other British detainees who have come home is a part of the story of Guantánamo that no official wants people to hear. Like all major miscarriages of justice finally overturned, the officials concerned will never apologise for breaking these

men's lives, no one in authority will lose their jobs, and sections of the media will continue to question their innocence. The denial of justice for these British Muslims - not to speak of the 490 men, including nine UK residents, still in Guantánamo with no legal rights - will corrode the social fabric of this country far into the future.

But the horror of Bagram, Guantánamo and other secret American detention and torture centres for Muslims, in which the UK government is scandalously complicit, is now so well known throughout the world that no propaganda offensive by western officials and their friends has any prospect of lasting success.

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<http://www.cageprisoners.com/articles.php?id=12833>

SOURCE: The Guardian

Letter: US Should End All Illegal Detention

We, the undersigned writers and artists, demand that the US immediately cease using the Guantánamo Bay base as an illegal detention centre and to close all of its arbitrary detention centres where the systematic abuse of human rights and dignity are still taking place.

As we write, the 62nd session of the UN commission of human rights in Geneva is about to begin and new images of the US military torturing prisoners in Iraq are being published. Yet the US and its allies in the EU have thus far prevented the UN commission from condemning the massive and systematic violations of human rights that have taken place in the name of the so-called war on terror.

EU countries have ignored the testimonies of even their own citizens who have been victims of torture in Guantanamo. Several have allowed the overflights of CIA aircraft carrying prisoners to detention centres and elsewhere. The UN commission on human rights (or the council proposed to replace it) must end this hypocrisy and demand the closure of Guantánamo Bay and all the detention centres created by the US, as well as the cessation of torture and the deliberate violations of human dignity.

José Saramago
Nadine Gordimer
Adolfo Pérez Esquivel
Rigoberta Menchú
Wole Soyinka
Harold Pinter
Dario Fo
Danielle Mitterrand
Harry Belafonte
Danny Glover
Gerard Depardieu
Alice Walker
Manu Chao
Eduardo Galeano
And 407 other writers and artists

<http://www.cageprisoners.com/articles.php?id=12836>

SOURCE: The Guardian

Guantanamo and Hypocrisy

Last week Channel 4 aired a film by Michael Winterbottom that highlighted the horrific experiences of Guantanamo Bay detainees.

Yet the press reaction to the film has been vitriolic. Times columnist David Aaronovitch strongly implied that the "Tipton Three" had fought for the Taliban – although neither torture nor the British police could unearth the slenderest shred of evidence for this.

Nick Cohen in the Evening Standard berated the journalist Rowan Pelling for saying she had been "radicalised" by the film. Liberals, he fumed, were "in bed with radical Islam".

What does it tell you when those who attacked the anti-war movement for "appeasing" Saddam Hussein's brutal regime can't bring themselves to discuss torture by the US without smearing and impugning its victims?

Richard Seymour, West London

<http://www.cageprisoners.com/articles.php?id=12841>

SOURCE: Socialist Worker

March 16, 2006

Dying For You To Listen

Guantanamo detainee's suicide note addresses Americans

In the first suicide note to be declassified by the U.S. government, Jumah Al Dossari explains why he saw no other choice but to try to take his own life. Written back in October of 2005, this was one of a number of his thwarted suicide attempts. Jumah's lawyer Joshua Colangelo-Bryan discovered him hanging in his cell (read his account) with a deep gash in his arm. Jumah survived.

The U.S. military has concealed the true number of suicide attempts by reclassifying many attempts as "self-injurious manipulative behavior." True numbers are, therefore, impossible to come by. Former military linguist, Erik Saar, noted that when he was in Guantanamo back in 2003, suicide attempts were a weekly phenomenon.

One can only imagine how this rate has increased after three further years of detainment.

The numbers of detainees who are taking part in hunger strikes as a form of protest (and, simply, to die) are similarly skewed. Many detainees are accepting one out of every nine meals that they are served in order to escape the technical definition of "hunger strike" -- and subsequently avoid the violent forced feeding that those who skip nine meals in a row endure.

Stay tuned for the March 22nd arguments -- the Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia will consider the government's motion to dismiss Guantanamo detainees' right to challenge their ongoing imprisonment.

Jumah's letter:

In fact, I don't know where to begin... or how to begin... Josh, Khaled the interpreter... I feel very sorry for forcing you to see...It might be the first time in your life... to see a human being who suffered too much... dying in front of your eyes...I know it is an awful and horrible scene, but...I really feel sorry for you. There was no other alternative to make our voice heard by the world from the depths of the detention centers except this way in order for the world to re-examine its standing and for the fair people of America to look again at the situation and try to have a moment of truth with themselves... why was no conclusion reached with regard to the detainees in Guantanamo, Cuba until now? Till when this tragedy will continue? When will it end after all these years, and when will the detainees go back to their homelands, families, wives and children? When will this tragedy cease to continue... till when? The detainees are suffering from the bitterness of despair, the detention humiliation and the vanquish of slavery and suppression...

Josh, Khaled: Actually I spent nice hours with you... even though they were full of talking about my agonies, pains and grieves... I hope you will always remember that you met and sat with a "human being" called "Jumah" who suffered too much and was abused in his belief, self, in his dignity and also in his humanity. He was imprisoned, tortured and deprived from his homeland, his family and his young daughter who is in the most need for him for four years...with no reason or crime committed. Remember that there are hundreds of detainees in Guantanamo -Cuba - they are in the same situation of suffering and misfortune. They were captured, tortured and detained with no offense or reason. Their lives might end like mine... When you remember me in my last gasps of life before dying, while my soul is leaving my body to rise to its creator, remember that the world let us and let our case down... Remember that our

governments let us down... Remember the unreasonable delay of the courts in looking into our case and to side with the victims of injustice...

Remember that if there were people who are actually fair and who defend justice and defend the victims of injustice and if there are judges who are fair, I wouldn't have been wrapped in death shrouds now and my family -my father, my mother, my brothers and sisters, and my little daughter - would not have to lose their son... forever... but what else can I do?

Take some of my blood... take pieces of my death shrouds... take some of my remains...take pictures of my dead body when I am placed in my grave, lonely...send it to the world.. to the judges...to people with live conscious... to people with principles and values, "the fair-minded"... To make them carry the burden of guilt in front of the world for this soul that was wasted with no guilt it has ever done... To make them all carry this burden in front of the future generations for this wasted soul that has done no sin... To make them carry this burden of guilt in front of history for this soul that was wasted with no reason... After this soul has suffered the worst by the hands of "the protectors of peace and the callers for democracy, freedom, equality and justice"... There, in the very far east, at the other end of the ocean... there in the east... how many fathers, mothers, wives, siblings, children and other family members who are crying now for their imprisoned children at Guantanamo Bay -Cuba... Why...Why do they have to suffer the agony of separation and swallow the bitterness of deprivation from having their sons... I am not the only one suffering ...this anguish...my family is very much suffering too... My little daughter whom they destroyed her spirit because of my detention and having me taken away from her... sends me letters saying: "Dad please come to me... please come back to me...all the girls in my school have dads, except me?!... Dad, I need you...I want you to come back to me...please come back for my sake...

In fact, I don't have an answer to her question...The answer to her question is there, with "the fair minded people"...

Josh... Khaled: At this moment, I see death looming in front of me while writing this letter...Death has a bad odor that cannot be smelled except by people who are going through the agony of death only.

Josh... Khaled: farewell... farewell with no hope of you seeing me again...I thank you for everything you have done for me, but I have a final request... Show the world the letters I gave you...let the world read them...Let the world know the agony of the detainees in Cuba...

Note: I wrote this letter on the same date shown, but I was surprised that Khaled, the interpreter, did not show. I really wanted to see him before I leave this life...I have decided not to make any changes to this letter that was meant to talk to you and Khaled, out of respect to my faithful friend Khaled...(same day at night).

Prisoner of Deprivation /

Jumah Abdel Latif Al Dossari

Guantanamo Bay, Cuba

(Signature)

Friday, 10/14/2005

Onnesha Roychoudhuri is assistant editor at AlterNet.

<http://www.cageprisoners.com/articles.php?id=12861>

SOURCE: Alternet

MI5, Camp Delta, and The Story That Shames Britain

Bisher al-Rawi and Jamil el-Banna are among eight British residents who remain prisoners at the U.S. Naval Air Station at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. They are jailed because British officials rendered them into the hands of the CIA in Africa, a fact that may explain why the British government refuses to intercede on their behalf. Bisher and Jamil have been wrongfully imprisoned now for more than three years. This is the story of their betrayal by the British government and their appalling treatment at the hands of the CIA and the U.S. military.

By George B. Mickum - The author, a partner with Washington law firm Keller and Hackman, represents Bisher al-Rawi and Jamil el-Banna. This exclusive report is compiled from conversations with his two clients, their declassified letters and declassified legal responses, and information provided by the US Military

Several weeks after 11 September 2001, two MI5 agents arrived at Bisher al-Rawi's family home to recruit him to work for British Intelligence. The visit was part of an effort to recruit scores of individuals from London's Muslim community for reconnaissance work and to assist the war on terror.

ABU QATADA

In particular, MI5 sought contacts with some of the Muslim clerics preaching in London. Mr al-Rawi was a perfect candidate, educated, fluent in English, and a friend of a Muslim cleric named Abu Qatada. The agents presented identification, introducing themselves to Mr al-Rawi as "Alex" and "Matt". However, they are the same names the agents used throughout the Muslim community in London.

The agents asked Mr al-Rawi wide-ranging questions, which he answered candidly. At the end of the meeting, they asked if would agree to speak to them again.

Two more meetings took place at Mr al-Rawi's family home in London. At the agents' suggestion, Mr al-Rawi started meeting them at a coffee shop in Victoria station. Shortly after, the agents asked Mr al-Rawi to work for MI5 on a more formal basis. He agreed. Over the next nine months, meetings took place in hotel rooms in and around London.

Throughout Mr al-Rawi's relationship with MI5, his agents pressured him to accept payment for his services. He refused all such overtures. The only thing Mr al-Rawi, 38, who is Iraqi born, ever accepted from MI5 was a mobile telephone. He took it to put an end to the agents' demand for him to be contactable.

As his work with MI5 continued, Mr al-Rawi became increasingly alarmed about his relationship with MI5 and his potential exposure. Eventually, he sought assurances from Matt and Alex that his work as an intermediary between MI5 and Abu Qatada would not get him into trouble. Ultimately, he requested a meeting with MI5 and a private attorney, suggesting the human rights lawyer Gareth Peirce. MI5 refused.

To assuage his concerns and convince him to continue working for MI5, the agents set up the first of two meetings with an MI5 lawyer whom they called "Simon". Alex and Matt were present at both meetings. Simon introduced himself to Mr al-Rawi as a lawyer with MI5. He conceded that Simon was not his real name. Simon assured Mr al-Rawi he was running no risk by working with MI5 and that MI5 and Simon himself would come to his aid if Mr al-Rawi found himself compromised. Simon told him that all he needed to do was record the date and time of his conversations with Simon, and MI5 would be able to identify and locate Simon. Mr al-Rawi's refusal to insist on a meeting with a private attorney would have devastating consequences.

Abu Qatada was completely aware of Mr al-Rawi's relationship with MI5. Mr al-Rawi carried questions and answers between the parties, served as a translator, and participated in negotiations with Abu Qatada. "All I did in Britain was try to help with steps necessary to get a meeting between Abu Qatada and MI5. I was trying to bring them together. MI5 would give me messages to take to Abu Qatada, and Abu Qatada would give me messages to take back to them."

It was during this time that Mr al-Rawi's good friend, Jamil el-Banna, a Jordanian British resident, became involved. While the British Government was publicly asserting that Abu Qatada's whereabouts were unknown, Abu Qatada was actively engaged in a dialogue with British officials that involved Mr al-Rawi and Mr el-Banna. Mr al-Rawi asked Mr el-Banna to drive Abu Qatada's wife and son to meet Abu Qatada in London. Mr el-Banna followed Mr al-Rawi, who led the way on his motorcycle. When Abu Qatada was arrested, Mr el-Banna taxied his wife and child home at the request of the British officials on the scene. Mr el-Banna never was arrested: the police thanked him for his assistance. He was never even questioned because everyone was aware of his limited involvement. Based on this involvement, he has been tortured and jailed for three years.

ARREST IN GAMBIA

Mr al-Rawi then turned his energy to his brother Wahab's long-planned mobile peanut oil factory, a project in Gambia.

Gambian authorities detained Mr al-Rawi, Mr el-Banna and their friends immediately after the group landed in Africa. Indeed, shortly after the arrest, Gambian authorities told the arrested group that the British had told them to make the arrests.

There is no question that British officials rendered Mr al-Rawi and Mr el-Banna into the hands of CIA officials in Africa in November of 2002. During one of Mr el-Banna's more than 100 interrogation sessions, his interrogator told him his adopted country had betrayed him

A British citizen, Abdullah El Janoudi, who accompanied Mr al-Rawi and Mr el-Banna to Gambia, confirms that a large American by the name of Lee told him British officials had the group arrested. He also confirms that during the interrogations that took place every two days, the CIA continued to press for incriminating evidence about Abu Qatada that linked him with al-Qa'ida.

In Africa, the CIA had a complete file on Mr al-Rawi that included his hobbies, information that can only have come from British Intelligence. Mr al-Rawi states that "from the very beginning in the Gambia the CIA said, 'The British told us that one of you was helping MI5.' By the second day in the Gambia, they [the CIA] were asking me to work for the US in Britain. I said I would not."

AFGHANISTAN

Although Mr al-Rawi's brother Wahab and another friend were released after a month and returned to England, Mr al-Rawi and Mr el-Banna were rendered at the end of 2002 in a CIA Gulfstream jet, one of a fleet of jets used by the CIA in its "extraordinary rendition" programme, in which the US transports victims to foreign countries for the express purpose of torture.

Mr el-Banna's account of his arrest reads:

Detainee: "When they came and arrested and handcuffed me, they were wearing all black. They even covered their heads ... They took me, covered me, put me in a vehicle and sent me somewhere. I don't know. It was at night. Then from there to the airport right away.

Tribunal president: An airport in Gambia?

Detainee: Yes. We were in a room like this with about eight men. All with covered-up faces.

Tribunal president: Were you by yourself at that time?

Detainee: Yes. They cut off my clothes.

Mr al-Rawi and Mr el-Banna were taken to the notorious "dark prison" in Kabul, Afghanistan. There, both men were imprisoned underground in isolation and darkness and tortured over two weeks. They were held in leg shackles 24 hours a day. They were starved, beaten, dragged along floors while shackled, and kicked. Round-the-clock screams from fellow prisoners made sleep impossible.

Subsequently, they were transferred to the US Air Force base at Bagram, Afghanistan. Although they were chained hand and foot and hooded, while waiting to be transported, their captors beat them. Mr el-Banna, in particular, was beaten repeatedly.

In Bagram, they were imprisoned and tortured for another two months. They were beaten, starved, and sleep deprived. What is particularly noteworthy is the fact that the only information the interrogators were interested in was information about Abu Qatada. Over the years, CIA and military interrogators have repeatedly attempted to suborn testimony from both men, linking Abu Qatada to al-Qa'ida. Mr el-Banna has repeatedly refused offers of freedom, money, and passports in exchange for false testimony.

GUANTANAMO BAY

Ultimately, both men were transported to Guantanamo, a trip so harrowing that a government informer, who was posing as a prisoner and had to be transported and treated the same as other prisoners, stated in a television interview that, at the time, he wished someone would shoot him. Forced to wear darkened goggles, face-masks and earphones, chained at the ankles, handcuffed behind their backs with thin plastic that caused incredible pain, and, in some cases, lasting damage, starving and sick prisoners who had been deprived of sleep were forced to maintain a sitting position, legs forward and chained without moving for nearly 24 hours.

If they moved they were beaten, kicked, hit with blunt objects. The government informer lasted barely one month in the intolerable conditions in Guantanamo before demanding freedom. During the first month at Guantanamo in which both were kept in strict solitary confinement, the pair were interrogated six hours per day and kept in the interrogation room for 14 hours per day, sometimes in freezing temperatures to induce hypothermia, one of the many techniques approved for use by the Bush administration. In some cases they were short-shackled, hands behind heels, for the entire time.

During his lengthy incarceration, Mr el-Banna has repeatedly asked his interrogators to administer a polygraph test, but the military has refused. However, the military's unwillingness to give him a lie detector deviates from standard prison policy. Former interrogators at Guantanamo confirm that a "passed" polygraph test is a prerequisite to be transferred to Camp IV, the lowest security prison camp on the base.

Mr el-Banna is in Camp IV. Mr al-Rawi, who also is in Camp IV, had a polygraph administered, but the military has refused to turn over the results and there is no mention of it in records produced by the military.

Indeed, the military has taken great pains to prevent any exculpatory information from creeping into the official records to ensure prisoners have no chance to exonerate themselves. In Guantanamo, Mr al-Rawi has met perhaps 10 different CIA agents. One agent who went by the name "Elizabeth" told him: "Don't think that leaving here will come without a price." Mr al-Rawi said: "She asked me whether I would work with them, and I said no. [She] suggested, 'How about working with MI5?'"

MI5 MEETINGS

Mr al-Rawi's relationship with MI5 did not end with his arrest. He has met MI5 agents at Guantanamo on numerous occasions. He first met an MI5 agent in the early autumn of 2003, fully shackled. After some perfunctory questions and answers that confirmed his work with MI5, the agent offered him an oblique, belated apology: "Sorry about all this." Several months later, Alex, the MI5 agent with whom Mr al-Rawi worked in London, interrogated him at Guantanamo. Among other things, Mr al-Rawi told Alex the Americans wanted him to work for US intelligence.

In January 2004, Martin and Matt, the other two MI5 agents that Mr al-Rawi worked with in London, met Mr al-Rawi in an interrogation room. During that meeting, agents proposed that Mr al-Rawi return to working with MI5 upon his release. He agreed. The following day, the agents told him it would take them one to six months to get him home.

Former Guantanamo interrogators report that all prisoner interviews with foreign intelligence officials are videotaped. The trial judge in charge of both men's cases granted them motion to preserve that specific evidence along with copious other evidence we have managed to identify.

REVIEW TRIBUNAL

I advised the men more than one month before I travelled to Guantanamo in September 2004, advising them not to appear before the CSRT (Combatant Status Review Tribunal) or participate in the process. My letters were not delivered until after each had participated in his tribunal. I advised them against participating, among other reasons because the tribunals were permitted to rely on information obtained under torture. Both men were not even permitted to review all the evidence against them, and thus had no chance to defend themselves.

The following testimony from a CSRT proceeding demonstrates the Bush administration's commitment to providing prisoners with meaningful due process. In response to the charge "While living in Bosnia, the detainee associated with a known al-Qa'ida operative" the following colloquy, which could have been lifted from the pages of *The Adventures of Alice in Wonderland*, took place:

Detainee: Give me his name.

President: I do not know.

Detainee: How can I respond to this?

President: Did you know of anybody who was a member of al- Qa'ida?

Detainee: No, no.

President: I'm sorry, what was your response?

Detainee: No. If you tell me the name, I can respond and defend myself against this accusation.

President: We are asking you the questions and we need you to respond to what is on the classified summary.

Although both men never were anywhere near Afghanistan or Iraq, never were involved in any wrongful activity, never possessed a weapon of any kind, they were powerless to defend themselves against the charge that they had associated with Abu Qatada, "a known al-Qa'ida operative", even though Abu Qatada has never been charged with any crime or been shown to be a member of or involved in al-Qa'ida. But, the full extent of both men's betrayal by MI5 does not end here.

At the tribunal, Mr al-Rawi testified under oath about his relationship with MI5 and his role as a liaison between MI5 and Abu Qatada. He informed the tribunal that MI5 had expressly approved of his role: "During a meeting with British Intelligence, I had asked if it was OK for me to continue to have a relationship with Abu Qatada. They assured me it was."

Mr al-Rawi requested that the MI5 agents Alex, Matt, and Martin appear before the tribunal to confirm his work with MI5 and Abu Qatada. Very much out of character, the tribunal president recognised the obvious importance of such testimony and "determined that these three witnesses were relevant". He instructed the military prosecutor to make inquiries and to determine whether the British Government would make the witnesses available .

The British Government not only refused to allow the witnesses to appear, it refused to confirm the accuracy of Mr al-Rawi's account, thereby ensuring both men's fate and consigning them to indefinite imprisonment. The following account is taken from Mr al-Rawi's CSRT:

President: Detainee has requested three witnesses who would testify that he supported the British Intelligence Agency. We have contacted the British Government and at this time, they are not willing to provide the tribunal with that information. The witnesses are no longer considered reasonably available, so I am going to deny the request for those three witnesses.

Later in the proceeding, the president issued the following clarification: " The British Government didn't say they didn't have a relationship with you, they just would not confirm or deny it. That means I only have your word."

Mr el-Banna's CSRT hearing was so procedurally defective that it would make good farce were the result not so devastating. The only evidence considered by the tribunal was that he drove Abu Qatada's wife and son to visit him during the time British authorities were engaged in discussions with him. In fact, his CSRT hearing was postponed and reconvened three times on 25 September, 28 September, 2 October and 9 October 2004 to allow the military's prosecuting attorney to collect and present additional evidence to the tribunal.

At the conclusion, Mr el-Banna's personal representative, a soldier and non-lawyer who could be compelled under the CSRT rules to testify against him courageously dissented from the tribunal's conclusion, including a formal statement in the CSRT record: "The personal representative states that the record is insufficient to prove that the detainee is an enemy combatant."

Although Mr al-Rawi disclosed his involvement with MI5 during our first meeting in 2004, he has been loath to go public with this information. But there are few options left available to both men.

Congress voted to ban torture by an overwhelming majority in December 2005, but President Bush signed the bill into law with a clarifying "signing statement" that allows him to ignore it whenever he chooses. Of more immediate concern is Congress's recent legislative reversal of the Supreme Court's decision to allow prisoners at Guantanamo to file petitions for habeas corpus . In response to the passage of the Detainee Treatment Act, the US government moved quickly to dismiss all of the habeas cases filed by prisoners at Guantanamo, including those filed by Mr al-Rawi and Mr el-Banna.

NO RETURN

Neither man can return to the UK because their visas have expired. The British Government adamantly refuses to reissue them visas or allow them to return home on humanitarian grounds. If the cases are dismissed, the US military intends to transfer Mr al-Rawi to Iraq and Mr el-Banna to Jordan. There, each will be jailed with the host country's pro-American acquiescence. Recent reconnaissance indicates the US government is negotiating with foreign governments to jail prisoners from Guantanamo indefinitely.

Why the British Government has treated these two men as it has, I cannot say. What seems most likely is that they were simply expendable pawns in Great Britain's and America's attempt to create a case against Abu Qatada

My security clearance allows me to review all of the classified evidence in the cases, including all the evidence the tribunal relied upon to conclude that Mr al-Rawi and Mr el-Banna were enemy combatants. There is no evidence in the record, classified or unclassified, which supports the military's determination that these are enemy combatants. None.

The African business trip that ended in chains and imprisonment

Jamal el-Banna, left, and Bisher al-Rawi, right, were arrested at Banjul airport, Gambia, in November 2002 on suspicion of links to terrorism.

The two friends were in a party of five businessmen who were trying to start up a peanut oil venture. Two other British nationals detained at the same time were flown home.

The Government argues that Mr al-Rawi, an Iraqi citizen in his late thirties and Mr el-Banna, a Palestinian in his forties, who have both brought up families in Britain, are British residents with limited rights.

After their arrest, the two men were interviewed by the Americans and flown in chains to Bagram in Afghanistan. In early 2003, they were taken to Guantanamo Bay.

Last month Mr Justice Collins ruled that Mr el-Banna and Mr al-Rawi should have their case for judicial review heard in the High Court, and that claims of torture at the camp meant the Government might have an obligation to act. But the Government maintains: "It is only through ... their nationality that persons can ... enjoy the obligations placed on a state by international law."

Robert Verkaik

<http://www.cageprisoners.com/articles.php?id=12859>

SOURCE: The Independent

Sketches of Guantanamo Detainees

By The Associated Press

A partial list of detainees at the U.S. military prison at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, compiled from transcripts of "enemy combatant" hearings and arranged by country of origin. The Pentagon released more than 5,000 pages of transcripts to The Associated Press. Names appear as they are spelled in the transcripts.

AFGHANISTAN

_ Abdul Ahmed was accused of recruiting for the Taliban beginning in 1996, but said he was forced into service. "They were recruiting by force all men, young and old, they were forcing to join and fight for them," Ahmed said. He said every tribe chose a representative to deal with the Taliban. "I can read and write, so they chose me because I could make a list and write down the names of the people that were given to the Taliban," he said.

_ Haji Mohammed Akitar said he was a high-ranking military officer before the Taliban took power, and later lived in Pakistan. When the Taliban were defeated, he returned to Afghanistan to join the new government. He said he was falsely accused by government officials who held a grudge against him. The record does not state what he was accused of.

_ Mohammed Aman, from the village of Malek Khil, said he worked for the defense department as a low-ranking personnel clerk with no ties to any party. He said he was forced to work for the Taliban when they came to power. The record does not state what he was accused of.

_ Naibullah Darwaish was accused of being the Taliban-appointed police chief for Shinkai district in Afghanistan's Zabul province. Darwaish said he fought for years with the mujahedeen against the Russians, as did the governor who appointed him, but denied that he or the governor were associated with the Taliban, al-Qaida or any terrorist group.

_ Juma Din denied being a main adviser to a leader of Hezb-e-Islami Gulhuddin, which the U.S. government calls a terrorist group linked to Osama bin Laden. Din, who was captured in a suspected al-Qaida safehouse in Pakistan, said he had no knowledge of accusations that his brother-in-law was an al-Qaida member. "They kept me here for 2 1/2 years because of what my brother-in-law did," Din said.

_ Qari Esmhatulla said he was asked by Taliban officials to help them and fellow Pashto speakers in their fight against the Farsi speakers in the Northern Alliance, which teamed up with U.S.-led international forces to oust the Taliban. He was captured by the Northern Alliance. He said he never intended to fight Americans. "I was going ... to fight the Farsi speakers, the Northern Alliance people, because of the difference between (Pashto) and Farsi speakers," he said.

_ Mullah Mohammed Fazi confirmed he was a minor Taliban military leader of 50-100 fighters who surrendered in 2001. "If you think this is a crime, then every single person in Afghanistan should be in prison or bring them here. ... I never ever fought against America and I didn't do anything wrong against them. Then why am I an enemy combatant? I could never fight against America; I don't know why I'm here."

_ Abdul Ghaffar of Shahawali Kot is accused of being the bodyguard of a person who killed a Red Cross worker in a March 2003 attack on a convoy. Ghaffar said he wasn't involved. "If I were a bodyguard there would have been evidence on me like a knife, a gun." He said he was a farmer and never worked with the Taliban government or kept a weapon. "I never worked with any kind of government," he said. "I'm a poor guy. I am not wealthy enough to keep a gun in my home." He said U.S. soldiers arrived at his house by helicopter to arrest him.

_ Haji Ghalib, who said he was a police chief under Afghan President Hamid Karzai, was suspected of collusion with the Taliban.

_ Awal Gul, an alleged Taliban member, turned himself in to the Northern Alliance in Kabul on Feb. 10, 2002. He was accused of associating with bin Laden on three occasions. Gul said he only shook hands with bin Laden and said he ran a Taliban camp in Jalalabad. "I don't have anything against the United States, and I don't want the United States to have anything against me," he said.

_ Dawd Gul denied being a member of al-Qaida or the Taliban. Gul said he helped his father raise sheep, and the Taliban drafted him into service while he was grocery shopping, tying his hands with a sheet and taking him to Kandahar, then Kabul and Narim. After he told the Taliban he did not know how to use a Kalashnikov, they gave him a job peeling potatoes, washing dishes and serving food.

_ Janat Gul ran Afghanistan's Ariana Airline when the Taliban government was in power. Gul said the airline was not under government control and he denied it provided Taliban fighters free flights to battle the Northern Alliance. Gul said he quit his job several days after Sept. 11, 2001. "I was released from the oppression of a government, the Taliban government," he said. "I came out of the darkness into the light. ... I had left my job; even before the Americans came, I was in my own house and in my own land." He was arrested in January 2003 in Lashkargar.

_ Mohammed Gul, a farmer and gas station owner, was suspected of links to Taliban forces and Hezb-e-Islami Gulhuddin. He was arrested with a Kalashnikov rifle near a Taliban facility. Gul denied any connections to terrorism and said he returned home from Saudi Arabia, where he had worked as a driver, to care for his sick wife. "I don't want to spend any more time here, not one more minute," he said.

_ Haji Hamidullah was accused of having ties to Hezb-e-Islami Gulhuddin. "I was a member of this group 15 years ago. ... At that time, the Russians invaded Afghanistan, and all people joined groups fighting the Russians. When the Taliban came to power, I cut all ties" to the group, he said. Hamidullah said he was later imprisoned by the Taliban but escaped and went to Pakistan. "I was happy to go home when I learned the U.S. was there," he said. He said he was arrested in Afghanistan because he supported the return of former King Zahir Shah.

_ Abdullah Hekmat was accused of commanding the third police precinct in Mazar-e-Sharif under the Taliban and grabbing young men off the street to fight for the militant group. He said his father-in-law was in charge of the Mazar-e-Sharif precinct and he filled in for him for two months. He complained bitterly that no case had been presented against him and that he had been separated from his family for years. Justice was swifter when the Soviets occupied Afghanistan, he said: "In the Russian time they would just kill and you wouldn't have to worry about it."

_ Said Amir Jan said he was minister of public benefits in the Karzai government and opposed al-Qaida and the Taliban. He said he was locked up in Kandahar for fighting against the Taliban. "Here, I'm accused of being with al-Qaida and (Osama) bin Laden, and then at the same time, I was imprisoned by them for five years," he said. "Everyday I spend here makes a bad reputation for United States."

_ Hafizullah Shabaz Khail was accused of being a member of the Taliban and participating in military operations against the U.S. coalition. He said he was arrested in retaliation for accusing the commander of security in his district of involvement in a robbery. He said he was appointed mayor of Zormat after Karzai came to power. "While I was mayor in Zormat, there were no problems with the Americans. I met with American commanders several times," he said. "We even took pictures together."

_ Abdullah Khan, an Afghan shopkeeper, said he was falsely identified as Khirullah Khairkhwa, the governor of Herat. "Americans were giving an announcement that if you turn over a high-ranking Taliban member or the governor, we will give you a lot of money. That's why they gave that Khirullah Khairkhwa name," he said. He was accused of being

an airfield commander, but said he was only a shopkeeper. "I have very small kids and I don't know what my kids are doing," he said. The transcript notes he passed a polygraph.

_Anwar Khan, who was caught with identification documents with several names crossing the Afghanistan-Pakistan border, said he commutes between the two countries.

_Mohabet Khan, 18, said he had been at Guantanamo since he was 16. He was captured in a military compound that allegedly fired on U.S. forces. Khan said he had been forced into service and "when the Americans arrived, with our own will, we went with happiness. We surrendered our weapons to the Americans. ... They searched the compound, and then they came back from the compound and tied our hands behind our backs."

_Shardar Khan, who worked as a cook, was accused of training to be part of an infantry supporting an alleged al-Qaida cell leader named Samoud. Captured at Samoud's compound, Khan denied fighting U.S. forces. He had been detained two years.

_Kadir Khandan, of Khost province, was accused of links to the Taliban and running a safehouse for an explosives-making cell. Khandan told the tribunal he worked for the Karzai government and opposed the Taliban. He said he was a pharmacist and that bombs were "truly against my ideology." He said he was tortured by U.S. soldiers in Afghanistan: "I was ordered to stand up 24 hours for 20 days in a row. I had blood coming out of my body and my nose for days because I was tortured so much." He added: "Here in Cuba, I have been treated nice. Overall it is fine here."

_Sabr Lal was accused of helping al-Qaida members elude coalition forces, a charge he denies. He also was accused of helping bin Laden escape from Tora Bora, but said he was in another part of Afghanistan at the time. "The only thing I want to tell you that is so ironic here is that I see a Talib and then I see myself here too, I am in the same spot as a Talib. I see those people on an everyday basis, they are cursing at me ... They say, 'See, you got what you deserved, you are here, too,'" he said.

_Abdul Matin said he returned from Pakistan in 2002 because the new government called for Afghans to help rebuild the country. He denied being a Taliban supporter or passing messages to Taliban or al-Qaida officials. "I was a science teacher, they never wanted that kind of person," he said. An attached document said he was able to answer several questions demonstrating a working knowledge of science and higher mathematics. Matin said he was turned over to the Americans because he refused to pay Afghan authorities a \$30,000 bribe.

_Alif Mohammed was accused of having a satellite phone to orchestrate ambushes. He denied it, saying: "I'm just a tinsmith."

_Taj Mohammed, a goat herder, was accused of being a member of Lashkar-e-Tayyiba, a group with alleged al-Qaida ties. He denied it. "I was a shepherd, and I never can even go out very much, and I was always with my goats on the mountain," he said. "These are all lies about me."

_Wali Mohammad said he was handed over to the Americans by Pakistani intelligence agents because he would not pay a bribe. He sold clothing, exchanged currency and had other businesses but owed \$1.1 million to 40 people when he was arrested Jan. 24, 2002. He denied that he was in business with the Taliban, smuggled gold for al-Qaida or facilitated transfers from accounts controlled by bin Laden to buy surface-to-air missiles. One witness, who said he had been Afghanistan's transportation minister, said Wali Mohammad borrowed \$1.5 million from the Central Bank in 1997-98 but lost it in the foreign exchange market.

_Abdullah Mujahid said was head of security for the city of Gardez and for Paktia province when he was arrested in July 2003 and accused of attacking U.S. forces. Mujahid also was accused of associating with al-Qaida, but said he aided coalition forces.

_Abdul Rahim Muslimdost worked as a journalist in Pakistan. U.S. authorities accused him of being a member of an Islamic militant group. He acknowledged membership, but said he joined to drive the Russians from Afghanistan, and denied serving as an al-Qaida contact in Herat province.

_Mohammed Nasim, 55, of Warzai, said he was a poor farmer and denied commanding 25 Taliban fighters. He was detained Feb. 11, 2003.

_Abdul Nasir was accused of being part of a group that attacked a base with Kalashnikov rifles, machine guns and a grenade launcher. Nasir said he was a student and was taken to the scene of the attack against his will. He said he went to authorities and turned over bullets and grenades he'd been forced to carry. He said he was detained at the U.S. military base at Bagram, where he was forced to stand for 10 days. "I was not allowed to sit or sleep and they interrogated me every single day," he said. He was transferred to Cuba after three months.

_ Allah Nasir, also identified as Nasrullah, an ethnic Tajik, allegedly worked in Herat for al-Wafa, a charity the U.S. military says has links to al-Qaida. Nasrullah said he was a shopkeeper and never heard of al-Wafa, al-Qaida or the Taliban until he was arrested Jan. 29, 2003, and taken to Guantanamo.

_ Habib Noor, a resident of Lalmai with family in Saudi Arabia, was accused of owning a compound that harbored attackers who ambushed U.S. special forces and Afghan soldiers in Khost province. His brother allegedly joined the fighting. Noor insisted he was unaware of the ambush and spent that day in the village bazaar.

_ Haji Noorallah, an ethnic Uzbek, is accused of commanding 100 Taliban fighters along the Afghanistan-Uzbekistan border. "My job was to take the new recruits to the Taliban. I was not a commander, and only brought the men to the Taliban. I brought 42 Taliban, not 100."

_ Abdul Qawi, identified by the United States as Abdul Hafiz, was accused of working for a Taliban militia and involvement in two killings. He allegedly was captured with a satellite phone linked to a slaying, but said he was given the phone by a man named Abdul Hafiz and he did not know how to use it. He expressed frustration at not being able to see classified documents containing evidence against him: "In our culture, if someone is accused of something, they are shown the evidence."

_ Abdul Rahman, a Pashtun from Kalat, said drought and other natural disasters forced him to move to Kunduz, where he ran a shop selling candy, tea and soap. Rahman said after the U.S. bombing began, he and other merchants were detained by Abdul Rashid Dostum, now the Afghan army's chief of staff. "They tied us up, and we stayed there for a night without food or water," he said. "I think they buried about 50 people alive into the ground. They kept on shouting and screaming, and they kept putting dirt on them." He denied the allegations against him, which include buying a vehicle for the Taliban and having a security force of four Taliban fighters. A member of the tribunal noted that Rahman passed a polygraph test.

_ Mahbub Rahman was accused of spying on American forces, shooting an Afghan soldier and two civilians, and being caught with two automatic rifles. He told the tribunal the shooting was in self-defense, and that he had one weapon for personal protection.

_ Mohammed Rasoul was accused of associating with the Taliban and participating in military operations against the U.S. Authorities believe he used a rocket launcher against American forces. Rasoul said he returned to Afghanistan from Pakistan to open a medical clinic. His brother, Naquibullah, a doctor who also was detained, told the tribunal they ran the clinic together.

_ Abdul Razak was minister of commerce in the Taliban government. He said the Taliban gave him a civilian job because he had no military training. He said he took up farming after the Taliban's ouster, but was arrested months later by Afghan authorities. He was carrying a Kalashnikov rifle at the time _ as practically every Afghan man does, his legal representative said.

_ Abdul Razzaq of Kandahar, who worked for five months as a Taliban cook, allegedly was captured with a list of 24 military recruits for the Taliban. Razzaq said he was a farmer and storekeeper, and the list had the names of people he owed money to or who owed him money. He said a Taliban official had him jailed in a land dispute, and he had to work as a cook to pay his debt.

_ Gholam Ruhani of Ghazni was accused of being a driver and clerk for the Taliban intelligence service. "The Taliban law was that young people had to join the Taliban," he said. "I had to join, but protested several times that I had an old father and I wanted to go back to my family. ... If I had not cooperated with the Taliban Intelligence service member, I would have been sent to the front lines. I was afraid I would be killed."

_ Mohammad Said, a 26-year-old storekeeper, was arrested with his father and brother. He and his family allegedly supported al-Qaida and the Taliban. Said claimed all he did was give a few pieces of bread to travelers and did not know they were al-Qaida. "I just provided them with food because they were strangers," he said.

_ Hafizullah Shah said he was a farmer from Galdon village who was arrested while walking to a bazaar. The U.S. said Shah was wearing an olive drab jacket and soldiers spotted him with a group hiding weapons. "I was just walking in the street and I was captured," Shah said.

_ Said Mohammed Ali Shah, from the village of Khwaja Hassam, lived as a refugee in Iran for more than two decades after the Russian invasion. While there, he studied to become a doctor. After returning to Afghanistan, he acted as a representative for the city of Gardez in Karzai's government; he was attending the National Assembly at the time of his capture. The record does not state what he was accused of.

_ Zahir Shah was accused of being a member of an Islamic militant group, Hezb-e-Islami, and of having automatic weapons and a grenade launcher in his house. He acknowledged having rifles, but insisted he did not fight American troops.

_ Mohammed Sharif, a native of Sheberghan, was accused of guarding a Taliban camp. He denied being a guard, and said he had been captured by the Taliban, and feared punishment and retribution against his family if he fled. He also denied any knowledge of al-Qaida.

_ Maulai Abdul-Haq Wasseq said he was forced to join the Taliban, and during three years sometimes acted as deputy minister of intelligence to combat "thieves and bribes." He also ran a guesthouse in Kabul, he said. He didn't deny using a radio to communicate with the Taliban chief of intelligence, but said he did not take part in military operations against U.S.-led coalition forces.

_ Mohammed Yacoub, who lost his left leg in a mortar attack in Kabul, acknowledged being part of the Taliban but denied fighting U.S. forces or being a guide for foreign fighters. "You were accusing me of joining the Taliban. ... At that time, the Taliban was the government of Afghanistan. Even if I were in Afghanistan, now I'd join the government, if any government came," Yacoub said.

_ Shah Zada said he was arrested in January 2003 with three others, including Abdullah Khan, who the United States believes was a Taliban spy. Zada said Khan was a dog handler. He said he was sold to the Americans by Afghans for \$15,000. He said: "If 20 years from now or even 100 years from now, if you can ever find any proof that I help the Taliban or I was involved with the Taliban, you can cut my head like you cut a bird's head and hang it right here on the ceiling."

_ Khan Zaman was allegedly captured with communications equipment, along with his nephew. The U.S. alleges Zaman's relatives allowed a high-ranking Taliban member to stay at his brother's guesthouse, and that his brother was a recruiter for Pashtun military commander Pacha Khan. U.S. forces bombed Zaman's home in November 2001 in an attack that killed 12 family members, according to his nephew Gul Zaman, a witness at the hearing. "We are just farmers, never worked with the Taliban and al-Qaida," Khan Zaman said.

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ALGERIA

_ Fethi Boucetta was absent from the hearing.

_ Boudella al Hajj, a Muslim cleric, worked with orphans in Bosnia. He is accused of being in contact with al-Qaida member Abu Zubaydah and of belonging to an Algerian militant group _ all of which he denied. He was acquitted of planning to attack the U.S. Embassy in Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina, before being handed over to the United States.

_ Mustafa Ait Idr, an Algerian with dual Bosnian citizenship, denied plotting to attack the U.S. Embassy and also denied any connection with al-Qaida in Bosnia. "Today is the 11th of October (2004), I think," he said. "In seven more days, I will have been in this prison for three years." Most likely he is Mustafa Ait Idir _ one of six people arrested in Bosnia and held at Guantanamo who sued the U.S. government in April 2005. In the lawsuit, Idir claimed he was severely beaten while his hands were tied behind his back and that he later suffered a mild stroke. His attorney, Robert C. Kirsch, said all six detainees were deprived of sleep and kept nearly naked in frigid rooms.

_ Mohammed Nechle was captured in Bosnia, where he worked with orphans for the United Arab Emirates' Red Crescent Society. After the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks on the United States, he was accused of planning to attack the U.S. Embassy in Sarajevo and spent three months in prison in Bosnia before being acquitted and handed over to the United States. He said he was given only apples for three days when he was taken to Guantanamo, and then was not treated for his exhaustion. "The way that this happened, the way I was brought here ... I feel that my future has been destroyed," he said.

_ Mohammed Abd Al Qadir was accused of belonging to an Algerian terrorist group and training at an al-Qaida camp. He lived in London but fled after being detained and then released on bail. He said he left because he feared being sent back to Algeria or going to prison. He decided to go to Afghanistan "to immigrate, make money, and find a wife." He denied being involved with al-Qaida.

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BAHRAIN

_ Adil Kamel Abdullah, a civilian employee with the Bahrain Defense Ministry, said he went to Afghanistan to help refugees and the poor, passing through Iran in September-October 2001. Abdullah said he did not participate in

military operations against the U.S.-led coalition and turned himself in to the Pakistani military after leaving Afghanistan.

_ Al Shaike Suleiman Bin Ebrahim Bin Mohamad Bin Ali Bin Khalefah Al Kalifa. He did not testify at his hearing but submitted a letter from the administration board of the Bahrain royal family council saying he is "an individual of the gracious royal family" with "a good reputation and manners."

CHINA

_ Abdel Abdulhehim, an ethnic Uighur, said he fled government persecution in China, ended up in Afghanistan and trained at Tora Bora, where he learned how to fire a Kalashnikov. The U.S. alleges the camp, which was bombed by U.S. forces, was operated by the East Turkistan Islamic Movement with funding from the Taliban and bin Laden. Abdulhehim said he went there only to learn how to fight the Chinese.

_ Akhdar Qasem Basit, an ethnic Uighur, traveled from China through Kyrgyzstan and Pakistan to reach Tora Bora. Basit said he did not know the Taliban were involved, and that he got no military training before the camp was bombed. "After the bombing we could not stay there so we ran off in to the mountains to take shelter in caves," he said. The tribunal pressed Basit for details: "Did you ever fire a weapon or help someone fire a weapon at U.S. or coalition forces?" His response: "That is a funny question. When we were in that place we did not see any U.S. or coalition forces against us. We did not see anyone we could fire at."

_ Abdul Gappher, an ethnic Uighur, was accused of traveling to Afghanistan to join the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan. Gappher denied that, saying he was in Afghanistan to "get some training to fight back against the Chinese government," and had nothing against the United States. He said his own "people and my own family are being tortured under the Chinese government." He was captured in Pakistan.

_ Arkin Mahmud, an ethnic Uighur, was captured by the Northern Alliance as a suspected Taliban fighter. He was at the Mazar-e-Sharif prison in November 2001 during a riot in which CIA officer Johnny "Mike" Spann was killed. He said he went to Afghanistan only to look for his brothers. "If I am guilty they should come up with my punishment," he told the tribunal. "Otherwise, do something faster to finish my case."

FRANCE

_ Redouane Khalid, a French citizen of Algerian heritage, said he went to Afghanistan on July 22, 2001, because he wanted to live in a Muslim society. He is accused of traveling to a Taliban camp in Kandahar for training. According to his legal representative, he tried to return to France after hearing of the Sept. 11 attacks. He has hepatitis C and scoliosis, the representative said.

BRITAIN

_ Feroz Ali Abbasi, who submitted written complaints that military police had sex in front of him while he was trying to pray, said repeatedly that he should be considered a prisoner of war. A U.S. Air Force colonel, whose name was blacked out, would have none of it. "Your conduct is unacceptable and this is your absolute final warning. I do not care about international law. I do not want to hear the words international law again. We are not concerned about international law," the colonel said before having Abbasi removed from the hearing so the military could consider classified evidence against him.

_ Moazzam Begg refused to attend a tribunal hearing. His personal representative said Begg was tortured by FBI agents in Afghanistan and interrogated hundreds of times. Begg was transferred from Pakistan to the United States in March 2002, according to his father.

IRAN

• Abdul Majid Muhammad is accused of being a "watchman" for the Taliban who went on patrols and acted as a guard. He said he was a poor well-digger in Iran who occasionally dealt in opium and hashish. He was arrested twice in Iran. He said he went to Afghanistan after the Sept. 11 attacks because he wanted to get rich selling drugs, not to join the Taliban or fight Americans. "I wanted to serve myself," he said. "My plan was to get rich then put it behind me." He says he was picked up by the Northern Alliance near Ghazni.

IRAQ

- Ali Abdul Motalib Hassan Al Tayeea, 31, said he was a mechanic who was jailed under Saddam Hussein . He said he went to Afghanistan to find work and joined the Taliban. "If I had known the Taliban was against America, I wouldn't have gone," he said. He said he gave information to U.S. interrogators and other detainees consider him an enemy. "For this, I have asked the American government to help me with asylum because my life is in danger," he said.

JORDAN

- Usama Hassan Ahmend Abu Kabir, 34, opened his hearing with a statement on conditions at Guantanamo: "Thank you for not abusing us mentally and physically; the guards have been kind and respectful to us at all times." He said he was a driver by occupation but also sold clothing with his wife from their home. Kabir acknowledged going to a conference in Pakistan organized by an Islamic charity that the U.S. says is linked to terrorism. Kabir said he went to Afghanistan in November 2001 "to help the government of (the) Taliban." He was captured by the Northern Alliance while trying to get back to Jordan. Of bin Laden, he said: "I stated he was a good man, a symbol of Islam, he fought against the Russians and he gave up the nice life and he lives simple."

KUWAIT

- Abdullah Kamal, an assistant electrical engineer for the ministry of water and electricity, said he went to Iran after the Sept. 11 attacks with \$15,000, almost of all of which he gave to the poor. He then traveled to Pakistan, where he was imprisoned before being taken to the Afghan city of Kandahar and then to Cuba. He was accused of having an F-91W Casio watch, which officials have said were used in bombs, but Kamal said he didn't know the timepiece could be used for terrorism.

- Fouad Al Rabia, 45, said he worked as an engineer for Kuwait Airways and was part owner of a health club. He acknowledged he saw bin Laden four times in Afghanistan in June 2001 but denied providing money to al-Qaida. Al Rabia said he returned to Afghanistan in October 2001 to gather evidence that would persuade people to support a relief effort there, but was trapped in the country and ultimately handed over to the Northern Alliance.

- Abdulaziz Sayer, a Kuwaiti who studied at the Imam Mohamed Bin Saud Islamic University, has a degree in Islamic law. Sayer said he met a man in Mecca who said he should go to Afghanistan to teach the Quran. He entered Afghanistan in October 2001 and did charity work there. His name was found on a computer hard drive after coalition forces raided a house. He denied being a member of al-Qaida or the Taliban.

MOROCCO

- Yunis Abdurrahman Shokuri helped set up a house for young Moroccans in Afghanistan. Authorities accused him of obtaining Kalashnikov rifles from the Taliban. He said they had one for protection but did not fight anyone. The house was closed after Sept. 11, 2001, and he left for Pakistan, where he was arrested. He is also accused of helping form the Moroccan Islamic Fighting Group and of associating with a man linked to an al-Qaida sleeper cell in Morocco. He said he never heard of the group and did not know anyone from al-Qaida. He said the U.S. government, in its search for terrorists, was arbitrarily rounding up people of Arab descent.

PAKISTAN

- Assem Matruq Mohammad Al Aasami, also known as Walid Ibrahim Mustafa Abu Hizaji, said he went to Saudi Arabia and then Afghanistan to find work, not to fight a holy war. He acknowledged that he went to an al-Qaida-linked training camp, but said he did not realize what kind of camp it was. He said he was there when the Sept. 11 attacks took place.

- Saifullah A. Paracha, a multimillionaire businessman from Karachi, was arrested on arrival in Bangkok, Thailand, in July 2003, held in isolation for 14 months in Afghanistan and then sent to Guantanamo. A computer science graduate of the New York Institute of Technology, he acknowledged meeting bin Laden twice, but denied all high-level offenses he was accused of, including making investments for al-Qaida members, translating statements for bin Laden, joining in a plot to smuggle explosives into the United States and recommending that nuclear weapons be used against U.S. soldiers.

- Abdur Sayed Rahman identified himself as a poor chicken farmer. But the U.S. alleged he was either a Taliban military judge or the Taliban's deputy foreign minister. It emerged during the hearing that the deputy minister was Abdur Zahid Rahman, a near homonym of the detainee. Police searched Abdur Sayed Rahman's home in the fall of

2001. He was arrested and said he could not bribe his way to freedom. "An American told me I was wrongfully taken and that in a couple of days I'd be freed," Rahman said. "I never saw that American again and I'm still here."

- Habib Rasool said he settled in Afghanistan in 2001, and that soon afterward the Taliban took him from his house to a compound in Kunduz. Held against their will, people at the compound were selected by lottery to fight, he said. Rasool said his number never came up before the Taliban surrendered to the Northern Alliance.

- Zia Shah was a driver for the Taliban. "I went to Afghanistan to get a job as a driver. I did not care whom I worked for; it was just that the Taliban were ones to offer me a job," he said. He said he occasionally transported people who were armed, but mostly he carried food. After the U.S. invasion, he was asked to drive a vehicle with Taliban members to Mazar-e-Sharif for them to surrender, he said.

SAUDI ARABIA

- Abdul Aziz Sa'ad Alfaldi, whose transcript said one family name was missing, said his arrest may have been a case of mistaken identity. He denied fighting coalition forces in Afghanistan or having ties to al-Qaida, saying he went to Afghanistan to talk his brother into returning home.

- Abdul Hakim Bukhary denied joining al-Qaida but said he met bin Laden 14 or 15 years ago while fighting in Russia. He traveled to Afghanistan to fight the United States after Sept. 11, 2001, but was jailed by the Taliban. The Taliban suspected him of being a spy after he said he liked slain Northern Alliance leader Ahmad Shah Massood, he said. After the U.S. invasion, he was sent to Guantanamo. "Prisoners here are in paradise," he said. "American people are very good. Really. They give us three meals. Fruit juice and everything!"

- Mohammed Atiq Al Harbi (or Atiq Mohammed Al Harbi) said he had three fruit and vegetable selling businesses in Saudi Arabia. He said he went to Pakistan with about \$12,000 in November 2001 to help Afghan refugees, but realized the best way to help was by donating the money to the Red Crescent. He said he was detained at a checkpoint as he headed to the Pakistani city of Quetta and was questioned by Americans. He said Pakistani authorities hid his passport, and that although the Saudi Arabian Embassy tried to help him, he believed he was sold by Pakistani intelligence to the U.S. He denied links to al-Qaida and attacking U.S. or allied forces. His name was allegedly found on a document recovered at a former residence of bin Laden in Kandahar.

SAUDI ARABIA

- Tariqe Al Harbi was accused of going to Afghanistan to fight the Northern Alliance. Harbi, who was about 18 at the time, said he went to help the poor and needy. Harbi said he left Al-Farouq, a military training camp run by Arabs, after two weeks and talked to the Taliban about helping the poor. But he didn't want to join the group and decided to go home. He went to Pakistan and asked authorities to take him to the Saudi Embassy but instead was taken into custody and turned over to the U.S.

- Bandar Ahmad Mubarak Al Jabri said he received training from the Taliban in Afghanistan but was not a member and never fought against the Northern Alliance or the U.S. "I wanted to use the training provided to fight in Chechnya," he said. He said he went to Pakistan with the intention of going home to Saudi Arabia because his mother was sick. He said Pakistani officials turned him over to the Americans.

- Abdul Rahman Owaid Mohammad Al Juaid said he was a student in Afghanistan who collected money at mosques to distribute to the poor. He fled the country when fighting broke out and Kabul fell, and turned himself in to Pakistani authorities. The U.S. alleged he provided money to the Al Haramain Islamic Foundation, which is on a terrorism watchlist for providing support to al-Qaida and other terrorist organizations. Juaid denied the allegation. The U.S. claimed one of the detainee's aliases was on a list of captured al-Qaida members on a computer hard drive. Juaid said he never uses an alias.

- Mazin Salih Musaid said he was not Salah Al Awfi, a name that turned up on a computer hard drive seized during raids on al-Qaida safehouses in Pakistan. Musaid said he went to Afghanistan in the summer of 2001 for humanitarian purposes, to support — but not fight for — the Taliban government. "I went with good intentions and then realized bad things were happening and I wanted to get out," he said. He acknowledged owning a Casio F-91W watch, a model that has been used in bombs. "Millions and millions of people have these types of Casio watches," Musaid said. "If that is a crime, why doesn't the United States arrest and sentence all the shops and people who own them?"

- Abdalaziz Kareem Salim Al Noofayee, 27 or 28, said he traveled to Pakistan sometime in 2001 for medical treatment for a bad back and was arrested March 2002 by police in a raid in Faisalabad, Pakistan. He said he had been at Guantanamo for three years. He was accused of attending a terrorist training camp in 1997 and of having a Casio F-

91W watch. He said: "The watch I had is like the watch even some of the guards here have. So does that mean they are Taliban and al-Qaida?"

- Rashid Abd Al Muslih Qa'id Al Qa'id, a principal from the al-Jouf region, said he traveled with two friends to help refugees on the Afghanistan-Iran border after the Sept. 11 attacks. Al Qa'id said he gave money to the refugees and when he tried to return to Iran, was told the border was closed. When he tried to leave through Pakistan, he and his friends were detained by the Pakistani police and handed over to the Americans. Al Qa'id denied associating with al-Qaida or working with a Saudi charity allegedly linked to the militant group. His two friends are identified as Wassim Allad Omar and al Nur. Al Qa'id said they were both held at Guantanamo. "Traveling to help refugees is a charge?" he asked. "It doesn't make sense."
- Mohammed Barak Salem Al-Qurbi allegedly was identified as an al-Qaida operative by one of bin Laden's bodyguards. His passport showed he spent time in Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and the United Arab Emirates in 2001. The tribunal said he used a trick to hide a stay in Afghanistan. Al-Qurbi also was alleged to be an operative linked to the suicide bombing of the USS Cole, which killed 17 sailors, on Oct. 12, 2000, and to have managed a hostel for the Taliban.
- Yusef Abdullah Saleh Al Rubesh said his brother went to Afghanistan to fight with the Taliban, which caused his parents great anguish, and that he followed to try to persuade his brother to return home. He said he was arrested by the Taliban for having music tapes and cigarettes and for having shaved. "I didn't know Afghanistan was a religious extremist country," he said. After several months, he said, he was released and found his brother on the Taliban's front lines fighting the Northern Alliance. They were both taken prisoner by the Northern Alliance and his brother was killed in captivity. He said he was tortured by Afghans and Americans into making false confessions.
- Adnan Muhammed Ali Al Saigh said he answered a fatwah from a religious leader in Saudi Arabia to fight against Northern Alliance leader Ahmed Shah Masood, who was assassinated in 2001. Saigh said he never fought against U.S. allies, though he acknowledged being with the Taliban. "I'm wondering why you are fighting my religion?" he asked the tribunal.
- Abd Al Salam said he went to Pakistan and Afghanistan to see a doctor. "How could I be a member of Al Qaida and the Taliban if I was only there for three months?" he asked. "That was the first time for me to leave Saudi Arabia. ... I left when I was 17 years old and there is proof in the papers that were found by the Northern Alliance that show that we went there to get treatment in a hospital in Pakistan." Al Salam denied an allegation that his name turned up on a document in an al-Qaida house: "I think this accusation is false. It is made up, cooked up against us."

_Muhammad Al Utabyi said he was a university art student who traveled to Afghanistan to try to retrieve a relative from the dangerous north. He denied being allied with the Taliban, but said he attended the Al Aqsa military training camp in 2000 in Pakistan. "I was too young. As a juvenile, we never think of the dangers, or what happens in those situations," he said.

_Slah Muhamed Salih Al Zabe said he was a taxi driver in Mecca before moving to Afghanistan with his family in 1999. "The cost of living is cheaper in Afghanistan and they treat foreigners with more respect," Zabe said. He said he didn't think it would be a crime against the United States to recognize the Taliban government after the Sept. 11 attacks. He said he was detained after fleeing to Pakistan about a week before Kabul fell. "I am not an enemy combatant because I never fought against the United States or any other person," he said. "No one thought it was bad to go to Afghanistan. So I do not know if this is a crime. Even my trip to Afghanistan was very official. I had my passport stamped — there was nothing for me to hide."

SOMALIA

- Mohammed Hussein Abdullah said he was "about 60" and had lived under U.N. refugee status since 1993 in Peshawar, Pakistan, where he taught orphans. Abdullah was arrested in raids on suspected al-Qaida houses connected to the Afghan Support Committee, which appears on a U.S. terrorism watchlist. The committee "belongs to the education social affairs ministry in Kuwait," he said. "So if this organization is a terrorist organization, talk to the Kuwaiti government." Abdullah denied ties to the Taliban or al-Qaida, and said his son-in-law, Mohammed Sulaiman, was also a detainee at Guantanamo. "If there is anybody here that should be called a terrorist, it should be the people that came to my house that took me at 2 o'clock in the morning in front of my children and grandchildren," he said.

SUDAN

_Hammad Ali Amno Gadallah said he was an accountant in Peshawar for the Society for the Revival of Islamic Heritage.

- Adel Hassan Hamad, who had been living in Pakistan, was accused of associating with al-Qaida. Authorities said he was employed by the World Assembly of Muslim Youth in Afghanistan and Pakistan. He said he had no involvement with al-Qaida. "I hate them and I pray to God not to let people among the Muslims carry (out) their ideas," he said. Hamad added that in Afghanistan he worked as the manager of a hospital helping Afghan refugees. After September 2001, he returned to Pakistan. He said he was arrested in July 2002 after returning from Sudan on his annual vacation.

- Mustafa Ibrahim Mustafa Al Hassan was accused of belonging to a terrorist organization and going to Pakistan on his way to fight in Afghanistan. He denied that, saying he went to Pakistan to trade in clothing and to study. He said he was trying to leave because he couldn't get his visa renewed when he was arrested at a checkpoint in Pakistan. "When the investigators were interrogating me, when I told them I went there to trade and I went there to study, they hit me, they tortured me," he said. "They were torturing us with electricity and they made us walk on sharp objects. They hit us a lot, and because of the pain we just said anything."

SYRIA

- Maasoum Abdah was accused of being a Taliban member. He said he went to Afghanistan in 2000 to get married and live because it was cheaper than Syria . He also was accused of operating a safehouse that contained Kalashnikov rifles. He denied the allegations. He was arrested crossing the border into Pakistan.

- Abu Omar Al-Hamawe, a butcher, said he went to Iran and then Afghanistan in 2000 to try to make enough money to get married. "After the fall of Afghanistan, I had to leave because the Northern Alliance was killing Arabs and all of the Arabs were targets," he said. Al-Hamawe said he was arrested at the Pakistani border and turned over to U.S. forces. He disputed an allegation that his name turned up on a document discovered in an al-Qaida safehouse. "The name on the paper is Abu Omar Mohammad. ... There is no one named Mohammad in my family," he said.

_Muhammad Khantumani said he was an 18-year-old high school student when he left Syria in June 2001 to join his father in Iran, and later in Afghanistan. He denied belonging to the Taliban or al-Qaida. "In fact, I am against any person who commits hostile acts and violent acts." Khantumani said he and his father — Abd al Nasir, who is also a Guantanamo detainee and who testified at his son's hearing — were tortured in a Pakistani jail while Americans were present, and asked not to be returned to Syria. "We heard if we return there, they would kill us," Khantumani said.

- Abd al Nasir said he traveled to Afghanistan in 1999 looking for work and was joined by his family in 2001. After the Sept. 11 attacks, he decided to leave Afghanistan but he and his son were separated from the rest of their family. They were arrested in Pakistan and claimed to have been tortured by Pakistanis while Americans looked on.

TAJIKISTAN

- Zain Ul Abedin (initially listed as Jumma Jan), born in 1978, was captured in Mazar-e-Sharif, Afghanistan, by coalition forces on July 3, 2003. He said they arrested the wrong man. He was accused of being a Taliban and Hezb-e-Islami Gulhuddin leader, and of carrying out a mission in Tajikistan with al-Qaida. Abedin said he came to Afghanistan in 1991 or 1992 as a refugee and was a taxi driver at the time of his arrest.

- Zakirjan Asam went to Afghanistan in the spring of 2001. He was accused of being a member of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, which allegedly has ties to the Taliban. Asam said he traveled to Afghanistan as a refugee and was turned over to U.S. forces because he could not afford a bribe.

TUNISIA

- Adel Ben, a Tunisian citizen living in Italy, migrated to Afghanistan in early 2001. He denied being part of the Sami Essid Network, which the U.S. says provides financial support to terrorist groups. He also denied providing al-Qaida members with fake passports so they could get to Europe. Ben said he went to Afghanistan after converting to Islam.

TURKEY

- Murat Kurnaz, a Turkish citizen living in Germany, was accused of planning to travel to Pakistan with Selcuk Bilgin, who participated in a suicide bombing. Kurnaz said he was unaware of the bombing, and that he and Bilgin were friends until 2000. He said he wanted to study Islam. Kurnaz said he was arrested in Pakistan, chained and put in isolation for a week before being handed over to Americans and taken to Cuba. "I am a Muslim, but I am not a terrorist," he said. "If I could prevent terrorism, I would. Islam is a peaceful religion."
- Salih Uyar, 24 at the time of his hearing, went to Afghanistan in 2000. He was accused of living with an al-Qaida member and of associating with radical religious groups. At the time of his capture, he had a Casio watch. "If it's a crime to carry this watch, your own military personnel also carry this watch," Uyar said. "Does that mean that they're just terrorists as well?"

UZBEKISTAN

- Oibek Bek, 26, said he was a member of the Uzbek armed forces and denied being part of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan. He said he went to Tajikistan to buy apples to sell in Russia, but his passport was stolen and he could not go home. He said Tajiks fooled him into going to Afghanistan in November 1999, where he made a living trading cattle. In October 2001, he was told he could get new papers at Bagram air base. "There, I saw American soldiers," he said. "They just took me inside, they questioned me, and they kept me for a few days. I've been detained ever since."
- Kamalludin Kasimbekov (or Kamoliddin Tohirjonovich Kacimbekov), 28, said he left Uzbekistan after a friend killed a policeman while driving Kasimbekov's car. He reached Afghanistan, he said, where the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan took away his military ID, which he needed to go home. He said he worked for the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan in an auto shop and as an ambulance driver. He is alleged to have been trained to use weapons.

YEMEN

- Emad Abdalla, a 25-year-old student, was captured at a university dormitory in Faisalabad, where he was studying the Quran, the Muslim holy book. He is accused of going to Afghanistan to participate in jihad, going to a training camp and then to Kandahar and Tora Bora. He was captured with up to 15 others.
- Agnahn Purhan Abjallil, from Orday, Yemen, was accused of belonging to al-Qaida, and with going to a militant training camp in Afghanistan. He denied the allegations and said the military mistook him for someone else. He said he left Yemen to seek medical treatment after a stroke, and expressed frustration about his classification as an enemy combatant.
- Faris Muslim Al Ansari denied he was a Taliban fighter. He said his family left Yemen when he was about 4, moving first to Pakistan and then to Afghanistan. He said his father helped the Afghans fight the Soviet Union. "The Taliban were nice to people like my father because it is a good, humane thing to do," he said.
- Fahed Abdullah Ahmad Ghazi is accused of being an al-Qaida fighter who trained in Afghanistan and was later chosen to go to Tora Bora and become one of bin Laden's bodyguards. He said he went to Afghanistan to escape problems in Yemen. "I was not in Tora Bora by choice," he said. "The only choice I had was to listen to the people who led me from one place to another. I thought Tora Bora would be a safe haven on the way out of Afghanistan." And he said: "It would have been impossible for Osama bin Laden to trust a 17-year-old with only nine days of training to become a trusted bodyguard."
- Abdullah Mohammed Al-Hamiri was accused of association with al-Qaida, of going to a militant training camp in Afghanistan in 2001, and of speaking with bin Laden at a safehouse. He was captured by Pakistani forces with a group of Arab fighters while trying to flee in December 2001. "All of those charges he said were made up in order to keep him and other Muslims at this camp," his legal representative said.
- Mohammed Hassan (or Mohammed Mohammed Hassan Al Udien) was at Salafia University in Pakistan studying the Quran. While there, he said, he heard of a house with Yemeni people and went to visit them. He was arrested in Faisalabad.
- Issam Hamid Ali Bin Al Jayfi, 25, described himself as a government clerk and wayward youth, using tobacco and drinking alcohol, who was persuaded by a more religious friend named "Sammy" to go to Afghanistan. Never having been outside Yemen, he said he thought it would be like Europe, a place where he could live freely. Once in Kandahar, the friend told him they had come to fight. He said he fled to Pakistan, where villagers turned him over to police.

- Karam Khamis Sayd Khamsan, a Yemeni soldier, denied links to the Taliban and al-Qaida. He said a Yemeni arranged to send him to Pakistan to act as human collateral in a drug deal. Khamsan was detained in Pakistan.
- Hussein Salem Mohammed, born in 1977, was accused of belonging to al-Qaida, staying at an alleged al-Qaida guesthouse in Afghanistan, and associating with a group accused of aiding al-Qaida. Mohammed acknowledged traveling illegally across borders, saying he was trying to get to Europe to apply for refugee status.
- Musad (also referred to as Musab) Omar Al Mudwani denied fighting in Afghanistan alongside the Taliban and al-Qaida. "I had a visa for one month only," he said. "I wanted to see how things were and come back home. When the events (of Sept. 11, 2001) happened, I still had a few days left on the visa. The roads were closed and I could not leave." After the fall of Kabul, Al Mudwani made his way to Pakistan, where he was arrested in September 2002. He said he had seen bin Laden twice in Afghanistan, but had no real contact with him.
- Ahmed Abdel Qadar said he had wanted to return to Yemen, and was arrested in Faisalabad, Pakistan. He said he went to Pakistan because he wanted to study computers, but could not find a course taught in Arabic.
- Mohammed Ahmed Salam was accused of associating with forces engaged in hostilities against the U.S. He traveled to Pakistan in May 2001; authorities said the trip was paid for by an Islamic group that is a front for terrorist activity. Salam said he went to Pakistan for a medical procedure on his nose. He denied the organization paid for his trip.
- Said Salih allegedly attended two speeches by bin Laden in Afghanistan and worked for al-Qaida as a guard at Kandahar airport. The transcript said he was captured following a firefight in Karachi, Pakistan, along with several alleged members of al-Qaida on Sept. 11, 2002. Salih said he did not participate in the firefight.
- Hani Abdul Muslih al Shulan said U.S. officials allege he supported the Taliban and was found with a Casio watch. Shulan was accused of being in Tora Bora during the U.S. air campaign. He said he was passing through on his way to Pakistan. Shulan said he was a student who went to Afghanistan to find a job and save money. He found work as a chef's assistant north of Kabul, he said.
- Mohammad Ahmad Ali Tahar denied any ties to al-Qaida and the Taliban.
- Mohammed Ali Salem Al Zarnuki, a farmer, said he went to Pakistan to study religion. After four months, he said, he visited Salafia University in Faisalabad, where he stayed at a house with other Yemenis. He said Americans arrested him and about 13 others. Al Zarnuki denied the allegations against him, which included being a member of al-Qaida and the Taliban.

NATIONALITY UNCLEAR FROM TRANSCRIPTS

- Mohammed Ahmed, also identified as Mohammed Al Asadi, was alleged to have gone to Afghanistan in March 2001 to fight and to have stayed at Taliban safehouses.
- Jamal Alawi was accused of working for Al-Wafa, a charity with alleged links to al-Qaida, but said he only bought medicine for them. He said he was merely a charity worker.
- Sa Ad Al Azmi was accused of working for Al-Wafa in Kabul for three months. He said he visited the organization to find a friend but never worked there. The U.S. said he was arrested in Karachi, Pakistan, with a member of al-Qaida, who owned a safehouse there. He responded: ``As far as I know, Al Zamel has no ties to al-Qaida."
- Zaman Gul, a shopkeeper accused of links to the Taliban and possessing weapons and communications equipment, was detained along with his father, uncle and a village elder by U.S. soldiers who claimed someone fired on them.
- Nabil Said Hadjarab traveled in late 2000 from Paris to London, where he attended the Finsbury Park mosque. In March 2001 he flew to Pakistan and then entered Afghanistan.
- Salim Ahmed Salim Hamdan said he was forced to become a driver for bin Laden.
- Faizal Salih Al Nasir acknowledged being a camp guard for the Taliban but said he did not know it was associated with al-Qaida. ``I thought I was going to be learning from the Taliban," he said, ``not fighting."
- Ehsanullah Peerzaie was detained by U.S. forces in Klianjki, Afghanistan. He was carrying a list of Taliban members and Taliban radio codes, both written on crumpled pieces of scrap paper, the U.S. said. Peerzaie denied being a member of the Taliban, saying, ``I am George Bush's soldier. I have never helped any Taliban and neither would I now."

- Mesh Arsad Al Rashid said he went to Afghanistan to help Muslims fight Dostum, now the Afghan army chief of staff, and Masood, the anti-Taliban Afghan military commander. ``I did not know my training would be considered al-Qaida training," Rashid said. ``I was trying to help Muslims. I am not from the Taliban."

- Abdul Razzak was accused of being a Taliban driver and commander of a Taliban cell in Afghanistan. He was alleged to have conducted an escort mission for bin Laden and to have been involved in assassination attempts on Afghan officials. Razzak denied the accusations.

- Abdul Sattar was captured in 2001 on unspecified charges. He testified briefly that he had never heard of al-Qaida until he was sent to Guantanamo.

- Ashraf Salim said he was a teacher and denied fighting in Afghanistan or maintaining any relationship with al-Qaida. Salim stopped talking to the tribunal after he was denied access to evidence. ``The classified information is going to stay classified until when?" Salim asked.

- Qalandar Shah, caught with weapons near the Pakistan-Afghan border, said he had a false ID under the name of Mohammed Sharif so he could not be identified by the Taliban.

- Mohammad Bin Abdul Rahman Al Shamrani declined to attend his hearing. ``I tell you I don't believe in the American Justice Department and your Supreme Court," he said in a statement. ``So judge me the way you like. I'm looking forward for God to judge between me and you."

-G hassan Abdallah Ghazi al Shirbi gave a speech against capitalists and Christians before he was taken from the hearing room.

- Adel Zamel was accused of establishing al-Wafa with Suliman Abu Ghaith. Zamel said he was just the manager in the Kabul office and ``had nothing to do with inside and the outside of the organization." He said he did not know Ghaith was a spokesman for al-Qaida and Bin Laden until he appeared on TV after the Sept. 11 attacks.

<http://www.cageprisoners.com/articles.php?id=12860>

SOURCE: Associated Press

Attorneys Representing Guantanamo Detainees React to Shocking Guantanamo Suicide Letter Just Released by the US

First Guantánamo Suicide Letter Declassified by U.S. Government Confirms Prior Accounts From Detainee: "Imprisoned, Tortured and Deprived" for "No Reason or Crime Committed"

Center for Constitutional Rights Blasts Bush Administration for Indefinite Detentions

NEW YORK - March 15 - Today attorneys representing Guantánamo detainees at the Center for Constitutional Rights (CCR) reacted to the first detainee suicide letter ever declassified by the U.S. Government, blasting the Bush Administration for driving detainees to suicide through indefinite detentions, mistreatment and torture at the base. The shocking letter by Jumah Al Dossari, a Bahraini national whose attorney found him hanging by his neck in a suicide attempt at Guantánamo in October 2005, describes how the horrific conditions of Jumah's confinement and indefinite detention drove him to try to take his own life. In his letter, Jumah seeks to make his "voice heard by the world from the depths of the detention centers" and implores the "fair people of America to look again at the situation and try to have a moment of truth."

"This disturbing new letter reveals a man brought to the brink of self-destruction because of the government's inhumane policies of indefinite detention and mistreatment - affecting hundreds of people who have not been accused of a crime or even afforded the most basic due process in court," said CCR Deputy Legal Director Barbara Olshansky.

"Jumah's letter is a haunting reminder of the meeting I had with him just before he slashed and hung himself. Jumah had repeatedly begged us to get him out of isolation. Because our request to the court for this relief was denied on technical grounds, we implored the military to hold Jumah under more humane conditions, and we continue to do so. Our grave fear is that if the military persists in denying our requests, Jumah, who by the military's own count has tried to kill himself ten times in U.S. custody, will not survive Guantánamo," said Joshua Colangelo-Bryan of Dorsey & Whitney LLP, co-counsel with the Center for Constitutional Rights for Jumah.

The entire letter is available at http://www.ccr-ny.org/v2/legal/september_11th/docs/jumaa_english.pdf.

On March 22, 2006, the Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia will hear oral argument relating to the government's motion to dismiss Jumah's case and those of all other Guantánamo detainees.

<http://www.cageprisoners.com/articles.php?id=12863>

SOURCE: CCR

March 17, 2006

Transcripts of Guantánamo Hearings: A Window into Washington's Gulag

By Joe Kay

The Associated Press published on March 15 its preliminary analysis of thousands of pages of documents on prisoners held by the US at Guantánamo Bay. The analysis gives a glimpse into the lives of hundreds of people who have been arbitrarily swept up and held without cause for years, subjected to abuse and wretched conditions.

The documents were released by the Defense Department on March 3, following a judicial order. The AP had filed a lawsuit against the Defense Department seeking release of the documents. More than 5,000 pages were handed over, consisting mainly of partial transcripts of the Combatant Status Review Tribunals, kangaroo courts in which prisoners have sought to challenge their status as "enemy combatants." However, the documents were not organized or indexed, and the AP has taken two weeks to put together a list of 186 names of prisoners.

These names represent only a fraction of those who have been held at the prison in Cuba, all of them deprived of basic democratic rights. According to the AP, more than 600 individuals held at Guantánamo Bay are not mentioned in the transcripts. However, this is the first time that anything approaching a list of prisoners—and their backgrounds—has been made available to the public.

Most of the 186 prisoners in the transcripts are Afghan, though many come from other countries throughout the Middle East and Central Asia, and some are from Europe. They were mostly picked up as part of the American invasion and occupation of Afghanistan. During the illegal invasion, the US military and its allies rounded up thousands of people, some with some relationship to the Taliban or the resistance to the American invasion, some arrested by accident or association.

A number of the prisoners said they were turned over to the American authorities because they refused to pay a bribe to the new government installed by Washington. Others said they were turned over to US troops for political reasons, because they had come into conflict with some other government officials following the invasion.

Many of the prisoners transferred to Guantánamo Bay first passed through US-controlled detention facilities at Bagram air base, or through other countries such as Pakistan, where they were routinely tortured. In the transcripts, many complain that they have no idea why they are being held and have not been shown any of the evidence against them. Transcripts of the hearings in which this secret evidence was presented were not included in the material released by the military. One prisoner noted during his hearing, "In our culture, if someone is accused of something, they are shown the evidence."

Among those arrested and held in Guantánamo Bay are:

* Abdullah Khan, an Afghan shopkeeper. Like a number of the prisoners, he says that he was falsely identified as a Taliban official. "Americans were giving an announcement that if you turn over a high-ranking Taliban member or the governor, we will give you a lot of money," he said. "I have very small kids and I don't know what my kids are doing." Khan passed a polygraph test given to verify his claims.

* Abdul Matin was arrested after he returned to Afghanistan from Pakistan following the US invasion. According to the transcripts, he said he was a science teacher and was not a supporter of al Qaeda or the Taliban, but that he was turned over after refusing to pay the government a bribe. The AP notes that he successfully answered a number of questions demonstrating a knowledge of science and mathematics.

* Abdul Rahman, who also passed a polygraph test, said he was a shop owner. According to the AP, "Rahman said after the US bombing began, he and other merchants were detained by Abdul Rashid Dostum, now the Afghan army's chief of staff. 'They tied us up, and we stayed there for a night without food or water,' he said. 'I think they buried about 50 people alive into the ground. They kept on shouting and screaming, and they kept putting dirt on them.' " During the US invasion, Dostum, a local warlord, was an important US ally and part of the Northern Alliance. It was Dostum's forces that were responsible for the massacre at Mazar-i-Sharif, when up to 1,000 prisoners were suffocated in sealed cargo containers.

* Dawd Gul, who says he raised sheep, but was forcefully drafted by the Taliban. According to the AP, "After he told the Taliban he did not know how to use a Kalashnikov, they gave him a job peeling potatoes, washing dishes and serving food."

* The AP recounts the following Kafkaesque exchange between members of the American tribunal and Mohammed Sharif, an Afghan accused of being a guard at a Taliban camp. "Q: You mentioned that if we had facts or proof against you, you would understand why you were a prisoner, is that correct?" A: "Yes." Q: "What could you have possibly done, that we might discover some of those facts?" A: "That's my point. There are no facts.... This is ridiculous. I know for a fact there is no proof."

* Abdur Sayed Rahman, a citizen of Pakistan, said that he was mistaken for Abdur Zahid Rahman, a deputy minister of the Taliban government. Rahman said that he was unable to pay a bribe to free himself once he was arrested. "An American told me I was wrongfully taken and that in a couple of days I'd be freed. I never saw that American again and I'm still here."

The documents go on like this—186 people with similar stories. All of the prisoners at Guantánamo are being held illegally, captured in the course of an aggressive war aimed to assert American control over critical resources in Central Asia. They are being held in flagrant violation of the Geneva Conventions and all standards of international law. The fact that many of these prisoners appear to have had absolutely nothing to do with the conflict is nevertheless particularly outrageous.

Also this week, the lawyer for a man currently held at Guantánamo Bay, Jumah al-Doussari, released a letter written in October 2005, just before al-Doussari attempted to kill himself. The letter was only cleared for release recently by the American government, which vets all communications from prisoners. Al-Doussari's letter provides a portrait of the desperation of many of the prisoners at the camp, who have no idea why they are being held and when they might be released, and are prevented from having contact with their families. Al-Doussari has attempted suicide on multiple occasions.

"The detainees," he wrote, according to a translation, "are suffering from the bitterness of despair, the detention humiliation and the vanquish of slavery and suppression." Directing his comments to his lawyer, he wrote, "I hope you will always remember that you met and sat with a 'human being' called 'Jumah' who suffered too much and was abused in his belief, self, dignity and also in his humanity. He was imprisoned, tortured and deprived from his homeland, his family and his young daughter who is in the most need of him for four years...with no reason or crime committed."

Al-Doussari wrote that suicide would be the way to "make our voice heard by the world from the depths of the detention centers" and called for the "fair people of America to look again at the situation and try to have a moment of truth with themselves.... When you remember me in my last gasps of life before dying, while my soul is leaving my body to rise to its creator, remember that the world let us and our case down. Remember that our governments let us down."

Hundreds of people at Guantánamo Bay are being held under the same conditions, he wrote. They "were captured, tortured and detained for no offence or reason. Their lives might end like mine."

<http://www.cageprisoners.com/articles.php?id=12893>

SOURCE: World Socialist Website

March 19, 2006

Wrong Place, Wrong Time

REVIEWED BY CHRISTINA LAMB

**ENEMY COMBATANT: A British Muslim's Journey to Guantanamo and Back
by Moazzam Begg**

Free Press £18.99 pp395

Even the most die-hard supporter of the war on terror is hard put to justify the Guantanamo Bay detention centre. How can you retain the moral high ground and fight for values such as personal freedom if you are keeping hundreds of people caged in subhuman conditions, for years, without charge?

The UN has said it should be closed, as have a growing chorus of Labour ministers including, last week, Peter Hain. President Bush's most faithful supporter, Tony Blair, can do no better than calling it an "anomaly".

So the first account of life behind the razor wire has turned its author, former detainee Moazzam Begg, into a celebrity, a regular feature on talk shows over the previous week. Arrested in Pakistan in January 2002 for being in the wrong place at the wrong time, Begg spent three years in detention at Bagram, then Guantanamo, one of nine Britons held there. His book confirms the leaked stories that have emerged: of torture, beatings to death, being forced to wear the infamous orange jump suits and share communal toilet buckets, of maggot-infested cells, and prisoners kept awake by bright lights and loud music (the blasting of the Bee Gees' Saturday Night Fever into a cell was a whole new form of torture to me).

Perhaps most cruel of all for a devoted family man, for two nights he was made to suffer the screams of a woman in the next cell, whom he was led to believe was his wife.

It is hard to read this and not be ashamed that it is being done in our names, by a country that professes to be the great defender of freedom. Surely such treatment would turn anyone against the west? Yet Begg shows a remarkable lack of bitterness, while pointing out that most of his fellow inmates were innocents who were simply caught up in the fighting in Afghanistan in 2001.

Although his account is horrifying, this is nothing we have not heard before. I was more struck by the complete pointlessness of much of the questioning. At the processing centre in Kandahar, two men in FBI baseball caps ask Begg when he last spoke to Mullah Omar or Osama Bin Laden, as if he would pour forth information.

Later, at Bagram, his interrogators accuse him of planning the assassination of the Pope on the basis of photographs on his laptop: this, he points out, is simply the history of websites he had looked at. At Guantanamo, he finds he has more in common culturally with his guards than with fellow inmates, most of whom are uneducated Afghans, and ends up discussing movies with some of them. But he is condescending on the dim-wittedness of many of his American captors, one of whom asks him to "stop using big words".

While I read this book with growing discomfort about the treatment of the detainees, I also felt uneasy at the way Begg glosses over visits to training camps of militant Pakistani groups as if they were school trips. The most moving part is his account of growing up as a Muslim in Birmingham in the 1970s and 1980s. His mother died of breast cancer when he was six and he was brought up by his father, a bank manager and frustrated poet, who tells him stories of fleeing India at Partition on the so-called Death Trains.

Subjected to "Paki-bashing" on the streets of Birmingham, he learns martial arts and joins a gang. Not surprisingly, when he hears of the rape of Muslim women in Bosnia, the sense of a religion under siege becomes acute. His life is changed by a holiday to Pakistan that leads to a visit to a training camp in Afghanistan. The commitment of the fighters he meets so impresses him that when he returns home, he gives up going to pubs and nightclubs, and opens an Islamic bookshop.

Trips to Bosnia and Chechnya follow, as well as a period living in Peshawar. Begg claims he took his family to live in Afghanistan in 2001 to drill wells and support a school. Even though it was a question repeatedly asked by his captors, he offers no answer as to why a man who worries endlessly about the welfare of his family might have moved them from a comfortable lifestyle in the Midlands to Taliban Afghanistan.

His attempts to defend the Taliban as not as bad as they were painted seem odd for a man clearly so well read and who witnessed some of their victims hanging from lampposts. Similarly, he dismisses hearing about September 11 in a small paragraph, saying that, as he did not have television in Kabul, he had no idea of the scale of the attack.

This seems odd. Most Afghans listen to the radio and, as a keen news and movie buff, Begg was surely familiar with the World Trade Center. He says the first time he was aware of what it really meant was October 17, yet this is nine days after the bombing of Afghanistan started.

Only when the Taliban fled Kabul did he leave and escape to Islamabad. It was there, in January 2002, that he got the midnight knock that marked the start of a Kafkaesque nightmare in which he found himself in a legal no man's land — an "enemy combatant" rather than a prisoner of war and thus deprived of rights under the Geneva Conventions. It is a shocking story that might open the eyes of those who still believe "Gitmo" is the best available option.

Available at the Books First price of £17.09 (inc p&p) on 0870 165 8585

THE OXFORD LITERARY FESTIVAL

Moazzam Begg appears at The Sunday Times Oxford Literary Festival on Wednesday, March 29, at 12.30pm. Telephone 0870 343 1001 for tickets

<http://www.cageprisoners.com/articles.php?id=12930>

SOURCE: The Times

From A Parallel Worldrom A Parallel World

Moazzam Begg tells the story of his three-year detention without trial in Enemy Combatant. Our only response should be outrage, says David Rose

The Observer

**Enemy Combatant: A British Muslim's Journey to Guantanamo and Back
by Moazzam Begg with Victoria Brittain
Free Press £18.99, pp395**

The war on terror waged since 9/11 has spawned the creation of a parallel world: planet spook, its rules and language determined by the agencies of what increasingly looks like an oxymoron - Western intelligence. In spookspeak, the brutalities of Guantanamo Bay are known as 'humane treatment', while a man such as Moazzam Begg, a gentle, devoted family man who was detained without trial for more than three years, can never be allowed to lose his label of terrorist fanatic. Hence the planted leak from planet spook last week, on the eve of this book's publication - a claim that Begg confessed to the FBI to having trained with al-Qaeda, notwithstanding the point that this long-retracted admission was the product of coercive torment.

Begg's account, co-written with Victoria Brittain, who also co-wrote the play Guantanamo, is a dispatch from across the spook event horizon. Begg has, it seems, survived, but our only appropriate response is outrage.

<http://www.cageprisoners.com/articles.php?id=12928>

SOURCE: The Observer