

## PRESS RELEASE

**January 19, 2006**

### **Guantanamo Prisoners Tied To London Bomb Probe**

**By Jane Sutton**

GUANTANAMO BAY U.S. NAVAL BASE, Cuba, Jan 18 (Reuters) - Prisoners at the Guantanamo base in Cuba provided important information in connection with last summer's London transit bombings that the United States shared with authorities in the United Kingdom, the general in charge of the prison said.

The July 7 suicide bombings by four young British Islamists on three underground trains and a double-decker bus in central London during the morning rush hour killed 52 people and wounded more than 700 others.

"After the attacks in London, there were a number of questions asked trying to understand who these people were and where they had been," Army Maj. Gen. Jay Hood, who oversees the Guantanamo detention operation, said in an interview late on Wednesday.

"A significant number of the men we're holding here, a number, have lived in London, have lived in the United Kingdom," Hood said.

"And so where we could answer their questions and provide background on movements, travels, financing, communications, means of communications, recruitment, training, that sort of thing, I think we have played an important role."

British anti-terrorism officials have said it was unclear what support or international links the bombers had. But in a videotape aired in September, al Qaeda's second-in-command Ayman al-Zawahri claimed the group had carried out the bombings to strike at "British arrogance."

All of the UK citizens who had been held at Guantanamo have been released but non-citizens who lived in the United Kingdom are among the nearly 500 prisoners at the remote U.S. naval base.

Hood did not discuss which prisoners gave information potentially linked to the London bombings, nor did he provide specifics.

The general said U.S. intelligence agents had shared with U.S. allies "literally everything" learned from the prisoners.

"Of course if we had people here at Guantanamo Bay who had some specific knowledge -- locations, personalities, monies, communications during their time in the United Kingdom, we'd certainly provide that," Hood said.

The United States began sending prisoners to Guantanamo four years ago but Hood said some have only recently begun providing useful information.

He said "a good, significant number" of mid-level al Qaeda associates were captured during the war in Afghanistan and held at Guantanamo and had discussed men they knew or trained who may have since moved up in the hierarchy of the militant Islamist group.

"Who knows those people better than anyone else? The people that were training them, the people that were preparing them for future roles in that terrorist organization," Hood said.

He said the Guantanamo prisoners learned about the London bombings shortly after they occurred, probably from visiting lawyers who are challenging their detention in the U.S. courts.

"Most of the information available to detainees comes to them from their contacts with legal counsel," Hood said.

<http://www.cageprisoners.com/articles.php?id=11778>

**SOURCE: Reuters Alertnet**

**January 20, 2006**

## **US Says Guantanamo Hunger Strike Dwindling**

**By Jane Sutton**

GUANTANAMO BAY U.S. NAVAL BASE, Cuba (Reuters) - The number of Guantanamo prisoners on a hunger strike to protest their detention has dropped to its lowest level since October, according to U.S. military officials, who said they are unsure why most of those involved have resumed eating.

As of Wednesday night, 22 prisoners had refused at least nine consecutive meals and 17 of those were being fed through tubes inserted through the nose into their stomachs, according to Army Lt. Col. Jeremy Martin, a spokesman at the prison for foreign terrorism suspects.

The hunger strike began in August and peaked on September 11, the fourth anniversary of the al Qaeda attacks on America, when 131 detainees -- more than a quarter of the total at the prison -- took part in protest of their detention at Guantanamo.

The number surge again on Christmas Day but has since dropped, military officials said.

"There has been a drastic change," Martin said. "Although we can't say with certainty why, detainees on hunger strike have begun to eat."

Lawyers for the prisoners have accused the military of undercounting the hunger strikers. In October, a federal judge in Washington ordered the government to notify their lawyers about forced feedings and provide them with prisoners' medical records.

U.S. District Judge Gladys Kessler said detainees' lawyers had presented "deeply troubling" allegations of U.S. personnel violently shoving feeding tubes as thick as a finger through the men's noses and into their stomachs without anesthesia or sedatives, with detainees vomiting blood as U.S. personnel mocked them.

Officials at the camp deny those allegations. The Navy doctor in charge of the detainee hospital said medical workers use soft, flexible feeding tubes and anesthetize and lubricate the prisoners' nostrils before inserting the tubes.

"It's done with great compassion and care," said the doctor, who like many military officials in direct contact with the prisoners, asked that his name not be used. "We are very, very gentle."

He said the prisoners were not strapped down during feedings and that none had been injured in the process.

Officials at the 4-year-old prison portrayed the hunger strike as a publicity stunt aimed at pressuring the United States to release the detainees. Most of the nearly 500 men were captured during the war to oust al Qaeda from Afghanistan after the September 11 attacks and the Bush administration has asserted the right to hold them indefinitely as part of the war against terrorism.

Guantanamo officials said most of the tube-fed prisoners cooperate with the "involuntary feedings" but refused to eat regular meals because they want to be counted as hunger strikers.

"Frankly I do not believe that the men that are participating in the hunger strike indeed wish to do any long-term physical damage to their own health," said Army Maj. Gen. Jay Hood, who oversees the prison operation.

He said several tube-fed prisoners had told the doctors, "I know as long as you are here that I will not die."

<http://www.cageprisoners.com/articles.php?id=11790>

**SOURCE: Reuters**

**January 21, 2006**

## **US Charges 10th Detainee With War Crimes**

### **Associated Press**

An Afghan man suspected of being an al Qaeda terrorist was formally charged yesterday in connection with a March 2002 grenade attack in Afghanistan that wounded three journalists.

Abdul Zahir, who also was charged with paying other members of al Qaeda to conduct terrorist attacks against coalition forces, became the 10th detainee at the U.S. prison at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, to be charged with criminal offenses that will lead to an eventual military trial.

Zahir was charged with conspiracy, aiding the enemy and attacking civilians.

According to the charges, Zahir operated in Afghanistan from 1997 until his capture in July 2002. He allegedly was paid to work as a money courier and translator, funneling money to members of a terrorist cell in Kabul. He was allegedly entrusted with more than \$50,000 to fund terrorist attacks.

He also was charged with producing anti-American leaflets to recruit Afghans living near the U.S. Embassy in Kabul and near U.S. military bases in Afghanistan to commit terrorist attacks against American soldiers.

Zahir was arrested about four months after the grenade attack. He is charged with working with two other terrorists in the attack, in which a grenade was thrown through the window of a vehicle carrying journalists traveling toward Gardez.

In that attack, a Canadian reporter for the Toronto Star was seriously wounded. Two other journalists and a driver were also in the car.

<http://www.cageprisoners.com/articles.php?id=11807>

**SOURCE: Washington Post**

**January 22, 2006**

## **Al-Hilah in Guantanamo, Amnesty Confirms**

### **By Observer Staff**

SANA'A - Abdul Salaam Al-Hilah, the Yemeni businessman arrested by US forces, is being held captive in the US-military Guantanamo Bay prison in Cuba, according to Amnesty International.

The 34-year old married father of four has given a testimony about his alleged kidnap by the US agency four years ago to Amnesty, the international human rights watchdog. The report has eased fears about the Yemeni's exact whereabouts as many - including his family - thought he may be being held in Afghanistan.

Al-Hilah claims he was illegally kidnapped by the CIA with the co-operation of the Egyptian authorities. Al-Hilah said he was kidnapped while in Egypt for business.

Al-Hilah said: "The Americans had imprisoned me after I was imprisoned in Egypt while on a short business visit."

Al-Hilah, a member in the general committee of the ruling General People's Congress party, said he was arrested in September 2002. He said he was moved to five different prisons before he was taken to the Guantanamo naval base prison on September 17 2004.

He told Amnesty that after he was kidnapped in Egypt, he was taken to a prison in Azerbaijan, before being shifted to a camp in Afghanistan. Finally he was taken to Guantanamo.

There he claims he has been subjected to physical abuse, insults and has been deprived of medical therapy he said he needs.

A diplomatic crisis was caused between Yemen and Egypt due to the disappearance of Al-Hilah, a lead member of the GPC.

However the Egyptian authorities have denied completely that Al-Hilah came to Cairo, or that they have set up a trap to arrest him.

Meanwhile the Yemeni Foreign Ministry said that Al-Hilah was being held in an American prison in Afghanistan, according to reports from Pakistan.

Al-Hilah's brother, Mohammed, talking on behalf of his family to the Yemen Observer, said that they had believed he was still under arrest in Afghanistan.

He added that one of the Al-Hilah's friends had received an anonymous call saying that he was imprisoned in an American base, before he was moved on to Guantanamo bay itself.

Amnesty International has called for the now notorious American base to be shut down and an investigation launched into the alleged abuses.

"There is no solution but to close this jail, and to launch an investigation immediately. Plenty information has been received of acts of torturing and severe mistreatment since 2002," a statement from Amnesty said.

The detention center in Cuba's eastern tip opened Jan. 11, 2002, after the U.S.-led force ousted the Taliban regime in Afghanistan for harboring Osama bin Laden. Only nine of the roughly 500 detainees from 35 different nationalities at the naval base have been charged after years in detention. Currently 40 prisoners are reported to be on hunger strike.

<http://www.cageprisoners.com/articles.php?id=11832>

**SOURCE: Yemen Observer**

## **US Guantanamo Lawyers Visit Yemen**

**By Observer Staff**

SANA'A – A team of ten American lawyers from the Center for Constitutional Rights (CCR) are due to arrive in Sana'a this week to meet the families of those Yemenis detained in the US-military Guantanamo Bay prison.

The Hood Organization for Defending Rights and Freedoms said that the American lawyers would hold a general meeting with the families of those held in the detention centre in Cuba.

The lawyers are expected to review the steps being taken in for the defense of the detainees with their families, and discuss what is needed to continue their work.

A press conference will be held after the meeting and answers would be given to questions from journalists relating to the cases.

The American lawyers have already met with the Yemeni detainees when they went to Guantanamo before the Eid vacation to review their legal conditions, so to be able to file a lawsuit under their names against the American authorities.

A lawsuit has already been filed with the names of 60 Yemeni detainees in Guantanamo.

Meanwhile the Yemeni government is reported to be intending to release four detainees held in detention in Sana'a, Aden, Taiz, and Al-Mahrah.

The four detainees are Walid Shaher Al-Qadasi, Salah Salem Qarw, Mohammed Saleh Al-Asad, and Mohammed Faraj Ba-Shumaila.

They are to be reported to be about to be released from prison since no evidence has been found linking them to the crimes that the American authorities accused them of. They were remanded in custody after their return to Yemen while the charges against them were investigated in this country.

However, one former detainee is currently facing trial in Sana'a. The trial of Karama Khomeisan, a Yemeni released from Guantanamo is to begin on Monday in the special penal court in Sana'a.

Khomeisan, who was arrested by US forces in the Afghan capital Kabul in 2002, is charged with involvement in drug trafficking, according to a judicial source. The US government released and returned Khomeisan back to Yemen in 2004, after no evidence was found to link him with the al-Qaeda terrorist network.

Meanwhile trials of detainees remaining in Guantanamo make slow progress. The U.S court decided to adjourn trial of the Yemeni national Hamza Al-Bahloul to May 15 after he refused to attend meeting sessions and decided to boycott the court. He also refused to allow American lawyers defend him but the American military court refused to allow Bahloul to defend himself. The presiding officer, Army Col. Peter E. Brownback denied the request, saying Bahloul was required to have a military lawyer.

Bahloul is charged with conspiring with al-Qaeda members to commit war crimes, including attacking civilians. Prosecutors charge that Bahloul was ordered by Osama bin Laden to create a video glorifying the group's October 2000 attack on the destroyer USS Cole in Yemen that killed 17 American sailors. Bahloul criticized the U.S. for its support for Israel, claiming it was one of the reasons that Arabs felt forced into the terrorism.

Bahloul, who has acknowledged that he is "from al-Qaeda", is one of only nine Guantanamo prisoners charged with crimes.

<http://www.cageprisoners.com/articles.php?id=11834>

**SOURCE: Yemen Observer**