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DOD 059652

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 centerforconstitutionalrights

May 13, 2004

George W. Bush
 President
 The White House
 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
 Washington, DC 20500



Dear President Bush:

We were kept captive, unlawfully, by U.S. Forces in Guantánamo Bay for more than two years until the 8th March of this year. We are now back in the United Kingdom.

The legality of our detention was due to be considered by the Supreme Court when we were suddenly pulled out of Guantánamo Bay and taken to England, where we were released within 24 hours.

During the past week, we have seen with disgust the photographs of men detained and tortured in Iraq. At the same time we are reading with astonishment in the newspapers here, official statements made by the United States Government about "interrogation techniques" used at Guantánamo Bay that are completely untrue.

For instance, we read that these techniques "are meant to wear down detainees by the rules forbid the kind of tortures coming to light in Iraq". The techniques, it is said, are "designed to cause disorientation, fatigue and stress", "but there is no stripping detainees naked"; There is "no physical contacts at all...our procedures prohibit us from disrobing a prisoner for any reason at all" (Army Colonel David McWilliams). It is said that "more extreme methods such as near-dry long interrogations require superior authorisation and medical monitoring" and that there is "no stripping or humiliation or physical abuse at Camp Delta."

Our own experience, and our close knowledge of the experience of other men detained beside us, demonstrates that each of these claims is completely untrue.

SecDef

ACLU (DP) 1851

DOD 059653

From the moment of our arrival in Guantánamo Bay (and indeed from long before) we were deliberately humiliated and degraded by the use of methods that we now read U.S. officials denying.

At Khandahar, we were questioned by U.S. soldiers on our knees, in chains, with guns held to our heads; and we were kicked and beaten. They kept us in "three-piece suits" made up of a body belt with a chain down to leg irons and hand shackles attached. Before we boarded the plane in Guantánamo, they dressed us in earmuffs, paintball goggles and surgical masks so we were completely disoriented. On the plane, they chained us to the floor without access to a toilet for the 22-hour flight.

Our interrogations in Guantánamo, too, were conducted with us chained to the floor for hours on end in circumstances so prolonged that it was practice to have plastic chairs for the interrogators that could be easily hosed off because prisoners would be forced to urinate during the course of them and were not allowed to go to the toilet. One practice that was introduced specifically under the regime of General Miller was "short shackling" where we were forced to squat without a chair with our hands chained between our legs and chained to the floor. If we fell over, the chains would cut into our hands. We would be left in this position for hours before an interrogation, during the interrogations (which could last as long as 12 hours), and sometimes for hours while the interrogators left the room. The air conditioning was turned up so high that within minutes we would be freezing. There was strobe lighting and loud music played that was itself a form of torture. Sometimes dogs were brought in to frighten us.

We were not fed all the time that we were there, and when we were returned to our cells, we would not be fed that day.

We should point out that there were and no doubt still are cameras everywhere in the interrogation areas. We are aware that evidence that could contradict what is being said officially is in existence. We know that CCTV cameras, videotapes and photographs exist since we were regularly filmed and photographed during interrogations and at other times, as well.

They recorded the interrogations in which we were driven to make false confessions; they insisted we were the other men in a video they showed us from August 2000 with Osama bin Laden and Mohamed Aza, but we had been in England at that time. After three months in solitary confinement under harsh conditions and repeated interrogations, we finally agreed to confess. Last September an agent from MI5 came to Guantánamo with documentary evidence that proved we could not have been in Afghanistan at the time the video was made. In the end we could prove our alibis, but we worry about people from countries where records are not as available.

Soldiers told us personally of going into cells and conducting beatings with metal bars which they did not report. Soldiers told us "we can do anything we want." We ourselves witnessed a number of brutal assaults upon prisoners. One, in April 2002, was of Jumah Al-Dousari from Bahrain, a man who had become psychiatrically disturbed, who was lying on the floor of his cage immediately near to us when a group of eight or nine guards known as the ERF Team (Extreme Reaction Force) entered his cage. We saw them severely assault him. They stamped on his neck, kicked him in the stomach even though he had metal rods there as a result of an operation, and they picked up his head and smashed his face into the floor. One female officer was ordered to go into the cell and kick him and beat him which she did, in his stomach. This is known as "ERFing". Another detainee, from Yemen, was beaten up so badly that we understand he is still in hospital eighteen months later. It was suggested that he was trying to commit suicide. This was not the case.

We wish to make it clear that all of these and other incidents and all of the brutality, humiliation and degradation were clearly taking place as a result of official policies and orders.

Under the regime of General Miller, it was regular practice for detainees to have all of their hair including their beards shaved off. We were told that it was for failure to cooperate in interrogation (including if they said that you had failed a polygraph test). All of this would be filmed on video camera while it was happening. We understand that even in the face of representatives from the Red Cross having witnessed at least one such instance for themselves, the administration of the camp denied to the Red Cross that this practice existed.

Sometimes detainees would be taken to the interrogation room day after day and kept short-shackled without interrogation ever happening, sometimes for weeks on end. We received distressed reports from other detainees of their being taken to the interrogation room, left naked and chained to the floor, and of women being brought into the room who would inappropriately provoke and indeed molest them. It was completely clear to all the detainees that this was happening to particularly vulnerable prisoners, especially those who had come from the strictest of Islamic backgrounds.

Shortly before we left, a new practice was started. People would be taken to what was called the "Romeo" block where they would be stripped completely. After three days they would be given underwear. After another three days they would be given a top, and then after another three days given trouser bottoms. Some people only ever got underwear. This was said to be for "misbehaving". (Punishment within Guantanamo Bay was constantly imposed for the breaking of any camp "rule" including, for instance, having two plastic cups in your cage when you were only allowed to have one or having an extra prayer bead or too much toilet paper or excess salt). So far as leaving detainees naked is concerned, it is our understanding that the Red Cross complained to the Colonel and then the General and after that to the U.S Administration itself about the practice.

We are completely sure that the International Red Cross has all of these complaints recorded and must undoubtedly have drawn all of them to the attention of the Administration. We therefore find it extraordinary that such lies are being told publicly today by senior officials as to the conditions and methods used at Guantanamo Bay. We are confident that records and pictures must exist and that these should all now be provided to the public in your country as well as ours at the earliest opportunity so that they can form their own judgement.

We look forward to an immediate response in view of the misinformation that is being put into the public domain worldwide and which we know to be untrue.

Yours sincerely,

Shafiq Rasul and Asif Iqbal

We are represented by the Center for Constitutional Rights in the United States and our solicitor, Gareth Peirce, in the United Kingdom. Please address all inquiries to:

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