

GITMO FILES



**WikiLeaks Reveals Secret Files on
All Guantánamo Prisoners**

In its latest release of classified US documents, WikiLeaks is shining the light of truth on a notorious icon of the Bush administration's "War on Terror" — the prison at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, which opened on January 11, 2002, and remains open under President Obama, despite his promise to close the much-criticized facility within a year of taking office.

In thousands of pages of documents dating from 2002 to 2008 and never seen before by members of the public or the media, the cases of the majority of the prisoners held at Guantánamo — 765 out of 779 in total — are described in detail in memoranda from JTF-GTMO, the Joint Task Force at Guantánamo Bay, to US Southern Command in Miami, Florida.

These memoranda, known as Detainee Assessment Briefs (DABs), contain JTF-GTMO's recommendations about whether the prisoners in question should continue to be held, or should be released (transferred to their home governments, or to other governments). They consist of a wealth of important and previously undisclosed information, including health assessments, for example, and, in the cases of the majority of the 172 prisoners who are still held, photos (mostly for the first time ever).

They also include information on the first 201 prisoners released from the prison, between 2002 and 2004, which, unlike information on the rest of the prisoners ([summaries of evidence and tribunal transcripts](#), released as the result of a lawsuit filed by media groups in 2006), has never been made public before. Most of these documents reveal accounts of incompetence familiar to those who have studied Guantánamo closely, with innocent men detained by mistake (or because the US was offering substantial bounties to its allies for al-Qaeda or Taliban suspects), and numerous insignificant Taliban conscripts from Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Beyond these previously unknown cases, the documents also reveal stories of the 399 other prisoners released from September 2004 to the present day, and of the seven men who have died at the prison.

The memos are signed by the commander of Guantánamo at the time, and describe whether the prisoners in question are regarded as low, medium or high risk. Although they were obviously not conclusive in and of themselves, as final decisions about the disposition of prisoners were taken at a higher level, they represent not only the opinions of JTF-GTMO, but also the Criminal Investigation Task Force, created by the Department of Defense to conduct interrogations in the "War on Terror," and the BSCTs, the behavioral science teams consisting of psychologists who had a major say in the "exploitation" of prisoners in interrogation.

Crucially, the files also contain detailed explanations of the supposed intelligence used to justify the prisoners' detention. For many readers, these will be the most fascinating sections of the documents, as they seem to offer an extraordinary insight into the workings of US intelligence, but although many of the documents appear to promise proof of prisoners' association with al-Qaeda or other terrorist organizations, extreme caution is required.

The documents draw on the testimony of witnesses — in most cases, the prisoners' fellow prisoners — whose words are unreliable, either because they were subjected to torture or other forms of coercion (sometimes not in Guantánamo, but in [secret prisons run by the CIA](#)), or because they provided false statements to secure better treatment in Guantánamo.

Regular appearances throughout these documents by witnesses whose words should be regarded as untrustworthy include the following "high-value detainees" or "ghost prisoners". Please note that "ISN" and the numbers in brackets following the prisoners' names refer to the short "Internment Serial Numbers" by which the prisoners are or were identified in US custody:

Abu Zubaydah (ISN 10016), the supposed "high-value detainee" seized in Pakistan in March 2002, who spent four and a half years in secret CIA prisons, including facilities in Thailand and Poland. Subjected to waterboarding, a form of controlled drowning, [on 83 occasions in CIA custody August 2002](#), Abu Zubaydah was moved to Guantánamo with 13 other "high-value detainees" in September 2006.

Ibn al-Shaykh al-Libi (ISN 212), the emir of a military training camp for which Abu Zubaydah was the gatekeeper, who, despite having his camp closed by the Taliban in 2000, because he refused to allow it to be taken over by al-Qaeda, is described in these documents as Osama bin Laden's military commander in Tora Bora. Soon after his capture in December 2001, al-Libi was rendered by the CIA to Egypt, where, under torture, he falsely confessed that al-Qaeda operatives had been meeting with Saddam Hussein to discuss obtaining chemical and biological weapons. Al-Libi recanted this particular lie, but it was nevertheless used by the Bush administration to justify the invasion of Iraq in March 2003. Al-Libi was never sent to Guantánamo, although at some point, probably in 2006, the CIA sent him back to Libya, where he was imprisoned, and [where he died, allegedly by committing suicide](#), in May 2009.

Sharqawi Abdu Ali al-Hajj (ISN 1457), a Yemeni, also known as Riyadh the Facilitator, who was seized in a house raid in Pakistan in February 2002, and is described as "an al-Qaeda facilitator." After his capture, he was [transferred to a torture prison in Jordan](#) run on behalf of the CIA, where he was held for nearly two years, and was then held for six months in US facilities in Afghanistan. He was flown to Guantánamo in September 2004.

Sanad Yislam al-Kazimi (ISN 1453), a Yemeni, who was seized in the UAE in January 2003, and then held in three secret prisons, including the "Dark Prison" near Kabul and a secret facility within the US prison at Bagram airbase. In February 2010, in the District Court in Washington D.C., Judge Henry H. Kennedy Jr. [granted the habeas corpus petition](#) of a Yemeni prisoner, Uthman Abdul Rahim Mohammed Uthman, largely because he refused to accept testimony produced by either Sharqawi al-Hajj or Sanad al-Kazimi. As he stated, "The Court will not rely on the statements of Hajj or Kazimi because there is unrebutted evidence in the record that, at the time of the interrogations at which they made the statements, both men had recently been tortured."

Others include Ahmed Khalfan Ghailani (ISN 10012) and Walid bin Attash (ISN 10014), two more of the "high-value detainees" transferred into Guantánamo in September 2006, after being held in secret CIA prisons.

Other unreliable witnesses, held at Guantánamo throughout their detention, include:

Yasim Basardah (ISN 252), a Yemeni known as a notorious liar. As the [Washington Post](#) reported in February 2009, he was given preferential treatment in Guantánamo after becoming what some officials regarded as a significant informant, although there were many reasons to be doubtful. As the *Post* noted, "military officials ... expressed reservations about the

credibility of their star witness since 2004," and in 2006, in an article for the National Journal, Corine Hegland described how, after a Combatant Status Review Tribunal at which a prisoner had taken exception to information provided by Basardah, placing him at a training camp before he had even arrived in Afghanistan, his personal representative (a military official assigned instead of a lawyer) investigated Basardah's file, and found that [he had made similar claims against 60 other prisoners in total](#). In January 2009, in the District Court in Washington D.C., Judge Richard Leon (an appointee of George W. Bush) excluded Basardah's statements while [granting the habeas corpus petition](#) of Mohammed El-Gharani, a Chadian national who was just 14 years old when he was seized in a raid on a mosque in Pakistan. Judge Leon noted that the government had "specifically cautioned against relying on his statements without independent corroboration," and in other habeas cases that followed, other judges relied on this precedent, discrediting the "star witness" still further.

Mohammed al-Qahtani (ISN 063), a Saudi regarded as the planned 20th hijacker for the 9/11 attacks, was [subjected to a specific torture program at Guantánamo](#), approved by defense secretary Donald Rumsfeld. This consisted of 20-hour interrogations every day, over a period of several months, and various other "enhanced interrogation techniques," which severely endangered his health. Variations of these techniques then migrated to other prisoners in Guantánamo (and to Abu Ghraib), and in January 2009, just before George W. Bush left office, Susan Crawford, a retired judge and a close friend of Dick Cheney and David Addington, who was appointed to oversee the military commissions at Guantánamo as the convening authority, [told Bob Woodward](#) that she had refused to press charges against al-Qahtani, because, as she said, "We tortured Qahtani. His treatment met the legal definition of torture." As a result, his numerous statements about other prisoners must be regarded as worthless.

Abd al-Hakim Bukhari (ISN 493), a Saudi imprisoned by al-Qaeda as a spy, who was liberated by US forces from a Taliban jail before being sent, inexplicably, to Guantánamo (along with four other men liberated from the jail) is regarded in the files as a member of al-Qaeda, and a trustworthy witness.

Abd al-Rahim Janko (ISN 489), a Syrian Kurd, [tortured by al-Qaeda as a spy](#) and then imprisoned by the Taliban along with Abd al-Hakim Bukhari, above, is also used as a witness, even though he was mentally unstable. As his assessment in June 2008 stated, "Detainee is on a list of high-risk detainees from a health perspective ... He has several chronic medical problems. He has a psychiatric history of substance abuse, depression, borderline personality disorder, and prior suicide attempt for which he is followed by behavioral health for treatment."

These are just some of the most obvious cases, but alert readers will notice that they are cited repeatedly in what purports to be the government's evidence, and it should, as a result, be difficult not to conclude that the entire edifice constructed by the government is fundamentally unsound, and that what the Guantánamo Files reveal, primarily, is that only a few dozen prisoners are genuinely accused of involvement in terrorism.

The rest, these documents reveal on close inspection, were either innocent men and boys, seized by mistake, or Taliban foot soldiers, unconnected to terrorism. Moreover, many of these prisoners were actually sold to US forces, who were offering bounty payments for al-Qaeda and Taliban suspects, by their Afghan and Pakistani allies — a policy that led ex-President Musharraf to state, in his 2006 memoir, *In the Line of Fire*, that, in return for handing over 369 terror

suspects to the US, the Pakistani government “earned bounty payments totalling millions of dollars.”

Uncomfortable facts like these are not revealed in the deliberations of the Joint Task Force, but they are crucial to understanding why what can appear to be a collection of documents confirming the government’s scaremongering rhetoric about Guantánamo — the same rhetoric that has paralyzed President Obama, and revived the politics of fear in Congress — is actually the opposite: the anatomy of a colossal crime perpetrated by the US government on 779 prisoners who, for the most part, are not and never have been the terrorists the government would like us to believe they are.

(Andy Worthington)

How to Read WikiLeaks’ Guantánamo Files

The nearly 800 documents in WikiLeaks’ latest release of classified US documents are memoranda from Joint Task Force Guantánamo (JTF-GTMO), the combined force in charge of the US “War on Terror” prison at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, to US Southern Command, in Miami, Florida, regarding the disposition of the prisoners.

Written between 2002 and 2008, the memoranda were all marked as “secret,” and their subject was whether to continue holding a prisoner, or whether to recommend his release (described as his “transfer” — to the custody of his own government, or that of some other government). They were obviously not conclusive in and of themselves, as final decisions about the disposition of prisoners were taken at a higher level, but they are very significant, as they represent not only the opinions of JTF-GTMO, but also the Criminal Investigation Task Force, created by the Department of Defense to conduct interrogations in the “War on Terror,” and the BSCTs, the behavioral science teams consisting of psychologists who had a major say in the “exploitation” of prisoners in interrogation.

Under the heading, “JTF-GTMO Detainee Assessment,” the memos generally contain nine sections, describing the prisoners as follows, although the earlier examples, especially those dealing with prisoners released — or recommended for release — between 2002 and 2004, may have less detailed analyses than the following:

1. Personal information

Each prisoner is identified by name, by aliases, which the US claims to have identified, by place and date of birth, by citizenship, and by Internment Serial Number (ISN). These long lists of numbers and letters — e.g. US9YM-000027DP — are used to identify the prisoners in Guantánamo, helping to dehumanize them, as intended, by doing away with their names. The most significant section is the number towards the end, which is generally shortened, so that the example above would be known as ISN 027. In the files, the prisoners are identified by nationality, with 47 countries in total listed alphabetically, from “az” for Afghanistan to “ym” for Yemen.

2. Health

This section describes whether or not the prisoner in question has mental health issues and/or physical health issues. Many are judged to be in good health, but there are some shocking examples of prisoners with severe mental and/or physical problems.

3. JTF-GTMO Assessment

a. Under "Recommendation," the Task Force explains whether a prisoner should continue to be held, or should be released. b. Under "Executive Summary," the Task Force briefly explains its reasoning, and, in more recent cases, also explains whether the prisoner is a low, medium or high risk as a threat to the US and its allies and as a threat in detention (i.e. based on their behavior in Guantánamo), and also whether they are regarded as of low, medium or high intelligence value. c. Under "Summary of Changes," the Task Force explains whether there has been any change in the information provided since the last appraisal (generally, the prisoners are appraised on an annual basis).

4. Detainee's Account of Events

Based on the prisoners' own testimony, this section puts together an account of their history, and how they came to be seized, in Afghanistan, Pakistan or elsewhere, based on their own words.

5. Capture Information

This section explains how and where the prisoners were seized, and is followed by a description of their possessions at the time of capture, the date of their transfer to Guantánamo, and, spuriously, "Reasons for Transfer to JTF-GTMO," which lists alleged reasons for the prisoners' transfer, such as knowledge of certain topics for exploitation through interrogation. The reason that this is unconvincing is because, as former interrogator Chris Mackey (a pseudonym) explained in his book *The Interrogators*, the US high command, based in Camp Doha, Kuwait, stipulated that every prisoner who ended up in US custody had to be transferred to Guantánamo — and that there were no exceptions; in other words, the "Reasons for transfer" were grafted on afterwards, as an attempt to justify the largely random rounding-up of prisoners.

6. Evaluation of Detainee's Account

In this section, the Task Force analyzes whether or not they find the prisoners' accounts convincing.

7. Detainee Threat

This section is the most significant from the point of view of the supposed intelligence used to justify the detention of prisoners. After "Assessment," which reiterates the conclusion at 3b, the main section, "Reasons for Continued Detention," may, at first glance, look convincing, but it must be stressed that, for the most part, it consists of little more than unreliable statements made by the prisoners' fellow prisoners — either in Guantánamo, or in secret prisons run by the

CIA, where torture and other forms of coercion were widespread, or through more subtle means in Guantánamo, where compliant prisoners who were prepared to make statements about their fellow prisoners were rewarded with better treatment. Some examples are available on the homepage for the release of these documents:<http://wikileaks.ch/gitmo/>

With this in mind, it should be noted that there are good reasons why Obama administration officials, in the interagency Guantánamo Review Task Force established by the President to review the cases of the 241 prisoners still held in Guantánamo when he took office, concluded that only 36 could be prosecuted.

The final part of this section, "Detainee's Conduct," analyzes in detail how the prisoners have behaved during their imprisonment, with exact figures cited for examples of "Disciplinary Infraction."

8. Detainee Intelligence Value Assessment

After reiterating the intelligence assessment at 3b and recapping on the prisoners' alleged status, this section primarily assesses which areas of intelligence remain to be "exploited," according to the Task Force.

9. EC Status

The final section notes whether or not the prisoner in question is still regarded as an "enemy combatant," based on the findings of the Combatant Status Review Tribunals, held in 2004-05 to ascertain whether, on capture, the prisoners had been correctly labeled as "enemy combatants." Out of 558 cases, just 38 prisoners were assessed as being "no longer enemy combatants," and in some cases, when the result went in the prisoners' favor, the military convened new panels until it got the desired result.