

WikiLeaks: Guantanamo Bay terrorist secrets revealed

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Al-Qaeda terrorists have threatened to unleash a “nuclear hellstorm” on the West if Osama Bin Laden is caught or assassinated, according to documents to be released by the WikiLeaks website, which contain details of the interrogations of more than 700 Guantanamo detainees.

However, the shocking human cost of obtaining this intelligence is also exposed with dozens of innocent people sent to Guantanamo – and hundreds of low-level foot-soldiers being held for years and probably tortured before being assessed as of little significance.

The Daily Telegraph, along with other newspapers **including The Washington Post**, today exposes America’s own analysis of almost ten years of controversial interrogations on the world’s most dangerous terrorists. This newspaper has been shown thousands of pages of top-secret files obtained by the WikiLeaks website.

The disclosures are set to spark intense debate around the world about the establishment of

Guantanamo Bay in the months after 9/11 – which has enabled the US to collect vital intelligence from senior Al Qaeda commanders but sparked fury in the middle east and Europe over the treatment of detainees.

The files detail the background to the capture of each of the 780 people who have passed through the Guantanamo facility in Cuba, their medical condition and the information they have provided during interrogations.

Only about 220 of the people detained are assessed by the Americans to be dangerous international terrorists. A further 380 people are lower-level foot-soldiers, either members of the Taliban or extremists who travelled to Afghanistan whose presence at the military facility is questionable.

At least a further 150 people are innocent Afghans or Pakistanis, including farmers, chefs and drivers who were rounded up or even sold to US forces and transferred across the world. In the top-secret documents, senior US commanders conclude that in dozens of cases there is “no reason recorded for transfer”.

However, the documents do not detail the controversial techniques used to obtain information from detainees, such as water-boarding, stress positions and sleep deprivation, which are now widely regarded as tantamount to torture.

The Guantanamo files confirm that the Americans have seized more than 100 Al-Qaeda terrorists, including about 15 kingpins from the most senior echelons of the organisation.

The most senior detainee at the facility is Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, the operational commander of Al-Qaeda and the mastermind of the 9/11 attacks, who will face a military tribunal later this year after plans for a full-scale trial in New York were abandoned.

His 15-page-file discloses that he was plotting Al-Qaeda attacks around the world in Asia, Africa, America and Britain. It concludes: “Detainee had numerous plots and plans for operations targeting the US, its allies, and its interests world-wide.”

It adds: “Detainee stated that as an enemy of the US, he thought about the US policies with which he disagreed and how he could change them. Detainee’s plan was to make US citizens suffer, especially economically, which would put pressure on the US government to change its policies. Targeting priorities were determined by initially assessing those that would have the greatest economic impact, and secondly which would awaken people politically.”

It can also today be disclosed that:

*A senior Al-Qaeda commander claimed that the terrorist group has hidden a nuclear bomb in Europe which will be detonated if Bin-Laden is ever caught or assassinated. The US authorities uncovered numerous attempts by Al-Qaeda to obtain nuclear materials and fear that terrorists have already bought uranium. Sheikh Mohammed told interrogators that Al-Qaeda would unleash a “nuclear hellstorm”.

*The 20th 9/11 hijacker, who did not ultimately travel to America and take part in the atrocity, has revealed that Al-Qaeda was seeking to recruit ground-staff at Heathrow amid several plots targeting the world’s busiest airport. Terrorists also plotted major chemical and biological attacks against this country.

*A plot to put cyanide in the air-conditioning units of public buildings across America was exposed along with several schemes to target infrastructure including utility networks and petrol stations. Terrorists were also going to rent apartments in large blocks and set off gas explosions.

*About 20 juveniles, including a 14-year old boy have been held at Guantanamo. Several pensioners, including an 89 year old with serious health problems were incarcerated.

*People wearing a certain model of Casio watch from the 1980s were seized by American forces in Afghanistan on suspicion of being terrorists, because the watches were used as timers by Al-Qaeda. However, the vast majority of those captured for this reason have since been quietly released amid a lack of evidence.

*Bin Laden fled his hideout in the Tora Bora mountain range in Afghanistan just days before coalition troops arrived. The last reported sighting of the Al-Qaeda leader was in spring 2003 when several detainees recorded he had met other terrorist commanders in Pakistan.

Guantanamo Bay was opened by the American Government in January 2002 at a military base in Cuba. The establishment of the controversial facility required a special presidential order as “enemy combatants” were held without trial.

A series of controversial torture-style techniques were also approved to be used on prisoners and many foreign Governments, including the British, pressed for their citizens to be released. However, the files disclose that British intelligence services apparently co-operated with Guantanamo interrogators.

Barack Obama had pledged to close the facility and hold open trials for those found to have committed crimes. However, the US President has failed to fulfil his pledge amid concerns over the admissibility of evidence collected during torture.

The files disclosed today also show that American military commanders implicitly acknowledged that dozens of people were incorrectly captured and sent to Guantanamo.

Many of the details are likely to be seized upon by human-rights campaigners and add to pressure of George W Bush, the former US President, to apologise for the operation of the camp.

For example, Muhammed al Ghazali Babaker Mahjoub, was the director of orphanages for a Saudi charity working in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

The charity was suspected of having financial links to Al Qaeda and Mahjoub was therefore arrested and transferred to Guantanamo because of “his knowledge of displaced persons in and around Pakistan and Afghanistan, specifically the orphan population.”

But, after a year in detention, and several interrogations in which he co-operated fully, the US military concluded his information was “not valuable” and that the charity worker had no links to any terrorist organisation. He was released.

An analysis of the Guantanamo files shows that at least 150 people were assessed by the Americans as innocent and released.

A total of about 200 detainees are classified as genuine international terrorists by the American military, with the remainder being mid or low level foot-soldiers.

599 detainees have already been released – some to prisons in other countries. About 180 people are still held at Guantanamo.

In the coming days, The Daily Telegraph will expose the crucial role that Britain has played in the global terrorist network that has been documented by those held at Guantanamo – with London emerging as a key “crucible” where extremists from around the world are radicalised and sent to fight jihad.