

U.S. Guantanamo Prisoner Held for 14 Years Gets First Public Hearing



Washington, August 25 (RHC)-- A U.S. Guantanamo prisoner, one of several to be tortured using the now infamous CIA waterboarding technique, has made his first public appearance in 14 years via a video link at a military hearing.

Abu Zubaydah appeared from Guantanamo where uniformed soldiers read out a translation of his case for release to a Periodic Review Board hearing by the Pentagon. Zubaydah stated he wanted to be reunited with his family and had “no desire or intent to harm the United States or any other country.”

The Saudi Arabian-born Palestinian, has been held for 14 years without an official charge. At the time of his capture Zubaydah sustained significant injuries, including the loss of his left eye, which he says he wants to recover from as a free man.

Zubaydah was captured in Pakistan in 2002 and was thought to be Al-Qaeda’s number three in charge, believed to have knowledge and involvement in a number of terrorist attacks, including 9/11 in the U.S. and the USS Cole bombing in 2000.

He was one of the first prisoners to be subjected to the CIA's torture and "enhanced interrogation techniques" program during the George W. Bush administration, according to a 2014 "torture report."

Zubaydah is one of three prisoners that the CIA admitted was waterboarded. He was waterboarded 83 times, confined to an extremely small space for days, stripped naked, sleep-deprived, slammed into the prison wall. At one point, they even feared they might have killed him.

Zubaydah, who wears a patch over his left eye, explained during the 20 minute statement to the board that he has been respectful and cooperative within the Guantanamo jail.

The U.S. government is against Zubaydah's release, with officials saying that his computer program skills could help him with terrorist activities. A decision from the board is expected to be made within 30 days.

Last week, the Pentagon announced the single biggest transfer of 15 Guantanamo prisoners to the United Arab Emirates as Barack Obama's administration attempts to work towards closing down the notorious jail.

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