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The whistleblowing website WikiLeaks has begun releasing thousands of secret documents from the U.S. military prison at Guantánamo Bay that reveal the Bush and Obama administrations knowingly imprisoned more than 150 innocent men for years without charge. In dozens of cases, senior U.S. commanders were said to have concluded that there was no reason for the men to have been transferred to Guantánamo. Among the innocent prisoners were an 89-year-old Afghan villager and a 14-year-old boy who had been kidnapped. Some men were imprisoned at Guantánamo simply because they wore a popular model of Casio watches, which had been used as timers by Al Qaeda. The documents also reveal that the journalist Sami al-Hajj was held at Guantánamo for six years partly in order to be interrogated about his employer, the *Al Jazeera network*. Al-Hajj's file said he was sent to Guantánamo in order to "provide information on ... the *Al-Jazeera* news network's training programme, telecommunications equipment, and newsgathering operations in Chechnya, Kosovo and Afghanistan." For more we speak with journalist Andy Worthington, author of "

*The Guantánamo Files: The Stories of the 774 Detainees in America's Illegal Prison*

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[Andy Worthington](#) , Journalist and author of the book, "The Guantánamo Files: The Stories of the 774 Detainees in America's Illegal Prison." He is co-director of the film, "Outside the Law: Stories from Guantánamo." His website is: <http://www.andyworthington.co.uk/>

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By Andy Worthington

From [World Can't Wait](#) | Original Article

On Sunday April 24, 2011 WikiLeaks began publishing 779 secret files from the notorious Guantanamo Bay prison camp. The details for every detainee will be released daily over the coming month.

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 -- 758 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, which 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) contain a wealth of important and previously undisclosed information, including health assessments, for example, and, in the cases of the majority of the 171 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 397 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 un rebutted 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.

Andy Worthington is the author of [\*The Guantánamo Files: The Stories of the 774 Detainees in America's Illegal Prison.\*](#)

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