

11/13/24 *Forty-two million* dollars. That's what a Federal civil jury just awarded three Iraqi men who were subjected to beatings and unimaginable cruelty while detained at notorious Abu Ghraib prison during America's post-9/11 occupation of Iraq. That money will come from CACI, a Virginia-based firm whose civilian interrogators worked alongside the Army MP's who carried out the abuses to "soften" prisoners for questioning. (See 4/15/24 update)

11/11/24 Will 9/11 mastermind Khalid Shaikh Mohammed and two accomplices actually serve the life terms to which they and prosecutors agreed? Eager to see the trio executed, Defense Sec. Lloyd J. Austin recently voided the agreement. But Air Force Judge Col. Matthew McCall ruled that the Defense Secretary lacked the legal standing to intervene. So he just voided Sec. Austin's voiding. Whether the two-decades-plus that the trio has already served will stretch indefinitely remains up in the air. (See below update)

8/5/24 "Thank God." That's how the widow of one of the 3,000 victims of the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks reacted when Defense Sec. Lloyd J. Austin set aside a plea agreement that guaranteed Khalid Shaikh Mohammed and two accomplices no more than life sentences. So far they've been in custody for 21 years, and their trial, which is back on track, remains years away. Sec. Austin took over the case from his chief prosecutor after objections to the deal, which would have spared the accused from the expected death sentences, arose from victim families and some members of Congress. Meanwhile, at a hearing in the case, [a psychologist who helped waterboard Mohammed minimized its effects](#). Mohammed, he said, was "extremely, uncharacteristically resilient on the waterboard" and "defeated it quite early." (See above update)

4/15/24 During America's post-9/11 occupation of Iraq, interrogators supplied by military contractor CACI instructed U.S. military police to "soften" detainees housed at notorious Abu Ghraib prison. And that the soldiers did, engaging in notorious physical and psychological abuses that eventually led to court-martials and convictions. But the civilians were never held to account. Until today, when a Federal civil lawsuit filed against CACI by three of its victims gets underway in Virginia. (See 11/13/24 update)

9/28/23 9/11 "mastermind" Khalid Shaikh Mohammed was captured in 2003. By 2007, when the FBI questioned him at Guantanamo, the CIA had waterboarded him 183 times. FBI agents, though, treated Mohammed respectfully. He did ask about a lawyer, but the practice was no lawyer until charges were filed by a military commission. So he chatted away. And now his lawyer says that his richly-detailed, multi-hour confession can't be used in the forthcoming trial. Where a conviction would mean death.

9/25/23 Accused 9/11 conspirator Ramzi bin al-Shibh was arrested in Pakistan in 2002, then tortured at CIA “black sites” for four years before arriving in Guantanamo. His recent diagnosis by U.S. medical experts of “post-traumatic stress disorder with secondary psychosis” just led a military judge to declare him “unfit for trial.” No trial is imminent, but if it happens, his four accused accomplices, who are also at Guantanamo, will be tried without him. As for al-Shibh, he’ll be held until he regains competency.

8/28/23 Captured in 2002, Abd al-Rahim al-Nashiri was sent to Guantanamo to be tried for spearheading the bombing of the U.S.S. Cole in 2002. And like most of his imprisoned colleagues, he was mercilessly tortured by the CIA. That just led a military judge to throw out his confession to the FBI. While the ruling might not hold, it casts a major shadow on the prosecution of Khalid Shaikh Mohammed and four associates, who await trial for planning the Sept. 11, 2001 attack.

6/27/23 In February Fionnuala Ni Aolain, a law professor and U.N.-commissioned rapporteur, visited Guantanamo Bay and met with the 34 detainees who then remained (30 are there now). She concluded, among many other things, that although their conditions have improved over time, their detention and treatment continues to be “cruel, inhuman, and degrading” and, even at present, “may also meet the legal threshold for torture.” [Official report](#)

3/27/23 According to U.N. human-rights investigators, “systematic shortcomings in medical expertise, equipment, treatment, and accommodations at the Guantánamo Bay detention facility and naval station” imperil the health and well-being of its 31 remaining prisoners, and particularly as they age. Their attention was focused on Abd Al-Hadi Al-Iraqi, a man in his sixties, who suffers from spinal degeneration and has been held for sixteen years. Prisoners cannot be sent to the U.S. for treatment. [U.N. report](#)

3/10/23 After spending twenty years in Guantanamo without a trial, Ghassan al-Sharbi, 48, was repatriated to Saudi Arabia. Sharbi, who had been going to college in Arizona, was detained in 2002 on information that he had recently received terrorism training at an al-Qaeda camp in Afghanistan. He was also accused of teaching English to terrorists. Sharbi was charged in 2009, but the case was dropped four years later. Thirty-one detainees remain in Guantanamo; most are “eligible for transfer.”

10/31/22 At 75, Saifullah Paracha was Guantanamo’s oldest prisoner. In 2003 an FBI undercover sting lured the Pakistani businessman, who was suspected of supporting Al Qaeda, to Bangkok. He was seized, then held at a military prison in Afghanistan. But he soon suffered a heart attack and was transferred to Guantanamo. His medical problems

persisted, but he declined surgery at American hands. Mr. Paracha, who once legally lived in New York City, was recently released and now resides in Pakistan.

6/14/22 In the *New York Times*, a series of unforgettable, previously classified images taken by Army photographers depicting shackled, hooded detainees as they are “escorted” into their new “home” at Guantanamo.

2/3/22 In September the military’s chief Guantanamo prosecutor retired after Federal lawyers disagreed with his view, which had been affirmed by a judge, that statements made during CIA black-site torture sessions could be used against detainees during the pre-trial process. That prohibition has now become policy. Statements elicited “through torture or cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment” are out of bounds during the Biden administration. But this rule could be changed by a future President.

1/17/22 Twenty years after its opening in January 2002, Guantanamo now holds thirty-nine prisoners. Eighteen have been approved by the “Periodic Review Board” for release, and the search is on for suitable and willing destinations. Of five most recently cleared, four are being held under the “law of war” as al Qaeda functionaries and were never charged with a crime. Each has been at the prison for fifteen or more years. One, a Somali, testified that he was tortured and sexually abused by the CIA.

12/30/21 An opinion piece in the *New York Times* by a military lawyer assigned to defend inmates at Guantanamo disparages the “inhumane” means used against those arrested after 9/11, comparing it to how Jewish persons were treated by the Nazis. He cites a letter from military jurors who called the treatment a “stain on the moral fiber of America” and “a source of shame for the U.S. government.”

9/10/21 Alleged 9/11 mastermind Khalid Sheikh Mohammed and four underlings sat in Guantanamo military court as defense lawyers and prosecutors questioned Col. Matthew N. McCall, the fourth judge to preside since 2012, about his qualifications. His appointment was approved by an appeals court, but the defense is expected to object. Their claim, that the Government’s case was irreparably tainted by the prisoners’ torture, is also still to be decided. When evidence will start to be heard is unknown.

7/19/21 As a first step towards potentially closing Guantanamo, inmate Abdullatif Nasser, a prisoner since 2002, was returned to Morocco. He was adjudged as no longer posing a threat five years ago. Of the 39 detainees who remain, two have been convicted and ten are pending trial.

7/11/21 Still awaiting trial after nineteen years at Guantanamo, Moath al-Alwi crafts intricate model ships. Three years ago his artwork, and that of three fellow prisoners, was displayed at [a special showing](#) by the John Jay College of Criminal Justice. That led

to a ban on their work's export and encouraged filmmakers to craft a documentary. Over the years, four other prisoner-artists have been set free.

4/18/20 In the *New York Times*, a comprehensive overview of the “Long Road to 9/11 Justice” details the struggles of bringing to trial defendants who were subject to unfathomable torture at C.I.A. “black sites” nearly two decades ago. Many prosecutors and defense attorneys have come and gone, most recently a 75-year old defense lawyer who is leaving for health reasons after serving eight years.

1/29/20 At Guantanamo, during a pretrial hearing for the five defendants, James Mitchell, one of two psychologists who designed the CIA's waterboarding program and helped conduct interrogations, said that he told an accused “I will cut your son's throat” if there was another attack and Americans were killed. He said he was given permission by a CIA lawyer, who advised to make threats “conditional.” Mitchell had earlier testified that he had followed his conscience and would do it again.

11/12/19 A military judge ruled that prosecutors misled defense attorneys for a Qaeda suspect awaiting trial in the bombing of the U.S.S. Cole. Their failure to provide accurate information about the man's torture while in C.I.A. custody may threaten the admissibility of what the defendant later told FBI agents at Guantanamo.