

Directions:

1. Demonstrate evidence of close reading.
2. Highlight your confusion.
3. Answer the two questions at the bottom of the page.
4. Write a 1+ page reflection in your WN.

New President Will Face Test on Detainees

They were called the Dirty 30 -- bodyguards for Osama bin Laden captured early in the Afghanistan war -- and many of them are still being held at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba. Others still at the much-criticized detention camp there include prisoners who the government says were trained in assassination and the use of poisons and disguises.

One detainee is said to have been schooled in making detonators out of Sega game cartridges. A Yemeni who has received little public attention was originally selected by Bin Laden as a potential Sept. 11 hijacker, intelligence officials say.

As the Bush administration enters its final months with no apparent plan to close the Guantánamo Bay camp, an extensive review of the government's military tribunal files suggests that dozens of the approximately 255 prisoners remaining in detention are said by military and intelligence agencies to have been captured with important terrorism suspects, to have connections to top Al Qaeda leaders or to have other serious terrorism credentials.

Senators John McCain and Barack Obama have said they would close the detention camp, but the review of the government's public files underscores the challenges of fulfilling that promise. The next president will have to contend with sobering intelligence claims against many of the remaining detainees.

"It would be very difficult for a new president to come in and say, 'I don't believe what the CIA is saying about these guys,'" said Daniel Marcus, a Democrat who was general counsel of the 9/11 Commission and held senior positions in the Carter and Clinton administrations.

The strength of the evidence is difficult to assess, because the government has kept much of it secret and because of questions about whether some was gathered through torture.

When the administration has had to defend its accusations in court, government lawyers in several cases have retreated from the most serious claims. As a result, critics have raised doubts about the danger of Guantánamo's prisoners beyond a handful of the camp's most notorious ones.

But as a new administration begins to sort through the government's dossiers on the men, the analysis shows, officials are likely to face tough choices in deciding how many of Guantánamo's hard cases should be sent home, how many should be charged and what to do with the rest.

The Pentagon has declined to provide a list of the detainees now being held or even to specify how many there are beyond offering a figure of "about 255." But by reviewing thousands of pages of government documents released in recent years, as well as court records and news media reports from around the world, The New York Times was able to compile its own list and construct a picture of the population still held at Guantánamo.

Much of the analysis is based on records of hearings at Guantánamo about individual detainees, which have been made public since 2006 as a result of an Associated Press lawsuit. The Times has posted those documents on its Web site arranged by detainee name.

The analysis shows that about 34 of the remaining detainees were seized in raids in Pakistan that netted three men the government calls major Qaeda operatives: Abu Zubaydah, Ramzi bin al-Shibh and Al Hajj Abdu Ali Sharqawi. Sixteen detainees are accused of some of the most significant terrorist attacks in the last decade, including the 1998 American embassy bombings, the 2000 attack on the destroyer Cole in Yemen, and the Sept. 11 attacks. Twenty others were called Bin Laden's bodyguards.

The analysis also shows that 13 of the original 23 detainees who arrived at Guantánamo on Jan. 11, 2002, remain there nearly seven years later. Of the approximately 255 men now being held, more than 60 have been cleared for release or transfer, according to the Pentagon, but remain at Guantánamo because of difficulties negotiating transfer agreements between the United States and other countries.

Two of those still held, government documents show, were seen by Bin Laden as potential Sept. 11 hijackers. The case of Mohammed al-Qahtani, whom the government has labeled a potential "20th hijacker," has drawn wide notice because he was subjected to interrogation tactics that included sleep deprivation, isolation and being put on a leash and forced to perform dog tricks.

The other detainee deemed a potential hijacker, whose presence at Guantánamo has gone virtually unmentioned in public reports, is a Yemeni called Abu Bara. The 9/11 Commission said he studied flights and airport security and participated in an important planning meeting for the 2001 attack in Malaysia in January 2000.

The Guantánamo list also includes two Saudi brothers, Hassan and Walid bin Attash. The government describes them as something like Qaeda royalty. Military officials said during Guantánamo hearings that their father, imprisoned in Saudi Arabia, was a "close contact of Osama bin Laden" and that his sons were committed jihadists.

Walid bin Attash is facing a possible death sentence as a coordinator of the Sept. 11 attacks. Hassan bin Attash was alleged to have been involved in planning attacks on American oil tankers and navy ships.

Hassan bin Attash's lawyer, David Remes, said the government's claims about the detainees were not credible. He and other detainees' lawyers say that the government's accusations have been ever-changing and that much of the evidence was obtained using techniques he and others have described as torture.

"You look at all of this stuff, and it looks terribly scary," Remes said. "But how do we know any of it is true?"

The extensive use of secret evidence and information derived from aggressive interrogations has led critics around the world to conclude that many detainees were wrongly held. Nearly seven years after Guantánamo opened its metal gates, only 18 of the current detainees are facing war crimes charges.

While both presidential candidates have said they would close the detention center, they have not said in detail how they would handle the remaining detainees.

McCain has said he would move the Guantánamo detainees to the United States but has indicated that he would try them in the Pentagon's commission system established after 9/11. After the conviction at Guantánamo last summer of a former driver for Bin Laden, McCain said the verdict "demonstrated that military commissions can effectively bring very dangerous terrorists to justice."

Obama has said that the Bush administration's system of trying detainees "has been an enormous failure" and that the existing American legal system was strong enough to handle the trials of terrorism suspects.

But in a speech on the Senate floor in 2006, Obama suggested that the allegations against many of the detainees needed to be taken seriously. "Now the majority of the folks in Guantánamo, I suspect, are there for a reason," he said. "There are a lot of dangerous people."

Some of the remaining prisoners have appeared determined to show how dangerous they are. "I admit to you it is my honor to be an enemy of the United States," said a Yemeni detainee, Abdul Rahman Ahmed, a hearing record shows. Officials said Ahmed had been trained at a terrorist camp "how to dress and act at an airport" and to resist interrogation.

A Saudi detainee, Muhammed Murdi Issa al Zahrani, was described by Pentagon officials as a trained assassin who helped plan the suicide-bomb killing of Ahmed Shah Massoud, the Afghan rebel leader, on Sept. 9, 2001.

"The detainee said America is ruled by the Jews," an officer said at a hearing after interviewing him, "therefore America and Israel are his enemies."

One man caught with Abu Zubaydah insisted on his innocence but described a training camp outside Kabul, Afghanistan, where, according to information he gave to interrogators, men were given "lessons on how to make poisons that could be inhaled, swallowed or absorbed through the skin."

Bin al Shibh was caught with a group of six Yemenis, all of whom are still held, after a two-and-a-half-hour gun battle. The records of those detainees include allegations that some were "a special terrorist team deployed to attack targets in Karachi." One of the men, Hail Aziz Ahmad al Maythal, was trained in the use of rocket-propelled grenade launchers, machine guns and "trench digging, disguise techniques, escape methods, evasion and map reading," according to the military's allegations.

The records include many of the murky cases that typify the image of Guantánamo, where detainees take issue with their own supposed confessions and, sometimes, their identities. And those doubts too are to be part of a new administration's inheritance.

"I was forced to say all these things," an Algerian detainee, Adil Hadi al Jazairi bin Hamlili, said at his hearing when confronted with his confession to murder and knowledge of a plot to sell uranium to Al Qaeda. "I was abused mentally and psychologically, by threatening to be raped," he said, adding, "You would say anything."

Abdul Hafiz, an Afghan accused of killing a Red Cross worker at a Taliban roadblock in 2003, told a military officer that he had the perfect alibi. "The detainee states again that he is not Abdul Hafiz," the officer reported to a military tribunal.

Source: William Glaberson and Margot Williams/*New York Times*/Monday, November 3, 2008

1. What is the author's purpose?
2. Who is the intended audience?