

## Night Sweats

**The Pentagon Archipelago's purpose is to establish the principle of arbitrary rule.**

**by Chris Floyd**

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This is the story of three innocent men, held in brutal captivity for more than two years; three innocent men, stripped, blinded, beaten, tortured, caged and silenced, all in the name of freedom and civilization; three innocent men, ground into the dust by an implacable power that defends its "enduring moral values" with the boot in the groin, the gun to the head -- and the abetting of atrocity and murder.

It's the story of three Britons released last week from the U.S. concentration camp in Guantánamo Bay, Cuba -- 26 months after they began their progress through the guts of the Pentagon Archipelago, the chain of U.S. detention camps and "interrogation centers" that now encircle the Earth. In the *Observer* -- a pro-war British paper -- Shafiq Rasul, Ruhul Ahmed and Asif Iqbal from Tipton, England, told reporter David Rose of their sojourn in the Bush Regime's legal purgatory.

The three men, lifelong friends in their early 20s, went to Pakistan in September 2001 for Iqbal's wedding. The following month, as Afghanistan's civil war flared under the shadow of the impending U.S. attack, the friends joined Muslim relief efforts in war-ravaged Afghan villages. As avowed moderates, they were under constant threat from the Taliban -- the virulent extremists who'd been armed, funded and sustained in power by U.S. ally Pakistan and the Bush Family's business partners in Saudi Arabia, as *Salon.com* reports.

When American bombs started falling, the friends tried to flee the country. But they were trapped in Kunduz with thousands of refugees when the city fell to U.S.-backed warlord Rashid Dostum, a former Soviet collaborator turned jihadnik. Known for his macabre punishments -- he liked to see his victims torn apart by tanks -- Dostum fell upon the surrendered masses with his wonted fury. Thousands died on a death march through the mountains to Shebargan, where Dostum linked up with U.S. Special Forces. There, the captives, including the Tipton men, were packed by the hundreds into metal truck trailers, where they were left for days to suffocate and die. Fires were lit under some of the trailers, roasting those trapped inside. Of the 35,000 who left Kunduz, only 4,500 remained alive.

The survivors were crammed into Shebargan's open-air prison, where they continued to die in droves -- as U.S. forces watched coolly from the perimeter. Finally, the three friends were sent to an American camp in Kandahar, where, hooded and chained, they were "processed": stripped, rectally probed, beaten, forced to kneel for hours, naked, their necks pressed to the floor by a guard's boot. Then came the first "interrogation": again kneeling, chained, with

beatings and kicking followed by questioning -- as an agent stood on the back of their legs, pressing a pistol to their heads. This routine went on for weeks. The only relief came when British spies appeared for a session: "Don't worry, they won't beat you while we're here," the jolly James Bonds would say. At night, there were head counts every hour to prevent the prisoners from sleeping.

One day, for reasons unexplained -- perhaps, as often happened, a false confession was beaten out of someone who gave names of "accomplices" to satisfy his interrogators -- the Tipton men were frog-marched onto a plane bound for Cuba, triple-chained and beaten along the way, beaten and kicked upon their arrival.

Then began the long, dazed limbo-life of Guantánamo. Endless interrogations: Each man was grilled at least 200 times, sometimes for 12 hours at a stretch, always kneeling, chained to the floor. Constant punishments: for "back talk," or seeking privacy for their bowel movements, or arranging their utensils incorrectly. And always, over and over, the farcical accusations that could have easily been disproved with five minutes of investigation.

But their captors weren't interested in the truth; they wanted "results." Finally, after two years of relentless physical and psychological pressure -- including the ever-present threat of a military tribunal and execution without appeal -- the friends cracked and signed false confessions to the most ludicrous charge of all: that they were top bin Laden lieutenants, pictured with him in a video from August 2000, despite the existence of documentary evidence -- witnesses, pay stubs, school records -- that proved they were in England at the time. But before their show trial could begin, British intelligence belatedly examined the charge and confirmed the alibis of all three men.

Now they're free, as the Regime flushes the most embarrassing cases out of the system before the Supreme Court rules on the "legality" of the Bush gulag this summer. The treatment of these three innocent men, chained and beaten for two years, is not just a crime, but also -- like that other crime, the invasion of Iraq -- an enormous waste of time and resources in the "war on terrorism." We saw the grim fruit of this waste in Madrid last week.

But of course, the Pentagon Archipelago wasn't designed to fight terrorism; it's designed to advance terrorism -- state terrorism. Its purpose is to establish the principle of arbitrary rule -- in the name of "military necessity" -- above the rule of law, in America and around the world. It's part of an overarching system of terror -- aggressive war, assassination, indefinite detention, torture -- employed to achieve the Regime's openly stated ideological goal: "full-spectrum dominance" of global politics and resources, particularly energy resources. Al-Qaida has the same goal, and uses the same methods, albeit on a smaller, "asymmetrical" scale.

Now we are all at the mercy of these entwined terrorist factions -- both led by fundamentalist sons of two financially linked elitist clans. We will see more Guanamos, more Madrids, before this long, dark night is over.

## Annotations

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