

REPORT OF WELFARE VISIT WITH OMAR KHADR
March 12 & 14, 2008

Summary: On March 12th & 14th, 2008, I met with Omar Khadr for approximately 9 hours over the course of two welfare visits carried out at Camp Iguana in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba (3.5 hours on March 12th and 5.5 hours on March 14th). Through the solid rapport which we quickly developed, I had the opportunity to observe a likeable, funny and intelligent young man. Though in some ways lacking maturity, due at least in part to his limited and negative life experiences to date, and from almost six years of detention with no educational or rehabilitation opportunities, he nevertheless demonstrated remarkable insight and self-awareness.

Both Defence counsel and Joint Task Force (JTF) GTMO Detainee Operations Staff indicated that Omar's behaviour, demeanour and outlook have developed *significantly and positively* in the last year or so, a change they both attribute in large part to the visits carried out by CNO/Collins and JLH/Nölke and the resulting beneficial relationships they have built with Omar.

The overarching theme of much of our discussions focused on his desire to get out of Guantanamo, to return to Canada, to fix his health, to educate himself, to have a family, and to eventually find a job satisfying his personal commitment to help those in need. By contrast, he also expressed a hyper-awareness of the challenges that he would face, but demonstrated no bitterness or anger, emphasizing instead a desire to move forward in life. The increasingly trusting relationships he has built with CNO/Collins and JLH/Nölke, which are clearly important to him, and the very positive visit we shared, seem to have put a face on the Canadian Government in his eyes, and he appeared hopeful that Canada is aware of him, cares about him, and will help him.

Conditions of Meetings: As outlined in previous welfare reports, pursuant to a Court Order, which ordinarily limits contact by Canadian officials to consular personnel, observers to the Military Commission proceedings in Guantanamo are permitted to carry out welfare visits with Omar Khadr. Under the terms of the Order, this report and any notes taken are provided to Omar's legal counsel within 30 days of the meeting.

As before, our two meetings took place at Camp Iguana, in the "habeas huts" and I was able to bring a number of food items including candy, fresh fruits, nuts, some junk food and juice with me. As set out by Camp Rules, Omar is allowed to partake of everything I am permitted to bring in, but cannot take any of it back with him to Camp IV. During our second visit on Friday, Military Police at Camp Iguana, as a "favour to [me]" and [REDACTED] warmed up the lasagne I had purchased for us later in the morning, and brought it in over the lunch hour with authorized utensils (sporks).

In keeping with previous visits, we were given privacy, but a camera in one corner of the hut was focused on Omar throughout. He used this camera to attract the attention of the guards (most of whom are around the same age as him) when required, or simply banged on the wall behind him. Omar indicated his belief that all of our conversations are nevertheless monitored.

Report: I offer the following observations based on my interactions with Omar during the aforementioned visits, but note that I am not a trained consular or medical expert. In keeping with JLH/Nölke's observations, Omar seems to be in overall good physical condition, and appeared relaxed and comfortable during our visits, although restrained by his left foot which remained shackled to the floor. He was open and friendly throughout, and although I indicated clearly that he could end the visit at any time, and had the right not to answer questions, he obviously enjoyed our time together and was willing to chat about every topic I raised. He further volunteered information about himself, wanted to know if there were any other things I was interested in knowing about him, and asked me my impressions of him. He was also curious about me, seeking permission to ask questions of both a personal and general nature. I learned

later Omar expressed to his defence counsel a desire to meet with me again, and that as a result they went out of their way to work late with him Thursday, so that he and I could visit for all of Friday morning.

General Physical & Mental Health

Omar continues to have difficulty with stomach problems and feels that the food he is provided is too heavy, always covered in "red sauce", over-cooked and tasteless. He told me he doesn't eat a lot because of this, but is very aware of making sure he maintains a healthy weight (he is weighed regularly) of 175-180lbs so that he is not force-fed. He eats primarily vegetables and light breakfast foods like yoghurt and bread with cream cheese, foregoing meat most of the time, as these are the only things that don't give him an upset stomach. He asked that we request he be given a side of cheese and olives with every meal. He has previously asked for a side of olive oil with lunch, a bottle of which was purchased by JLH/Nölke on her last visit, and a small bit of olive oil is given to him in a cup at lunch. During the lunch time I spent with him on Friday, the guards brought his regular meal to him, in addition to the lasagne, giving me a chance to see it. He was given a hamburger with lettuce and tomato, a small side salad of lettuce, a side of olive oil and a container of apple juice. Given that I had brought him a full lunch of lasagne, fresh fruit, fresh squeezed orange juice and chocolates, he didn't eat the other meal, but indicated that the hamburgers and the fettuccine alfredo, which come around every two weeks, respectively, were among the only meals he liked.

The enamel on the bottom of Omar's front right tooth appears to have chipped and is causing him pain. He says that he has asked to see a dentist but has not yet been given an appointment. When I raised this with the SJA they told me he has only to ask, so I reminded him to ask again, but also highlighted the issue with the SJA. I further purchased him a tube of Sensodyn toothpaste which I asked to be brought to him.

Omar had been running regularly and seemed to be enjoying it for both the mental and physical benefits. However, persistent foot and ankle pain, which he attributes to lack of proper footwear, have prevented him from running regularly in recent weeks. He indicated that he has asked to see a doctor, but his requests have been ignored for the last three weeks. He felt that insoles could perhaps help the problem, and I indicated to him that I had brought down new shoes (with Velcro closures) which I would do my best to make sure were given to him. I also brought down an ankle brace, but was not able to find any insoles in GTMO to purchase. Both the shoes and the brace were being inspected by SJA security, and although I had handed them in for inspection on Tuesday evening, they still had not been passed through on Friday when I checked. I reminded him to ask for an appointment again, and indicated that I would also follow up.

Omar's back continues to cause him problems, as outlined in JLH/Nölke's previous report, which he identifies as something beyond muscular and related instead to things inside of him. Later in our second visit he was more specific, indicating that the shrapnel still inside his body causes him a variety of aches and pains. He also joked that it is this shrapnel which constantly sets off the metal detector when being frisked going in and out of Camp Iguana.

He asked again for an extra blanket for warmth at night, and a pillow, which he felt might be helpful in easing some of his back discomfort. He currently chooses to sleep on the ground, although he has a small cot, because this allows him more space to spread out. Omar indicated he gets about 7 hours of sleep a night (10:00pm - 5:00am) which is "decent" sleep. We had been previously been informed by the SJA that he would likely be allowed a pillow if we were to provide it, but emails seeking confirmation of this went unanswered prior to my arrival. I therefore purchased a pillow for him and brought it to the SJA, requesting that it be brought in to Omar. I was told that it would be screened and brought in to him, however this had not yet been done when I departed on Friday. The pillow itself doesn't seem to pose any security risk as a number of detainees have been given pillows by their interrogators.

Omar is almost entirely blind in his left eye, something that is obvious given how it now looks. He is concerned that it is getting worse, however, and that his exposure to constant light is causing his vision to get blurrier, which in turn is causing him more frequent and more painful headaches. He explained to me that he never sees darkness as the lights are on all through the night, and although he has something to cover his eyes when he sleeps, he has requested and is continuing to request a pair of plastic sunglasses, which can cut down on the rays to which he is exposed outside during the day, and inside in the evenings.

Educational Opportunities

Omar currently has no educational opportunities available to him, beyond rudimentary language classes, which, given his natural intelligence and inquisitiveness, is evidently very frustrating. School books brought down to him earlier by JLH/Nölke provide some mental stimulation, but he indicated that these are difficult to complete for two reasons. Firstly, while given access to pens, he is not allowed to keep them, and therefore often when he wants to work out of the workbooks, he has no way of doing so. Secondly, he indicated that he is not necessarily motivated to do work out of a book, and there are often too many distractions to allow him to stay focused. He expressed on several occasions a desire for the structure, discipline and interactivity of a classroom setting, emphatically highlighting to me his wish to go to school with other students, and to go home, study and prepare homework for the next day.

The SJA expressed surprise that he had not been given flexible pens to keep, indicating they believed he did have some. Omar forcefully reiterated on several occasions that although he had access to pens, he had not been given any that he was allowed to keep. These pens are clearly very important to him, and as they do not represent a security risk, as several other detainees are able to keep their own flexible pens, this is an issue worth following up on.

After an incident last month, now resolved, detailed in JLH/Nölke's earlier report, in which his participation in Arabic classes was cancelled, he has been reinstated and currently has the opportunity to attend classes 3 times a week, which he wishes to continue. The English class is offered once a week, and is far too basic for Omar's level (they are learning how to pronounce the alphabet). There are also Pashto classes offered 3 times a week which Omar was very keen to join. Follow up should be done with the SJA to ensure he has access to these classes.

I spoke separately with the SJA about providing Omar with further educational opportunities, and indicated that we have found a school willing to provide distance learning opportunities for Omar through an interactive program. I attempted to get a sense of whether the US would be willing to fund such a program, and was told explicitly that if Canada were to suggest this or a similar initiative, something could more than likely be arranged.

Intellectual Stimulation, Interests & Goals

Apart from the weekly classes, Omar's only intellectual stimulation comes from debates and conversation with other detainees, and from the books and magazines which have been provided by CNO/Collins and JLH/Nölke. He also enjoys writing in English, and has been writing poetry which he someday hopes to publish. He mentioned that much of his poetry is written when he is feeling very emotional about something, and this is a way of expressing himself. As such, his lack of English vocabulary and solid grammatical base frustrate him. He told me that recently he had been writing less and less, because of a fear that his efforts would be wasted if/when the guards took his work away. When we met on Friday however, he indicated that he had felt encouraged to start writing again, and would like to pen a comparative study on how different cultures deal with elements of life such as birth, death, marriage, education, divorce and festivals, etc.; the impetus for the idea stemming from the sadness and sympathy he felt towards one of the guards who had gone through a divorce, and his interest in examining how that event was dealt with in the context of the American culture.

Given our inability to talk about his legal issues, and any of the details leading to his detention, the thrust of our conversations focused on current events, on Canada, on the future and on

Omar's interests and goals. He is particularly fixated on wanting to travel and see the world, connect to people from a variety of different cultures and linguistic backgrounds, help those less fortunate through medical and social programs, become an Emergency Medical Technician, create an NGO in Africa (where "people are the neediest"), perhaps work for the ICRC, and simply live a "normal life" and be a "normal person". He broached the topic of public scrutiny of any organization in which he is involved, and for this reason indicated he would like to conduct all work openly and transparently, under the auspices of the United Nations.

Family

Omar barely broached the subject of his family, beyond sharing with me a few memories, such as learning to ride a bike with his uncle in Ottawa. I conveyed to him that he was now allowed another phone call home, and could let the guards know when he wanted to schedule it, but he didn't seem overly keen to do so. The SJA told me later that one of his last phone calls had initially been cancelled by his mother, because she couldn't make herself available.

Religious Needs

Omar was praying when I first arrived for our initial visit, but did not seem bothered by missing a number of prayers over the course of our two visits, nor did he seem upset about the fact that I had not been able to find an English Koran in time to bring down with me. I asked him whether he had access to spiritual/religious guidance and was told that they no longer have an 'official' Imam. I indicated that we would do our best to bring him an English Koran during our next visit and this seemed to satisfy him.

Miscellaneous

JLH/Nöike's previous report comments upon Omar's request for warmer clothes or a warm covering for court. Omar was again dressed in the 'whites' reserved for the most compliant detainees, and had on a long sleeve white waffle shirt underneath, which he also wore for both of our visits. Despite this added layer, the court room was again *freezing* cold, and he expressed distress the following day about how cold his hands were. Given that he has to keep his hands on the table in front of him during the proceedings, enquiries should be made to see if gloves or something similar can be provided to him.

Omar also requested a round, squeeze stress ball to help strengthen his hands.

Finally, he requested a copy of Michelle Shephard's forthcoming book, 'Guantanamo's Child'. I indicated that I wasn't sure he would be allowed a copy, but that I would look into it, with no promises.

Conclusions & Next Steps: In the words of [REDACTED], Omar is "salvageable", "non-radicalized", and "a good kid", who is well liked both within the Camp and by JTF staff. JTF staff seems to look out for him by stopping by to chat on occasion, convincing him to meet with his lawyers and encouraging him to "keep his nose clean". Despite this, several requests made both by Omar and Canadian Government Officials seem to have fallen through the cracks. For example, photos sent to the SJA in January, which they had undertaken to print and show to Omar, were only brought in while I was there, after I pressed the issue. To this end, it is important that we play an active role in following up with the SJA. There seems to me no reason that Omar should not have access to, *inter alia*, a pillow, an extra blanket, Velcro shoes, the origami book and sheets, flexible pens and a warm covering for court. Justification should be requested for items that are not permitted.

Specific follow up should be conducted to ensure that the following items I purchased/brought down for Omar get to him. The SJA indicated that there are a number of items for Omar from JLH/Nöike's last visit, which have not yet been brought to him, and with the additional purchases I made, he now has a several extra items waiting to go to him. Moreover, he still has not received many of the books and magazines that we have been bringing. Although the SJA indicated that they don't bring items in all at once, but over time, there doesn't seem to be any good reason for

the delay. Closer monitoring and follow up will have a direct impact on Omar's quality of life as it relates to his ability to access books, magazines and some creature comforts. The above-mentioned items include:

A pillow; Velcro Shoes; An ankle brace; A photo book of Canada; Chocolates; Chips; Green & Black Tea; Coffee; Chewing Gum; Shampoo & Conditioner; Body Wash; Deodorant; Fruit juice mixes; Toothbrush; Sensodyn Toothpaste; A running logbook; A variety of National Geographic, Modern Science and Nature magazines; Several novels/non-fiction books; An origami book with accompanying paper; A yoga book.

Omar has also requested the following, which can be obtained and brought down to him, or which should get to him through the SJA:

Black Seeds (available at Middle Eastern grocery stores for his stomach); English Koran; Gloves/Warmer clothing for court, particularly for his hands; Plastic sunglasses; Cologne (in a plastic container with no glass or metal components); Extra blanket; Side of Cheese & Olives with meals; Insoles; First Aid Book; Pashto Classes; Letters from Dennis Edney which he hasn't yet received; Stress ball.

Drafted: JLH/Millington