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PERIODIC REVIEW BOARD, MARCH 8, 2016
SAIFULLAH ABDULLAH PARACHA (ISN 1094)

**OPENING STATEMENT OF
PRIVATE COUNSEL DAVID H. REMES**

Good morning. I am David Remes, private counsel for Saifullah Abdullah Paracha. Mr. Paracha is a citizen of Pakistan. At 68, he is the oldest remaining Guantánamo detainee. I have represented him since 2005 and speak frequently with his family in Pakistan and America.

Mr. Paracha respectfully asks that the Board recommend him for transfer. He wishes to be brought either to Pakistan or America. In Pakistan, he will reunite with his wife of 36 years, and their two daughters and large extended family, rebuild his businesses and build new ones, and live a normal peaceful life. In America, he and his wife will live normal lives among their large contingent of relatives here, who include one of his brothers, one of his sisters, his two sons, and 22 nieces and nephews.

Wherever he goes, Mr. Paracha, who suffers from chronic medical conditions, will require medical observation and care.

Mr. Paracha is certainly well prepared for life in America or any other English-speaking country. He lived in the U.S. from 1970 to 1986 and married here. Born into extreme poverty in a remote Punjab village in 1947, he came to America when he was 24 and became a successful businessman. He owned travel agencies which facilitated travel between the U.S. and Pakistan, and he produced a weekly television program for the Pakistani population in New Jersey.

When Mr. Paracha returned to Pakistan in 1986, he and an American partner established an export-import business, which acted as a buying agent in Pakistan for American retail giants, such as Wal-Mart and K-Mart, placing orders for garments and other merchandise made in Pakistan. Mr. Paracha also set up a television production company, which produced plays and programs designed to promote religious harmony.

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Mr. Paracha is fluent in English and avidly follows the news in the English-language news media. Mr. Paracha does not speak Arabic. He often beats me to the punch when we discuss political or economic developments here and abroad. Mr. Paracha also has faith that the United States can play a constructive role in world affairs. Among the items we submitted to the Board are pre-9/11 letters that he wrote to President George W. Bush and former President George H.W. Bush proposing ways to bridge the divide between the Western and Arab worlds.

Mr. Paracha is and has always been a model detainee. He has always been held in quarters reserved for the most compliant detainees. Remarkably, he has stayed cheerful and upbeat despite his unfortunate circumstances. Guards and camp officials enjoy his company, and he always talked freely and openly with his interrogators. Of course, Mr. Paracha cannot show "remorse" for things he maintains he never did.

Mr. Paracha has been an enormously positive influence on other detainees. Other detainees call him "Uncle," a term of great respect for male elders, and seek out his advice. Wise and understanding, he discourages conflict and calms detainees when they are agitated. He promotes harmony among religions. He taught classes in business administration and English. Once, when other facilities were unavailable, he set up class in a cell.

Mr. Paracha also counseled cooperation with the government in the judicial and administrative review process. When the Supreme Court in 2004 gave detainees the green light to pursue habeas corpus cases, Mr. Paracha urged his fellows to accept help from the American lawyers. When the Periodic Review Board opened for business in July 2013, he urged them to participate in the process.

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Saifullah Paracha harbors no animosity to the U.S. On the contrary, he has many family members here and is willing to be resettled here. Once, when asked if he is half-Pakistani and half-American, he replied that he is entirely Pakistani and entirely American. Nor does Mr. Paracha have any sympathy for terrorism or radical Islam. On the contrary, he has publicly denounced terrorism as un-Islamic and will continue to speak against it, wherever he is sent.

Model detainee. Mentor to younger detainees. Counselor of tolerance, understanding, and cooperation. Paterfamilias of a great extended family, with members in Pakistan and America. A man at home in the U.S. and at ease with Western culture and ways. A man who opposes and denounces violent extremism. This man, Saifullah Paracha, is no threat to the United States, and the Board should recommend him for transfer.

Thank you.

PERIODIC REVIEW BOARD INITIAL HEARING, 08 MAR 2016
SAIFULLAH ABDULLAH PARACHA, ISN 1094
PERSONAL REPRESENTATIVE OPENING STATEMENT

Good morning, we are the Personal Representatives for Saifullah Abdullah Paracha, a 68 year-old man who has always been an exemplary detainee evident in both his behavior for fellow detainees and towards the administration. As the Personal Representatives for Saifullah, we can account that he has attended every meeting, been prepared and readily willing to participate throughout this process. In addition, he has persuaded other detainees to participate in the PRB process in order to sagaciously participate in their own PRB allowing a better process. He has a calm demeanor. His consistent character demonstrates he will remain the same peaceful and stable person outside of GTMO.

Saifullah would be the first to tell you that he has no problem with the United States. His ability to speak both English and Urdu has enabled him to teach other detainees as well as be a mediator between fellow Urdu speaking detainees allowing communications in a closed off community. As one of the oldest detainee in Guantanamo, many of his peers look to him for guidance and even consider Saifullah a father figure. He hopes that his transfer from Guantanamo will make up for the lost years of his life. Saifullah wants nothing more than to return to his loving wife and children. He is willing to be transferred to any country in order to move on with his life.

Saifullah was an extremely successful businessman and once he is transferred, he wants to continue his business. He has the skill set and talent to be successful in whatever country he is repatriated. Additionally, his family is ready to supply support wherever this may be, although they would like him to return to Pakistan to be the head-of-household for both his wife and kids, who will rely on him.

Saifullah has not expressed any ill will or anger about his detention at Guantanamo. He has denounced terrorist acts and organizations. Saifullah hopes today that you will find he is not a threat to the U.S. by answering your questions so he can return home.