

PERIODIC REVIEW BOARD INITIAL HEARING, 29 SEP 2015
ABDUL RAHMAN AHMED, ISN 441
PERSONAL REPRESENTATIVE OPENING STATEMENT

Good morning ladies and gentlemen, we are the Personal Representatives for Mr. Abdul Rahman Ahmed, whom we address as Mansoor. While working together and preparing for his board, Mansoor has been very enthusiastic, cooperative and forthcoming. He has been looking forward to meeting with you and answering your questions.

During his detention, Mansoor seized many opportunities to educate himself on different subjects as shown by the exhibits submitted in his case file and has earned his GED. This proves he is an excellent and serious student dedicated to advancing his knowledge and improving himself. His contribution to the Yemen Milk & Honey feasibility study and business plan combined with his ability to learn English demonstrates his potential to succeed as a business owner in almost any country. He is an energetic self-starter and resourceful self-learner. Mansoor is ready to begin a new life, build a career, and start a family. He is willing to go to any country that allows him to accomplish these goals while continuing his education.

Prior to his detention, he is remembered by the residents in his native village as being a well-behaved and friendly boy. The teachers, elders, and sheiks in the village speak highly of his academic abilities and peaceful behavior. Despite the challenges and circumstances at Guantanamo, Mansoor has maintained a positive attitude and been cooperative with camp staff which is evident by his current location, communal living. He schedules his day with constructive activities in order to continue growing and maturing. He will show you today that he is no longer a significant threat to the U.S. and is ready to be transferred so that he may start a new life as a business owner, husband, and father.

In closing, I'd like to mention Mansoor's spirited and dialectic personality because it kept our meetings productive, educational, and even enjoyable at times. Never once however, was he disrespectful to our mission, goals, and authority.

Thank you again for the opportunity to share these opening remarks. We would now like to defer to Mansoor's Private Counsel for her opening statement.

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PRIVATE COUNSEL OPENING STATEMENT

I am Beth Jacob, private counsel for Mansoor Ahmed Rahman Said al Warifi.

I would like to give you a little background about myself, so you can have context to consider my comments about Mansoor. Shortly after law school, I became a prosecutor in the New York City District Attorney's Office in Manhattan, where I worked for eight years. I was in the Rackets and Frauds Bureaus, investigating and prosecuting organized crime, official corruption, white collar crime, large scale tax evasion and major financial frauds. Along the way, I handled some street crime cases as well.

Some years after I left the District Attorney's office, I defended the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey – the owner of the World Trade Center complex – in the litigations arising out of the events of September 11, 2001. On a pro bono basis, I also helped victims of that attack make claims against insurers and obtain compensation from the fund established by the United States government for that purpose. Now, most of my work is representing generic pharmaceutical companies in patent infringement litigation against brand pharmaceutical companies. Along with others at my previous firm and my current firm, I have represented men detained at Guantanamo since 2005.

Turning to the immediate question before you: Who is Mansoor today, and what are his attitudes toward the United States? Is there any reason why he should remain detained? Mansoor now is a man who has acquired some education and maturity; he is pretty Westernized and more familiar with much of Western popular culture than I am. He speaks English well, rapidly, and at length about everything from his own experiences, to his favorite singers and TV shows, to his hopes for the future, to his philosophy about life. He gets along with the guards – while I was there a few weeks ago, one of them gave him a list of recommended books – and is housed in a block for compliant detainees who are comfortable with Western culture. At my first meeting, my female colleague and I walked in wearing scarves over our hair as a courtesy. Mansoor stood up, held out his hand for a handshake, and told us to take the scarves off, they were not necessary.

Mansoor will tell you that his attitudes changed completely starting in 2009, when he was moved from pretty harsh circumstances into communal living and was given a lawyer. That lawyer was Andy Hart, an Ohio federal defender who died several years ago. Andy encouraged Mansoor to take classes and learn English, and this opened up a whole new world. Mansoor was able to see America through American TV and English language writings, and even became a fan of American culture. He likes listening to Taylor Swift. He enjoys watching US sitcoms. He likes Little House on the Prairie, because it reminds him of his very rural home with few modern conveniences. He enjoys Christopher Nolan movies.

In the past six years, Mansoor has taken advantage of every opportunity for education. These studies have been as serious as was possible – not only crafts and health, but also the GED (high school equivalency) program, and languages (he learned English and now has started

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Spanish). The books he requested include a history of the United States and computer technology, because he would like to go into IT when he is released from Guantanamo – a very realistic and pragmatic choice. As do most of the men down here, he hopes to get married – but, as he will tell you, his view of marriage is pretty modern: He is looking for a wife who will be a friend and a companion, well educated and able to help him make his new life.

Mansoor also is one of the group who put together the Yemen Milk and Honey Farm business proposal, which I gather you are familiar with. This work shows an impressive ability to learn new subjects, to put them together in a realistic and practical way, and to persevere. In addition to its content, the presentation itself is impressive.

Mansoor's first goal when he is transferred from Guantanamo is to go to college. He actually tried to apply to colleges a few years ago, with the help of his lawyer Andy Hart and the Red Cross, but it is not possible while he is detained here. He is looking forward to a future which is not that different from many young Western men – go to college, go into IT, start a family, start a business.

I have gotten to know Mansoor not only from a half-dozen all-day meetings over the past two months, but also from reading his letters to his habeas counsel over the past six years and talking with his habeas counsel. His current attitudes are not new or assumed for this board. We have asked to submit copies of one or two letters he wrote which demonstrate this.

I also have gotten to know Mansoor from the statements in his support from his family and village. Almost four dozen people from his village sent video statements through short cell phone clips and several others sent writings. We have submitted about a dozen of the videos for you to watch – we can provide them all if you like – and transcriptions of them all. These were collected over a year ago, without lawyer input and long before this hearing was scheduled. Each is very short, but their individual content is not the point. Two things come clear from the collection. The first is that Mansoor has the strong support not only of his immediate and extended family, but also of his entire community. He has a stack of letters from his immediate family and has had regular telephone calls with them since those were allowed.

The simple fact that his brother was able to get so many people to speak on behalf of Mansoor demonstrates that there is a strong and committed community which will provide moral and practical support for Mansoor once he is released. And Mansoor appreciates this and feels strong ties in return. I was with him while we played all of the video clips for him – it took over an hour. I saw his reaction, and he became emotional, actually tearing up when he saw his father speak and as his friends, family, former teachers, and community leaders all stood to express their support.

The second thing is that in these videos, everyone agreed that Mansoor had been a good student, very smart, and very well-behaved in school. He was not a trouble-maker. I would like to comment specifically on the last two videos that we gave you to watch – an elderly couple. This is a couple in straitened circumstances who Mansoor helped out when he was living at his home. I think when you watch the videos and read the statements, you will agree with this couple's conclusion: Mansoor was a good boy.

The evidence before you indicates that the good boy they knew has grown into a good man. He has been here for over 13 years, and over that time has matured. He is now a man who is eager to learn about other cultures, and who is able to appreciate attitudes and lifestyles different from his own. He wants to continue his education, and if given a choice would prefer to be sent to a country where that will be possible, and where he can continue to enjoy the Western culture that he has gotten to know and enjoy.

Mansoor is willing to cooperate with any rehabilitation process. He understands that everything cannot happen immediately, and that it will take time before he can create this future. He has shown a willingness to work toward a realistic goal that takes time to achieve – the Milk & Honey Farm prospectus, learning English, taking the courses of the GED curriculum.

I have seen no sense of entitlement in him, no sense of resentment or any grudges. To the contrary, he is grateful for the educational opportunities he has been given here, he is friendly with the guards, he is appreciative of the help of his counsel and his personal representatives.

As his Personal Counsel and his habeas co-counsel, my firm and I stand ready to assist and support Mansoor to make a new and productive life after Guantanamo. I have been through the college application process recently with my children, so perhaps that is one way we can be of help. We also hope to be able to assist in his acclimation to his new country and to life outside of prison.

Whatever problematic statements or activities may be in his past – and we are not here to go through that – in the present Mansoor is poised to be a productive member of society. He presents no threat to the safety of the United States, and he should be cleared for transfer.

Thank you.