

PERIODIC REVIEW BOARD INITIAL HEARING, 19 MAY 2016
JABRAN AL QAHTANI, ISN 696
PERSONAL REPRESENTATIVE OPENING STATEMENT

Good morning ladies and gentlemen of the Board. I am the Personal Representative for ISN 696, Mr. Jabran Saad al Qahtani. I will be assisting Mr. Qahtani with his case this morning, along with the assistance of his Private Counsel.

Jabran has been overjoyed and eager to participate in the Periodic Review process since I first met with him in mid-April 2016. He has maintained his positive attitude throughout all of our meetings and has always been gracious and respectful towards me.

Mr. Qahtani has expressed his desire to return home to reunite with his family. However, he is open to transfer to any country, but would prefer an Arabic-speaking country, if possible. He is willing to participate in any rehabilitation or reintegration program as well. He looks forward to life after his transfer from Guantanamo Bay and reconnecting with his large family. As the youngest son of his parents, he hopes that at some point his many sisters and brothers could visit him and he could get to know the youngest members of his close-knit family who were born during his detention.

Jabran has been a compliant detainee with a relatively low number of infractions since his arrival at Guantanamo Bay and has taken advantage of the communal living opportunity here at the detention facility. He earned an electrical engineering degree from King Saud University and comes from a large close-knit family of educators, government workers, and small business owners. Additionally, over the past 14 years, Jabran has attended art, computer skills, and English courses offered at the camp. By being exposed to so many people of various cultural and religious backgrounds here at GTMO, Jabran has had many opportunities to better understand and appreciate their beliefs and customs. These adaptive skills, along with his formal education in Saudi Arabia and coursework completed at Guantanamo Bay, will serve him well wherever he is transferred.

I am confident that Jabran's desire to pursue a better way of life if transferred from Guantanamo Bay is genuine and that he bears no ill will towards anyone. I remain convinced that Jabran does not pose a significant threat to security of the United States or any of its allies.

Thank you for your time and attention and I look forward to answering any questions you may have during this Board.

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May 9, 2016

Periodic Review Secretariat
JTF-GTMO

Written Submission in Support of Jabran Said Wazar al Qahtani (ISN 696)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This submission is to support the release of Jabran Said Wazar al Qahtani (ISN 696). Mr. al Qahtani has been confined at Guantanamo Bay for the past fifteen years as a result of actions that he took when he was twenty four years old. He is now thirty nine and has come to deeply regret what he did while he was young, ignorant, and swept away by a movement he did not understand.

Mr. al Qahtani realizes that he cannot recapture the years he lost or the other consequences of his actions. But he is committed to starting his life afresh, focusing on what he has come over time to recognize are most important to him: building a family and contributing to his community through work and service.

I. MR. AL QAHTANI POSES NO THREAT TO THE SECURITY OF THE UNITED STATES.

A. The Background to Mr. al Qahtani's Actions

Jabran Said Wazar al Qahtani is the eighth child of Sa'id Wazur al Qahtani. He has 13 brothers and eight sisters. His father built a successful real estate business in Riyadh.

As a boy, Mr. al Qahtani was raised in a family where an education was highly prized. Math, science, and engineering came naturally to many of Mr. al Qahtani's older brothers, who achieved early success. Two of Mr. al Qahtani's brothers are chemical engineers, one is an electrical engineer, one is a petroleum engineer, one is a computer scientist, and two are college professors. None of his siblings has had any involvement in extremist movements.

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Mr. al Qahtani greatly admired the success and achievement of his father and his older brothers. Although studies did not come as easily to him as some his older brothers, Mr. al Qahtani was able, through long hours of study as a boy and a young man, to earn an electrical engineering degree specializing in high voltage from King Saud University in Riyadh. This led him to accept a position at the Saudi Arabian Electric Company in Riyadh. Around that time, Mr. al Qahtani met Nawal. They married and began to plan a family of their own.

In 2001, however, Mr. al Qahtani got caught up in a wave of enthusiasm for defending Islam against what he heard described as a "crusade" by the United States and its allies. His understanding of battle at that time came from story books. He had no training or experience with combat or military affairs.

In what he has come to recognize as the greatest mistake of his young life, Mr. al Qahtani left Saudi Arabia for Afghanistan in 2001 and, after a series of misadventures, ended up in a training camp north of Kabul. The camp lasted for ten days. While it included weapons instruction, most of that consisted of classroom lectures. He spent much of his time digging a bunker and ducking fire from the Northern Alliance. He never fired a shot in anger.

After the ten days were over, Mr. al Qahtani retreated into hiding for approximately twenty days. He ended up in a safe house in Faisalabad, where he was captured by Pakistani soldiers. Plans to exploit Mr. al Qahtani's knowledge of engineering by training him to train others on the making of triggering devices came to nothing. Nobody was ever harmed by a device made directly or indirectly by Mr. al Qahtani.

Mr. al Qahtani was the furthest thing from a hardened Mujahadeen. In the words of one of those captured with Mr. al Qahtani in Faisalabad: "His background and actions weren't that of a fundamentalist. He liked to joke, have fun."

Mr. al Qahtani's attempts to puff himself up as tough and dangerous following his capture—for example, calling himself a "terrorist"—were nothing more than a misguided attempt to fit into the extreme society of his fellow Guantanamo Bay detainees.

B. Mr. al Qahtani's Family are Committed to Supporting His Plans to Start a Family and Live a Quiet Life.

Mr. al Qahtani comes from a well-respected Saudi Arabian family that, despite his mistakes, is willing to support his reintegration into modern society.

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None of Mr. al Qahtani's brothers is involved in extremist activities. They were all dismayed by Mr. al Qahtani's actions and would have tried to stop him had they known his intentions in 2001/2002.

Mr. al Qahtani's family statements, enclosed with this submission, evince a loving family ready to support Mr. al Qahtani:

- Mr. al Qahtani's brother has collected letters from all available members of his family. He says that Mr. al Qahtani's release would return the "smile and happiness" to every member of his family.
- His other brother hopes that Mr. al Qahtani's life is stabilized "with marriage, suitable work, and [a] house to be a productive individual serving his home and his society."
- His brother-in-law says that his entire family was shocked when he left home but hopes that the Board gives Mr. al Qahtani an opportunity to join his family once again.
- Another brother describes him as, among many other things, "gregarious," "humorous," "moderate," "patient," and "loved by others."
- Another brother says that Mr. al Qahtani's leaving home was "terrible" and that he hopes to help Mr. al Qahtani "proceed his life which will be the new better beginning to him."
- An additional brother remarks fondly on how Mr. al Qahtani taught his younger siblings school lessons and hopes that his family can help Mr. al Qahtani start a family of his own soon.
- His sisters and his father's second wife express excitement for his release and note that his family plans to help provide him a home and financial support upon his release.

Mr. al Qahtani plans to reintegrate into society by finding a wife, a job, and starting a family. These are not the plans of a potential recidivist, but rather the plans of a man ready to live the rest of his life quietly.

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A. Mr. al Qahtani's Behavior in Custody has Improved

The statements from Mr. al Qahtani's fellow inmates and teachers reflect the maturing of his character. Mr. al Qahtani has taken a number of classes at Guantanamo, including English, life skills, and Photoshop courses, and his instructors in those courses speak highly of his studious nature and willingness to work with others. Similarly, while Mr. al Qahtani was formerly stand-offish at Guantanamo, he has slowly opened up to other inmates and has become social once again. Their statements evince his development while in Guantanamo Bay and his readiness to reintegrate into modern society.

II. THE BOARD SHOULD RELEASE MR. AL QAHTANI

Mr. al Qahtani poses no threat to the security of the United States. He deeply regrets his decision to leave home in 2002 and realizes that it was based on an immature, storybook notion of the world that has no basis in reality.

Mr. al Qahtani's training as an electrical engineer should not stand in the way of his release. Mr. al Qahtani is not a bomb-maker. Indeed, he has never been alleged to have been a bomb-maker, only a young man who, because of his education, was picked out to receive training in that area. There is no reason to believe that formal electrical engineering training Mr. al Qahtani received twenty years ago would provide him with relevant specialized knowledge of bomb-making.

Regardless, Mr. al Qahtani has absolutely no desire to be a bomb maker. He wishes to live a quiet life, raise a family, get a job, and earn respect in his community.