

PERIODIC REVIEW BOARD INITIAL HEARING, 21 JUNE 2016
RAVIL MINGAZOV, ISN 702
PERSONAL REPRESENTATIVE OPENING STATEMENT

Good morning ladies and gentlemen of the Board. As the Personal Representative for Ravil Mingazov (ISN 702) I would like to thank the Board for allowing me this opportunity to demonstrate how Ravil is no longer a continuing significant threat to the United States.

Ravil is a Russian Tartar, a religious and ethnic minority group from the Tartarstan region of Russia. He grew up in a loving family and led an active life, ultimately becoming a professional-level ballet dancer prior to being conscripted into the Russian military like most young men. During his time in the Russian military, Ravil never trained for combat duty. Actually, his first two years of service were part of a military ballet troupe. Following this, he served in support roles performing passport control on the border with Mongolia and then managing all food, logistics, and cooking for a base of around fifteen hundred people.

During Ravil's time in the Russian military, he became increasingly bothered that he was not allowed to observe basic tenets of the Islamic faith while on duty, such as pray or eat halal food. His attempt to peacefully engage military and civilian political leadership on this issue started a chain of events that eventually drove him to leave Russia and seek an Islamic country where he and his family could more freely practice their religion. While traveling from Russia to Tajikistan, his young son became very ill, so his wife was forced to return to Russia with their son to seek medical care. The Tajikistan government eventually relocated Ravil and many other foreigners out of the country, leading to his arrival in Afghanistan. Ravil never fit in with any group due to suspicion of his Russian background. He survived by performing menial tasks and moving often. Following the onset of coalition operations, he joined the waves of people fleeing Afghanistan, eventually crossing into Pakistan where he was detained at a guest house.

While at Guantanamo, Ravil has been a compliant detainee who has never taken part in any non-religious fasting, even when most other detainees participated. Ravil took numerous classes in Life Skills, Arabic, and Arabic to English. Despite the language barrier with other detainees, Ravil developed close friendships at Guantanamo, due in large part to his calm, friendly demeanor. Ravil desperately wants to re-connect with his only son, now a teenager with no memory of his father prior to detention. Ravil's son, ex-wife and other in-laws currently live in the United Kingdom under political asylum and have written numerous letters pledging to support Ravil upon his release. Ravil holds no grudges against the United States and, in fact, greatly admires the religious freedom that America offers. Ravil is prepared to answer all of your questions truthfully and respectfully in order to demonstrate he is not a continuing significant threat to the United States. Thank you.

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INITIAL HEARING OF JUNE 21, 2016**

**STATEMENT BY GARY THOMPSON
PERSONAL COUNSEL FOR RAVIL MINGAZOV (ISN 702)**

Dear Members of the Periodic Review Board:

Thank you for accepting this statement from me as Personal Counsel (PC) in this PRB hearing for Guantanamo detainee Ravil Mingazov. I am a private, pro bono attorney from the law firm of Reed Smith LLP in Washington, D.C. (where I serve as the D.C. office managing partner). I have been practicing law for 26 years, always with time for pro bono cases of many kinds. In 2005, my firm accepted several detainee representations for their respective habeas corpus cases. At the time, a former Marine officer (Doug Spaulding) and Army officer (Bernie Casey) took the cases and I was pleased to join them. Since 2007, I have traveled to Guantanamo many times and spent many days meeting with Ravil. With Doug and Bernie now retired, I have become the lead counsel, including as PC in this hearing.

I fully understand and appreciate the issue being considered by this panel – whether Ravil, if released, would be a “threat” to anyone (taking into account security measures by the receiving country). My background allowing me to comment on this matter includes my in-person meetings with Ravil over the last 10 years, letters exchanged, and also calls, Skype, and letters exchanged with Ravil’s mother, former wife, and son. I am also very familiar with all of the evidence concerning Ravil, including as presented in his habeas case (presently still active, on appeal by the government), although of course I do not comment herein on any of that evidence or allegations.

Please appreciate that I have thought and reflected long and hard on the issue over the course of many years, and most recently, during my usual ultra-long-distance runs. This is my considered conclusion: *I believe and know Ravil to be a kind and peaceful man who, if released, will do no harm to anyone.* He will live the rest of his days as a devout and peaceful Muslim, a loving father and family member, a good son to his mother (for her remaining days), a cheerful friend to all those around him, a physically and mentally healthy person, and a productive employee in any number of jobs that he would eagerly take.

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Ravil's son and other family members now residing in Nottingham, England would receive Ravil with open arms (assuming, we hope, the United Kingdom sees fit to accept an asylum petition). They will give him a bed and use of an apartment, feed him, care for him, help him transition, and help him find gainful employment. The United Kingdom, of course, would provide the highest levels of security assurances.

With respect to Ravil and his peacefulness, I have come to these conclusions because I have observed his character over many years. Ravil has always greeted us, first and foremost, as his friends. He has never been impatient or hostile with us personally in any way. On the contrary, almost without exception, Ravil has been kind, cheerful, and humorous – something that is extraordinary to us given his long imprisonment. More, I have never heard Ravil lash out or say anything negative or threatening about anyone – not about any guard, officer, fellow detainee, any American leader, or anyone. When discussing Russian politics, Ravil does so with a keen and deep understanding of the issues, history, and a respect for the struggles of ethnic people who simply want to live and worship in peace. We have spent much time in excellent conversation about history, leaders, philosophy, literature, and other topics. And we also talk at great length about our families, friends, and the simple things of life - the interesting animals and creatures of Guantanamo, the pleasant weather, our mutual like of running and exercising, and our hopes and dreams for the future.

For sure, over the years, we have reviewed, and re-reviewed, every last detail about his past, his whereabouts in 2000-2002, the conditions at GTMO, and the endless labyrinth of his never-ending habeas case in court. Discussing the court case gets tedious, and so we mostly simply talk as friends, increasingly so as the years go by. This is also the case with our longtime translator and all the other counsel Ravil has befriended over the years (especially Doug Spaulding, who has spent the most time with Ravil). So it is not surprising that so many people – family, friends, counsel, fellow detainees – have taken the time to write such positive statements about Ravil. I hope that these statements taken as a whole, along with Ravil's statement, will convince you that the PRB clearance standard in this case is very well satisfied.

I plan to be present at the June 21, 2016 PRB hearing, where I would be pleased to discuss these issues further, including any questions that the Panel may have regarding the classified summary.