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Ex-Guantanamo inmate 'saw' deadly beating

Associated Press
February 25, 2005

A Briton held as a terrorist suspect by US forces in Cuba and Afghanistan said today he saw two prisoners beaten so badly by guards that he believes they died.

Appearing on Channel Four TV News, Moazzam Begg said he saw the alleged fatal assaults while being held in Afghanistan.

Begg, a 37-year-old father of four, was arrested by the CIA in Pakistan in February 2002, and held at the Bagram air base in Afghanistan for a year before being sent to the Guantanamo Bay US naval base in Cuba in early 2003.

He was released last month with three other Britons from the US prison camp for terrorist suspects.

The former detainee claimed that he was tortured while in Bagram but not mistreated in Cuba.

"I witnessed two people get beaten so badly that I believe it caused their deaths," he told Channel Four News.

"And one of those deaths was later investigated, and those investigators turned up to Guantanamo Bay and asked me if I would be willing to point out the perpetrators of that, those beatings, of what I witnessed."

Begg, who lives in Birmingham, England, was released from Guantanamo in January with three other Britons: Feroz Abbasi, Martin Mubanga and Richard Belmar.

When asked about Begg's claims, US officials said the two deaths were investigated by the US Department of Army Criminal Investigation and its coroner reached a verdict of homicide last year, Channel Four said.

The network quoted the US officials as saying the case has now been referred to the US Army's Department of Public Justice to decide if charges should be brought.

Channel Four quoted the Pentagon as saying it could find no evidence that Begg had been abused while being held in custody in Cuba or Afghanistan.

Begg said he had visited two training camps operated by locals in Afghanistan in the 1990s.

He said he stayed at the first base, run by the anti-Taliban Northern Alliance, for two weeks in 1993. He said he was "looking at what they do and how they live".

Five years later, he said, he visited a camp near Jalalabad for a day-and-a-half. He said it was run by Kurds who had been fighting against Saddam Hussein and that it was later closed by the Taliban.