

GUANTANAMO BAY AND OMAR KHADR

Introduction

Focus

This *News in Review* story focuses on the case of Omar Khadr, the young Canadian who has been held in the U.S. military prison in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, since 2002 and the controversy surrounding his detention there and possible release.

Did you know . . .

Omar Khadr would have most likely died on the battlefield without the speedy and effective medical assistance of U.S. forces.

On July 27, 2002, a U.S. military unit on patrol near Khost, in Afghanistan, stormed a bunker containing a band of Al Qaeda fighters operating in support of Taliban insurgents fighting the NATO occupation of the country. In the ensuing firefight and bombing, three insurgents and one American soldier were killed. As the dead and wounded Al Qaeda fighters were dragged from the bombed-out ruins of their compound, the U.S. troops were astonished to discover that one of them, a 15-year-old boy, was a Canadian who spoke perfect English. His name was Omar Khadr, and his subsequent detention as an alleged “unlawful enemy combatant” in the U.S. prison in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, has aroused considerable controversy during the six years of his forcible confinement in that notorious institution.

Khadr was accused of throwing the grenade that killed Sergeant Christopher Speer, a Delta Force medic acting in a combat role in the assault on the bunker. However, subsequent investigations raised serious questions about Khadr’s responsibility for the soldier’s death. Severely wounded in the firefight, Khadr was initially held in the U.S. military prison in Bagram, Afghanistan, where he claimed to have been badly mistreated. He was subsequently airlifted to Guantanamo Bay, where the U.S. had established a prison holding hundreds of prisoners suspected to be terrorists waging war against U.S. forces in Afghanistan and Iraq. Khadr alleges that he was subjected to further abuse and harsh techniques of interrogation at the hands of his American captors there.

Omar Khadr was born in Ottawa in 1986 into a family with strong links to radical fundamentalist Islamic groups such as Al Qaeda. This organization, led

by Osama bin Laden, was responsible for the terrorist attacks on New York City and Washington, D.C., on September 11, 2001. Khadr’s father, a native of Egypt, moved the family to Afghanistan in the 1990s, where he ran a charity organization for orphans. He strongly supported the extremist Taliban regime then ruling the country and was a personal friend of bin Laden. He encouraged his four sons—Omar, Abdurahman, Abdullah and Abdul—to undergo training as jihadists, or Islamic holy warriors, against the United States. Omar became separated from his father after the fall of the Taliban during the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan in late 2001 and was part of an Al Qaeda cell when he was wounded and captured. Whether or not he was a willing participant in the group’s military actions against U.S. forces remains unclear. But despite his young age, the United States regarded him as a terrorist deserving incarceration in Camp Delta at Guantanamo and eventual trial before a military tribunal, where he would not be entitled to the rights normally granted a person accused of a crime.

In the six years since he was sent to Guantanamo, Khadr’s case has attracted considerable attention in his home country and around the world. Many people have accused the United States of operating a torture centre in Guantanamo and flouting the norms of international law, such as the Geneva Conventions guaranteeing the humane treatment of prisoners of war. The United Nations, the Red Cross, the Canadian and U.S. Supreme Courts, and other respected institutions have repeatedly demanded that Guantanamo be closed. They also argue that the prisoners be released, either to face charges in the United

Update

As this story was being prepared, U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton met with Foreign Affairs Minister Lawrence Cannon. Cannon stated that he did not raise the Khadr issue with Clinton and said, "I have indicated today the government of Canada fully respects the process that the American government has put forward, and we will await the outcome of that process, before anything takes place" (*Toronto Star*, February 25, 2009).

States itself, or that they be repatriated to their respective homelands. Despite a concerted campaign in Canada to pressure the federal government to intervene on Khadr's behalf, Prime Minister Stephen Harper has been reluctant to do so.

On January 20, 2009, Barack Obama was inaugurated as president of the United States. Two days later, in one of the first acts of his new administration, he signed an executive order to close the Guantanamo prison (but not the base itself) within one year. Throughout his successful campaign for the presidency, Obama had denounced Guantanamo and the abuse of those detained there as a deep stain on the international reputation of the United States as a country that purports to uphold the rule of law and human rights. In the meantime, U.S. military officials announced that the pending trials of Khadr and other detainees at Guantanamo were indefinitely postponed.

By late February 2009, it appeared that after six long years, Omar Khadr's days as a prisoner in Guantanamo would soon be over. The question arising at this point was what would happen to him once he was released? Would he be brought to the United States to face trial or would he be returned to Canada? And if he did

come back to his homeland, what would be done to prosecute or rehabilitate him? Many of those who have come to know Omar Khadr in Guantanamo, including his U.S. and Canadian lawyers and even some of his guards there, regard him as basically a "good kid" who is potentially "salvageable" and not necessarily a hardcore jihadist inclined to violence. But some members of his family now living in Canada, including his mother Maha and his sister Zaynab, have not done his public image any favours through their widely publicized statements of support for Al Qaeda, the September 11 terrorist attacks, and the killing of Sergeant Speer.

The case of Omar Khadr has raised some important questions regarding the definition of a "child soldier," the rights of prisoners of war, and the use of harsh interrogation techniques and mistreatment of "enemy combatants" in U.S. military prisons such as Guantanamo in Cuba, Bagram in Afghanistan, and Abu Ghraib in Iraq. With the likelihood of imminent release once Camp Delta is closed for good, Omar Khadr will face an uncertain future wherever he is finally relocated. His story as an unwitting or willing participant in the "war on terror" appears far from over.

To Consider

1. Why has the case of Omar Khadr aroused so much controversy in Canada and elsewhere?
2. Why have there been many demands that the United States close down its detention centre in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba?
3. What important change in U.S. policy regarding the Guantanamo Bay prison was announced in early 2009?
4. What may happen to Omar Khadr if he is released from captivity in Guantanamo Bay?
5. In your opinion, what should be the fate of Omar Khadr? Why?

GUANTANAMO BAY AND OMAR KHADR

Video Review

Further Research

To learn more about some of the groups supporting Khadr's return to Canada visit Amnesty International Canada at www.amnesty.ca and the Canadian Council on American Islamic Relations at www.caircan.ca.

Watch the video and answer the following questions.

1. a) How old was Omar Khadr when he was captured in Afghanistan? _____
b) Where has he spent the last six years? _____
2. What are the views of the following on Khadr as a terrorist?
 - a) Sgt. Layne Morris _____
 - b) Lieut. William Kuebler _____
3. What prominent retired Canadian military leader has publicly called on the federal government to intervene with the U.S. on Khadr's behalf?

4. Why is there such a controversy over whether or not Omar Khadr threw the grenade that killed U.S. soldier Sgt. Christopher Speer?

5. Why was it so important for the U.S. to obtain a conviction on terrorism charges for at least one of the prisoners it had detained in Guantanamo?

6. What kinds of abuse and maltreatment does Khadr claim he has been subjected to at Guantanamo? What proof is there of these charges?

7. What statements have Khadr's mother and sister made to the media that have provoked a negative public reaction in Canada against the family?

9. What is the opinion of Canadian and U.S. officials who have met with Khadr about his personality and likely terrorist sympathies?

10. Describe your personal view of Omar Khadr.

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A History of the Guantanamo Bay Naval Base

Did you know . . .

The motto of Joint Task Force Guantanamo, which operates the prison in Guantanamo, is "Honor Bound to Defend Freedom."

Did you know . . .

Fidel Castro has kept each of the Guantanamo "rental cheques" in a desk in his office. None of them have been cashed.

On January 20, 2002, the first group of hooded and shackled prisoners in the "war on terror" arrived at the U.S. Naval Base at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, after a 20-hour flight from Afghanistan. In the aftermath of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on New York City and Washington, D.C., American forces had invaded Afghanistan. They did so because the country's radical Islamic fundamentalist government, the Taliban, had permitted Osama bin Laden and his Al Qaeda organization, the terrorist group responsible for the attacks, to use Afghanistan as a base of operations. Within days of the invasion, the Taliban were driven from power in the capital city of Kabul. Remnants of the group, along with some Al Qaeda cells, took to the hills of that remote and forbidding country to begin a guerrilla war against U.S. and later NATO forces, including Canadians. This conflict continues to rage many years later and shows no signs of ending soon. Any prisoners taken in the fighting who were believed to have links to terrorist actions such as 9/11 were to be detained and eventually sent to Guantanamo. After the United States invaded Iraq in March 2003, even more prisoners in the expanding "war on terror" fell into U.S. hands and found themselves on their way to the prison in Cuba.

Shortly after the events of 9/11, U.S. President George W. Bush declared a "war on international terrorism" and stated that his country's military forces would not be bound by the normal rules of war in their campaign against this hated foe. Any Al Qaeda or Taliban fighters who fell into U.S. hands would not be regarded as legitimate prisoners of war, but instead were to be classified as "unlawful enemy combatants," who were

not entitled to the rights usually accorded soldiers captured in combat. And instead of bringing these prisoners back to the United States itself to face trial, Bush ordered that they be indefinitely incarcerated in the Guantanamo Bay Naval Base, nicknamed "Gitmo," located on the southeastern tip of the island of Cuba.

Although Cuba's communist government, then led by Fidel Castro, had no involvement with any terrorist organization, and had in fact condemned the attacks of 9/11, it soon found itself included in the "axis of evil," a group of "rogue states" that Bush alleged to be a threat to the security of the United States. Cuba did not support the use of the base as a holding pen for terrorist captives but could do nothing but protest against the treatment these prisoners were receiving there. Guantanamo Bay had been a U.S. naval installation since 1898, after the United States intervened on behalf of Cuban rebels fighting for independence from Spain. U.S. military and naval forces helped tip the balance in favour of the rebels, forcing Spain to withdraw. In return for their assistance, the Americans insisted that the new Cuban government grant them a number of concessions, including the perpetual lease of the strategic naval facility, permitting them to exercise control over the Caribbean.

The original lease agreement required the U.S. to pay Cuba \$4 000 per year for the use of the base. However, since the 1959 Cuban revolution, the Castro regime has refused to accept payment and has called for its removal from the country's sovereign territory.

During the period of the Cold War of the 1960s to the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, Castro charged that the base was "a dagger pointed at the heart" of

Archives

To learn more about the Cuban Missile Crisis visit the CBC Digital Archives at www.cbc.ca/archives and explore the audio-visual files "The Cuban Missile Crisis" and "Looking back at the Cuban crisis."

Did you know . . .

A group of Guantanamo inmates were returned to Saudi Arabia for a re-education program. However, all of these people returned to lives as terrorists.

his country and the probable launching pad for a full-scale U.S. invasion of Cuba to oust him. On two occasions—the abortive Bay of Pigs invasion of 1961 and the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962—the base was the epicentre of Cuban-American conflict. On the second occasion, it came very close to triggering a full-scale nuclear war between the U.S. and the former Soviet Union, Cuba's main ally at the time. After the end of the Cold War, the base's strategic and military importance declined, and it was a very sleepy place when the first prisoners of the "war on terror" arrived there after the events of 9/11.

The first facility to house alleged terrorist suspects, called Camp X-Ray, was constructed as an open-air, high-security prison where the inmates could be on view at all times. It had a tin roof but no walls. Pictures of the orange-suited prisoners, often held in foot shackles and exposed to the burning sun and hot winds, aroused worldwide condemnation. In April 2002, a more permanent installation, Camp Delta, was built to house the rapidly increasing prison population, up to a maximum of 2 000 inmates. The cells in Camp Delta were fully enclosed, with their own bathrooms and running water. By April 2005, according to a U.S. State Department report, there were 520 prisoners from over 40 countries being detained at Guantanamo. A total of 232 individuals previously held there had left by then, either transferred to the United States or returned to their home countries.

There have been numerous reports of prisoners attempting suicide because of the harsh and stressful conditions at Guantanamo. In early 2004, the first two detainees, from Yemen and Sudan, were placed on trial for conspiracy to commit war crimes. However, their trials were suspended after the U.S. Supreme Court

ruled that the military tribunal they were to face was unconstitutional because it did not grant the defendants the same rights to which they would be entitled in a U.S. courtroom.

Shortly afterward, five British prisoners were released and sent back to the United Kingdom, where they were immediately charged under that country's Anti-Terrorism Act. However, their cases were later dismissed for lack of solid evidence against them. Three of these individuals testified under oath that they had suffered abuse while under detention at Guantanamo. In a detailed report prepared by their lawyers, they alleged that they were repeatedly beaten, injected with drugs, deprived of sleep, and subjected to frequent body-cavity searches, which resulted in sexual and religious humiliation.

In May 2005 *Newsweek* reported that U.S. military interrogators at Guantanamo were desecrating the Qur'an, the Islamic holy book, in order to force inmates to talk, by flushing it down the toilet. This story touched off considerable protest across the Muslim world, leading to 17 deaths in Afghanistan alone. Although the story was later retracted, there were other claims that guards had splashed urine on a prisoner and his Qur'an and had written obscenities on another. Omar Khadr, the young Canadian still being held at Guantanamo, has reported similar kinds of abuse to his Canadian lawyer and other officials from this country who have visited him there.

Along with Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq, the U.S. detention centre in Guantanamo Bay will long remain a controversial symbol of the methods the Bush administration chose to deal with individuals it captured during the "war on terror." The events of September 11, 2001, and the subsequent U.S. military operations in Afghanistan and Iraq

Did you know . . .

One detainee (a former British resident) has already been released from Guantanamo by the Obama administration ("Guantanamo Bay history," CBC News In Depth, www.cbc.ca/world/story/2009/01/22/f-gitmo.html).

altered the perceptions of many people regarding the treatment of alleged terrorists, including people such as Omar Khadr. Initially, there was little sympathy for them, especially in the United States. But as reports of abuse and even torture began to surface, in some cases documented with graphic eyewitness accounts or even photographs, public opinion began to turn. Both Barack Obama and John McCain, the two main candidates for president of the United

States in 2008, committed themselves to closing Camp Delta, acknowledging the great damage to the reputation of the United States the facility had caused all over the world. Whatever the final resolution of the "war on terror," facilities such as Guantanamo will be a reminder that democratic governments can sometimes lose sight of their basic principles, such as the upholding of human rights and the decent treatment of prisoners of war.

Analysis

1. Why did the United States decide to detain alleged terrorists in Guantanamo and not in the U.S. itself?
2. What role did the Guantanamo base play in the period of U.S.-Cuban tensions that marked the Cold War era?
3. Why has Guantanamo become such an international embarrassment for the U.S. and the former Bush administration?

GUANTANAMO BAY AND OMAR KHADR

Two Views of the Omar Khadr Case

The case of Omar Khadr, the only Canadian citizen under detention in the U.S. military prison in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, has aroused considerable interest and controversy in this country. There have been strong demands for his release and for the federal government to intervene with U.S. authorities to ensure this happens. On the other hand, there are those who regard Khadr and his family as terrorists who have abused the hospitality of Canada to promote their extremist views, and therefore do not deserve any protection or assistance from Ottawa.

Here are two very different viewpoints on the Khadr case.

Bob Rae, a Toronto MP, is the Liberal Party's critic for foreign affairs. He has pressured the government of Prime Minister Stephen Harper to act on the Khadr case and demand that U.S. authorities release him from captivity. Now that U.S. President Barack Obama has pledged to close down Guantanamo, Rae believes that this has "forced Harper's hand." Previously, whenever Rae or other opposition MPs demanded that the government move on the Khadr case, they were always met with rejection and the statement that the U.S. must have legitimate reasons for detaining the young man. But after Obama's announcement, Defence Minister Peter MacKay indicated that the government was "reassessing" its position on the Khadr case. But, at the same time, Harper continued to insist that Khadr was not a child soldier, even though he was only 15 years old when he was captured. In Harper's view, this was because Khadr was not fighting for a "regular army," but instead for a military group that the U.S. defines as terrorists.

Rae believes that there is solid evidence that Khadr has been subjected to harsh treatment and coercive interrogation

techniques, if not outright torture, during his detention at Guantanamo. He points to the fact that both the Canadian and U.S. Supreme Courts have stated that the conditions under which Khadr is being held are a "clear violation of fundamental human rights protected by international law." He praises Obama for making the closing of the centre one of the key promises in his successful campaign, and for acting quickly after taking office to suspend the military tribunals that would eventually put Khadr and other detainees on trial. More importantly, he regards Obama's decision to close the detention centre for good as the closing of a "dark chapter" in U.S. history.

Rae cannot fathom why Prime Minister Harper remains the only world leader who continues to defend Guantanamo Bay. As a signatory to the international agreement on the use of children as soldiers, forbidding any military faction, whether or not it is a formal army, from enlisting fighters under the age of 18, Canada has committed itself to the rehabilitation and reintegration of people like Omar Khadr into Canadian society. Rae believes that Harper is "missing the boat" on the Khadr case and not taking into account the fundamental changes in U.S. foreign policy that have been initiated by the Obama administration, in particular its position on dealing with suspected terrorists. He thinks that Harper should begin negotiations with the United States for Khadr's release and return to Canada, arguing that "the legal and moral reasons to do so have always been compelling. There is now a political imperative to get it done—and quickly."

Source: "Harper should follow Obama's lead on Gitmo," *National Post*, January 29, 2009, <http://bobrae.ca/en/print/138>

Did you know . . .

The leaders of all opposition parties in Parliament have called upon Harper and Obama to immediately return Omar Khadr to Canada.

Christie Blatchford is a journalist who has extensively covered the Canadian military campaign in Afghanistan, of which she is a strong supporter. She has also written columns expressing support for former U.S. president George W. Bush's "war on terror." For this reason, she has little sympathy for alleged terrorist Omar Khadr, his extremist family, or those in Canada who have called on the federal government to intervene on Khadr's behalf. She is especially critical of the Toronto church group that has indicated its willingness to assist in Khadr's resettlement in Canada following his release from incarceration. Although she is willing to concede that there may be some doubt about Khadr's role in the killing of Sgt. Christopher Speer during the 2002 fire in which he was captured, she still regards him as a "child terrorist," if not a "child soldier" strictly speaking. She does not want him returned to Canada, especially if he were to be allowed to return to what she refers to as the "poisonous maternal bosom" of his mother and sister, both of whom have publicly stated their support for international terrorism and the killing of American troops.

Blatchford also accepts the fact that at least some of the alleged terrorists incarcerated at Guantanamo may have been abused or subjected to harsh methods of questioning. But she seeks to minimize this by arguing that the extent of the mistreatment is rather small, considering the total number of detainees who have passed through the prison since it opened in 2002. She also tries to explain, if not justify, these actions by

pointing to the post-September 11, 2001, attitudes of many Americans, especially the military jailers in Guantanamo, who would have been expected to have little sympathy for people they held responsible for the attacks on American soil and the loss of life they caused. She even quotes Michael Ignatieff, the federal Leader of the Opposition, who wrote a book a few years ago in which he stated that Western governments were entitled to use methods that might otherwise be considered "evil" in their fight against international terrorism.

In all of the controversy surrounding the Khadr case, Blatchford believes that the central, often overlooked fact is that he was accused of killing a U.S. soldier. She admits that "maybe, Khadr, 15 at the time he was arrested . . . didn't throw the grenade. Maybe he's just a poor boy, now 22, who needs a little TLC." However, it should not follow from this that Omar Khadr should be returned to Canada where his misguided band of supporters can throw him a "pretty party." Instead, she argues, Omar Khadr should face trial in the United States, which she considers to be, "a civilized country, where the rule of law matters." She believes that it would be a great evil to bring Omar Khadr back to Canada just because people are sick and tired of Guantanamo Bay and have sympathy for him because he is young and has suffered lengthy confinement and likely abuse.

Source: "As Gitmo closes, what becomes of that 'wounded young boy'?" *The Globe and Mail*, February 14, 2009, www.theglobeandmail.com/servlet/story/LAC.20090214.BLATCH14/TPStory/TPC

Activity

1. Read the passages above and summarize in your own words the arguments both authors make to advance their viewpoints on whether or not Omar Khadr should be released from detention in Guantanamo Bay and returned to Canada.
2. Form groups to discuss the passages above. Which of them do you agree with, and why? Explain your position to the rest of the class.

GUANTANAMO BAY AND OMAR KHADR

What Next for Omar Khadr?

Did you know . . .
Omar Khadr's six years in custody at Guantanamo is a longer sentence than what he would serve in Canada for murder as a young offender.

Ever since he was captured by the U.S. military and sent to Guantanamo, Omar Khadr has been the focus of an intense campaign in Canada to obtain his release on humanitarian grounds. However, the governments of prime ministers Jean Chrétien, Paul Martin, and Stephen Harper have all shown reluctance to challenge the U.S. position that Khadr is an “unlawful enemy combatant” in the “war on terror” who is alleged to have killed an American soldier with a grenade. Khadr’s supporters, including Liberal Senator and former military officer Roméo Dallaire, have strongly criticized the government’s inaction on intervening on Khadr’s behalf, since he was only 15 years old at the time the events in question took place and was thus a “child soldier” under the definition of international law. But the statements of some members of Khadr’s own family living in Canada, including his mother and sister, supporting radical Islamic terrorist groups such as Al Qaeda, have infuriated many Canadians and hardened their position that the government should show the young man no special favour.

Now that new U.S. President, Barack Obama, has stated his intention to close down the Guantanamo Bay prison by the end of 2009, the question is: What does the future hold for Omar Khadr and the other inmates still under detention there? According to Lieut. William Kuebler, the military lawyer who has been acting on Khadr’s behalf, Khadr is not a hard-core radical jihadist. He believes that Khadr is a confused young man who can probably be rehabilitated and returned to normal life after he reaches Canada. But in the mind of Sgt. Layne Morris, the U.S. soldier who was blinded in one eye during the firefight that led to Khadr’s

capture, he is definitely a terrorist, and Canada should think twice before permitting him to return here.

One big question relates to the kind of treatment Khadr will receive after his arrival in this country. Already a church group in Toronto that has taken up his cause has approached a number of religious and psychological specialists who have indicated their willingness to help him. Hamid Slimi, a Muslim cleric and the president of the Canadian Council of Imams (www.canadiancouncilofimams.com), has stated that “a lot of healing has to be done and a group of people are willing to help” in Khadr’s rehabilitation. As someone who has been accused of committing a terrorist act, Khadr would initially have to face some kind of preventative detention upon his return to Canada, to determine whether or not he really poses a security threat to this country. Professor Anthony Doob of York University, a legal expert in terrorism, thinks that Khadr could be subjected to strict limits on his whereabouts, including being forbidden to associate with people believed to harbour extremist views. This could conceivably include members of his own family living in Canada, such as his mother Maha and his sister Zaynab.

One procedure that Khadr would almost certainly have to undergo would be a thorough psychological assessment to find out if he really is someone with violent terrorist tendencies. Dr. Howard Barbaree, of the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) in Toronto, is prepared to conduct such an assessment on Omar Khadr, although he admits that this would be a precedent-setting event, since no Canadian has previously been subjected to this kind of

test. While undergoing this assessment, Khadr would be held in a secure forensic triage unit, where the chances of escape are next to zero. He would not be guarded, as he was at Guantanamo, but all his movements would be monitored by television cameras. This procedure would be designed not only to prevent Khadr from escaping, but also to ensure his own safety, should he show any suicidal or self-destructive tendencies while undergoing what are likely to be very intense psychological examinations.

Kuebler believes it is likely that any such assessment of Omar Khadr will reveal that he was subjected to serious abuse, and possible torture, while incarcerated at Guantanamo. He was chained to the prison floor for lengthy periods of time in extremely uncomfortable “stress positions,” and after urinating on himself was left to lie in his own urine for days. Kuebler thinks that after the psychological assessment, there will also have to be a lengthy training in basic life skills that will make up for the six years that Omar Khadr has lost while under detention. This will of necessity include preventative measures that will guarantee that he does not associate with people who might influence him to resume his terrorist sympathies or activities.

Religious rehabilitation will also have to be part of Omar Khadr’s rehabilitation program. Thomas Quiggin, an expert on Islamic extremist groups, thinks that Khadr will need to be “deprogrammed” to help him to turn his back on his radical jihadist past. Similar therapies have been used to rehabilitate former members of religious cults who have been subjected to brainwashing in the past. Quiggin thinks that Khadr is an excellent candidate for such a program because he is still young and has not spent his entire life in an environment where Islamic terrorism is promoted, despite his family’s influence and his experience in jihadist youth training camps. Hamid Slimi is prepared to undertake this part of Khadr’s rehabilitation, by pointing out to him that nowhere in the Qur’an does it state that it is permissible to kill innocent non-believers, or that those who do so will gain immediate entry to heaven. Slimi is aware that members of Khadr’s family, especially his mother and sister, have publicly expressed extremist views, and if they still hold them, they might try to influence him to embrace them again. But he does not think it is practicable to deny the young man any contact with them, especially after such a long absence.

Source: “Welcome back Omar Khadr,” CBC, November 11, 2008

Inquiry

1. Why is there such a conflict of opinion over whether or not Omar Khadr should be permitted to return to Canada after his eventual release from prison in Guantanamo?
2. What steps would have to be taken to ensure that Khadr is not a security risk and that he will be able to return to normal life once he is back in Canada?
3. How would you evaluate the likelihood of a successful rehabilitation for Omar Khadr if he is allowed to return to Canada?

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Activity: Debating the Return of Omar Khadr

Further Research

The following sources might be consulted while preparing for the debate.

"The U.S. vs. Omar Khadr," www.cbc.ca/documentaries/doczone/2008/omarkadr/, two recent books on Omar Khadr and Guantanamo: Michelle Sheppard's *Guantanamo's Child* and Gordon Cucullu's *Inside Gitmo*.

As a class, debate the following resolution:

"Resolved that the federal government should permit Omar Khadr to return to Canada and be rehabilitated into Canadian society as soon as possible."

Two small teams should be selected: one to present the case for the affirmative (supporting the resolution) and one for the negative (opposing the resolution). Each team should prepare its case using information obtained from the video and the other sources referred to in this *News in Review* resource guide. Those not assigned to a team should complete independent research so that they can understand and analyze the arguments raised in the debate.

A formal in-class debate should consist of the following:

1. Each side presents its opening position supporting or opposing the resolution.
2. Each side is given time to rebut the statements made by its opponent in the opening positions.
3. Each side presents a closing statement summarizing its arguments.

Once both teams in the debate have made their presentations, ask the class for its response, questions, or feedback. Decide which team has won the debate through a class vote.

Organizer: Should Omar Khadr Be Returned to Canada?

Affirmative Arguments	Negative Arguments