

U.S. Department of Defense  
Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Public Affairs)

## News Release

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**IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Detainee Pleads Guilty at Military Commission Hearing**

The Department of Defense announced that Omar Khadr pleaded guilty today in a military commission. In accordance with a pre-trial agreement, Khadr admitted, in open court, to committing murder in violation of the law of war, attempted murder in violation of the law of war, providing material support to terrorism, conspiracy, and spying. His sentence will be determined at a hearing that begins Oct. 26.

Khadr admitted to throwing a grenade on July 27, 2002, that killed Sgt. 1st Class Christopher Speer after the conclusion of a four-hour firefight between al Qaeda affiliated forces and U.S. military forces, and that he threw the grenade with the intent of killing American or coalition forces. Khadr also admitted that in the months prior to his murder of Speer, he converted landmines to improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and assisted in the planting of ten IEDs with the intent of killing American forces.

In all cases tried by a military commission, the military judge has the duty to ensure the guilty plea is both supported by the facts and voluntarily made before accepting the guilty plea. In this case, Military Judge Col. Patrick Parrish, questioned Khadr at length about his actions and his understanding of his plea. Parrish then indicated that he was satisfied that Khadr understood his rights, the plea was voluntary, and that Khadr did in fact commit the acts that constitute the offenses as charged. This requirement for questioning the underlying facts and voluntariness of the plea safeguards the rights of the accused and guarantees the legitimacy of the plea. Khadr was assisted by two appointed military defense counsel, at no cost to him.

In all military commissions, a panel of military officers known as "members" determines the sentence, regardless of whether the plea was guilty or not guilty. At a hearing scheduled to begin tomorrow, the defense and prosecution will each have an opportunity to present evidence and argument to the members to aid them in determining a sentence.

Under the pre-trial agreement, Khadr agreed to waive his right to trial and plead guilty to the charged offenses in exchange for a limitation on his sentence. Parrish questioned Khadr and determined that he entered into the agreement voluntarily and believed it was in his best interests. In order to preserve the integrity of the sentencing deliberations, the terms of the agreement are not disclosed to the members until after the sentence is announced.