

FRANK R. WOLF
10TH DISTRICT, VIRGINIA



241 CANNON HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-4610
(202) 225-5136

COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

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HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

13873 PARK CENTER ROAD
SUITE 130
HERNDON, VA 20171
(703) 709-5800
(800) 945-9653 (IN STATE)

110 NORTH CAMERON STREET
WINCHESTER, VA 22601
(540) 667-0990
(800) 850-3463 (IN STATE)

wolf.house.gov

December 29, 2009

The Honorable Barack H. Obama
The President
The White House
Washington DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

I have sent you and your administration the five enclosed letters since October 1 urging you not to release additional detainees from Guantanamo Bay to Yemen and other dangerously unstable countries. In light of U.S. attacks against al Qaeda in Yemen on December 17 and 24 that reportedly targeted at least one former Guantanamo detainee, I again implore you to immediately halt these releases.

The Washington Post on December 27 reported that “Yemeni al Qaeda branch is [a] magnet for jihadists.” On the same day, the *New York Times* stated, “Al Qaeda’s profile in Yemen rose sharply a year ago, when a former Guantanamo Bay detainee from Saudi Arabia, Said Ali al-Shihri, fled to Yemen to join Al Qaeda and appeared in a video posted online. Several other former Guantanamo detainees have also joined the group.” Al Qaeda agents in Yemen also have played pivotal roles in attacks against the U.S., including the radicalization of alleged Northwest Airlines terrorist Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, alleged Fort Hood terrorist Major Nidal Hasan, and the June 1 killing of a soldier in Little Rock, Arkansas. How many other Westerners or dual passport holders are currently in Yemen that may be exposed to similar radicalization?

It is unconscionable that your administration would release terrorist detainees back into the clutches of al Qaeda in Yemen, Somaliland and Afghanistan as was done earlier this month. These dangerous detainees were released under a cloak of secrecy and the American people were not informed until these individuals walked free. Your administration still has not provided information on their past terrorist activities. These releases are reckless and the administration’s continued concealment is a danger to the security of America.

According to published reports, at least one detainee released to Somaliland (which the U.S. does not formally recognize), Mohammed Soliman Barre, has a close personal relationship with Osama bin Laden and another released to Afghanistan, Abdul Hafiz, was implicated in a brutal murder of a Red Cross worker in 2003. Additionally, ABC News reported that “two of the four leaders behind the al Qaeda plot to blow up a Northwest Airlines passenger jet over Detroit were released from Guantanamo prison in November 2007.” The detainees that were released

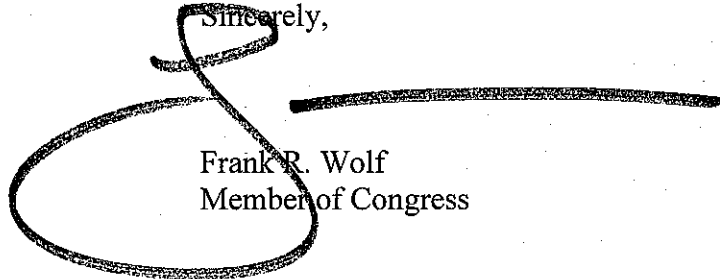
The Honorable Barack H. Obama
December 29, 2009
Page 2

during the Bush Administration were considered to be a lower security risk than the detainees that have been released this year. If lower threat detainees have returned to terrorist activities in such high numbers, one must assume that the remaining detainees, if released, pose a significant security threat to the U.S.

Earlier this month, I offered an amendment to the fiscal year 2010 omnibus appropriations legislation that would have required unclassified notifications about impending detainee releases. Unfortunately, my amendment was defeated along party lines at the urging of the White House. Your administration has a moral obligation to release the names and information -- including threat analyses -- about those your administration has released. Your administration also should publicly release the updated Defense Intelligence Agency report on terrorist recidivism following former Guantanamo detainees. I have read the classified biographies of the detainees to be released. They are dangerous people. I am troubled by every one of the detainees who is being sent back.

I implore you again to immediately halt these releases and answer the questions of the American people about your policies and who you are releasing. They deserve to know. It is inconceivable that you would release terrorist detainees to Yemen and Afghanistan at the same time you are launching missiles at terrorist targets. Please stop these releases.

Sincerely,



Frank R. Wolf
Member of Congress

This is important to national security. Please stop these releases.

FRANK R. WOLF
10TH DISTRICT, VIRGINIA

COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

SUBCOMMITTEES:

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SCIENCE

TRANSPORTATION-HUD

CO-CHAIR—TOM LANTOS
HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
December 18, 2009

241 CANNON HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-4610
(202) 225-5136

13873 PARK CENTER ROAD
SUITE 130
HERNDON, VA 20171
(703) 709-5800
(800) 945-9653 (IN STATE)

110 NORTH CAMERON STREET
WINCHESTER, VA 22601
(540) 667-0390
(800) 850-3463 (IN STATE)

wolf.house.gov

The Honorable Barack H. Obama
The President
The White House
Washington DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

It was reported earlier today by *The Washington Post* that you are preparing to immediately release six Guantanamo Bay detainees to Yemen and an additional four detainees to Afghanistan -- both dangerously unstable countries wherein al Qaeda freely operates. According to the article, "Yemen's government has been struggling with a civil war in the north, a secessionist movement in the south and humanitarian crises as the economy crumbles. In this void, al-Qaeda has steadily grown, using the nation's vast lawless, rugged terrain as a haven."

I have written you and others in your administration on three occasions imploring you to halt the release of detainees to these countries due to the deteriorating security situations and the dangerous potential for recidivism. I am deeply concerned that American lives will be at risk because of this terrible decision. According to the article, many military and intelligence officials share these concerns.

It is my understanding that the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) may have upwardly revised its recidivism numbers on former Guantanamo Bay detainees that have returned to terrorism, but this information has not been shared with most members of Congress. I hope your administration will not suppress this information. The American people have a right to know the facts about the danger posed by released detainees. Over the past year, I have called on your administration numerous times to declassify this information. You have a moral obligation to share this with the public.

I urge you again to immediately halt the release of these detainees to Yemen and Afghanistan until the American people can be assured that they do not pose a risk to national security.

Sincerely,

Frank R. Wolf
Member of Congress

FRANK R. WOLF
10TH DISTRICT, VIRGINIA

COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

SUBCOMMITTEES:

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SCIENCE

TRANSPORTATION-HUD

CO-CHAIR—TOM LANTOS
HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

241 CANNON HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-4610
(202) 225-5136

13873 PARK CENTER ROAD
SUITE 130
HERNDON, VA 20171
(703) 709-5800
(800) 945-9653 (IN STATE)

110 NORTH CAMERON STREET
WINCHESTER, VA 22601
(540) 667-0990
(800) 860-3463 (IN STATE)

wolf.house.gov

November 12, 2009

The Honorable Barack H. Obama
The President
The White House
Washington DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

As the author of the language that created the National Commission on Terrorism in 1998 and the ranking Republican on the House Appropriations subcommittee with oversight authority for the Justice Department, I remain deeply concerned about the administration's imminent release of as many as 26 Guantanamo Bay detainees to Yemen -- a growing haven for al Qaeda in the Persian Gulf. It is my understanding that you are also preparing to release several other detainees to another country that anyone with a basic understanding of world affairs would agree is unacceptable.

The American people have the right to know who these detainees are and what acts of terror they were engaged in. If the public had this information, they would never tolerate the release of these men back into unstable countries with a sizeable al Qaeda presence.

If the administration does not halt these pending releases immediately, it could be responsible for creating a new revolving door of terrorism that will cost American lives. The security of the American people could be at risk because of your administration's relentless pursuit of a campaign promise to close Guantanamo Bay by January 22, 2010.

Why has the administration made basic information about these dangerous detainees so highly classified that it cannot be shared with the American people or the media? I have reviewed the materials. These are dangerous individuals. To release committed al Qaeda terrorists back to Yemen under these conditions would be an act of gross malfeasance that undermines the safety of the American people.

Earlier this year, I offered an amendment to the fiscal year 2009 supplemental appropriations bill requiring the administration to provide unclassified fact sheets and threat analyses of any Guantanamo detainees scheduled for release. The American people have the right to this information, which has direct implications on the safety of our military and civilians. The amendment was defeated by a partisan vote thus allowing your administration to operate under a cloak of secrecy to empty Guantanamo Bay.

The Honorable Barack H. Obama

November 12, 2009

Page 2

You receive intelligence briefings daily and must know that Yemen is undoubtedly one of the most unstable countries in the world today -- and the country where al Qaeda has reconstituted its operations over the last year. The director of the National Counterterrorism Center, Michael Leiter, stated last month in a *Voice of America* interview, "In Yemen, we have witnessed the reemergence of al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula and the possibility that that will become the base of operations for al-Qaida." His sentiment is shared by United Nations sanctions coordinator Richard Barrett who indicated that few places in the world provide a more perfect safe haven to al Qaeda than Yemen.

Instances of former Guantanamo Bay detainees launching terrorist attacks from Yemen include one just a month ago. On October 13, Saudi police prevented an imminent suicide bomb attack as two al Qaeda terrorists slipped across the border from Yemen. Notably, one of the would-be suicide bombers, Yousef Mohammed al Shihri, was a former Guantanamo detainee released in 2007 to Saudi Arabia. He quickly left Saudi Arabia for dangerously unstable Yemen where he rejoined al Qaeda.

Just over a year ago, in September 2008, another former Guantanamo Bay detainee, Said Ali al Shihri, helped orchestrate the terrorist attack on the U.S. embassy in Sanaa, Yemen, killing 10 guards and civilians. Since that time, al Qaeda's posture in Yemen has grown stronger with the merger of the Saudi and Yemeni arms of al Qaeda into one group--al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula--with Yemen as its base for training and operations.

Yemen is also now home to radical cleric Anwar al-Aulaqi, who influenced alleged Fort Hood gunman Major Nidal M. Hasan. As you may recall, al-Aulaqi mentored two of the 9/11 hijackers before fleeing to Yemen in 2004. He is believed by U.S. intelligence to be a critical link in al Qaeda's efforts to radicalize Muslim Americans and incite domestic terrorist acts. According to one expert cited in a 2008 *Washington Post* article, "Aulaqi is 'a huge inspiration to home-grown terror cells in the U.K. and Europe.'"

As the facts surrounding the Fort Hood attack have emerged, it is becoming clear that anyone who is cited in the 9/11 Commission Report -- as al-Aulaqi was on page 221 -- as a "significant" contact for 9/11 terrorists Nawaf al-Hazmi and Khalid al-Mihdhar should be considered a "significant" connection to Hasan. Al-Aulaqi has subsequently praised Hasan's attack stating on his Web site: "Nidal Hassan is a hero... Nidal opened fire on soldiers who were on their way to be deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan. How can there be any dispute about the virtue of what he has done? In fact the only way a Muslim could Islamically justify serving as a soldier in the US army is if his intention is to follow the footsteps of men like Nidal," according to a translation.

The American people deserve a full accounting of al-Aulaqi's relationship with Hasan and his incitement of terrorism in Yemen. Since fleeing to Yemen in 2004, al-Aulaqi has taught his radical ideology at the Iman University in Sanaa, Yemen -- the same university attended by

The Honorable Barack H. Obama
November 12, 2009
Page 3

convicted terrorist John Walker Lindh. In 2002, the university was temporarily closed following a deadly attack by one of its students on three American citizens in Yemen. If al-Aulaqi were able to have this impact on a U.S. Army major at Walter Reed Army Medical Center and Fort Hood, what impact will he have on the newly freed detainees in Yemen?

Iman University's founder, Abd-al-Majid al Zindani, is a long-standing ally of Osama bin Laden and was designated by the U.S. Treasury Department in 2004 as a "specially designated global terrorist." However, the Yemeni government has refused to turn over Zindani to U.S. authorities amid speculation that President Salih is protecting him for political purposes. If the Yemeni government is obstructing the arrest of high-profile terrorist financiers like Zindani, how can we trust that they would even attempt to rehabilitate or monitor detainees released from Guantanamo Bay?

You were at Fort Hood on Tuesday for the memorial service. You saw the grief-stricken families of those who died. You saw the heartbreak of innocent children who will grow up without a parent, the gut-wrenching sorrow of spouses who are left to carry on alone, the tears of mothers and fathers, sisters and brothers, aunts and uncles of the fallen soldiers.

I raise these concerns directly with you because, according to everyone with whom I have spoken, detainee transfers and releases are being run directly out of the White House. Setting aside the obvious concerns about politicization of the National Security Council (NSC), it is clear that your consolidation of operational authority within the NSC could certainly be viewed as an attempt to thwart congressional oversight and exert greater political control over the process, as reflected in instructions not to inform Congress about the effort to release Uyghur detainees into the U.S. earlier this year.

In my May 1 letter to you -- to which I am still awaiting your response -- I expressed my ardent opposition to the transfer of any Uyghur detainees from Guantanamo Bay to northern Virginia. The planned-transfer was ultimately scrapped over congressional objections, including mine. It should be noted that according to the *New York Daily News*, the Dar al-Hijrah mosque where Major Hasan first encountered Anwar al-Aulaqi, "is directly across the street from a residence where a half-dozen Turkmen Muslims known as Uighurs were slated to be relocated from Guantanamo Bay, according to a law enforcement source. Lawmakers scuttled the plan." Had I not been informed about the NSC effort to release the Uyghur detainees into the U.S., your NSC would have completed the release without ever informing a member of Congress or the American people.

I raised these concerns as well in my November 2 letter to you. To date, I have not received a reply to either of these letters nor to my letters dated March 13, April 23, May 13, July 7, July 10, October 1, and November 2 to your attorney general on these matters. This is disappointing. Why is the administration not answering the legitimate questions of the American people?

The Honorable Barack H. Obama

November 12, 2009

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In closing, I implore you to immediately halt the release of detainees to Yemen and other unstable countries. If the administration is intent, however, on proceeding with the release of detainees, it has an obligation to provide the American people with fact sheets and threat assessments for each and every detainee who leaves Guantanamo.

Best wishes.

Sincerely,

Frank R. Wolf
Member of Congress

P.S.

Having personally read the case histories of some of these dangerous detainees, I believe there is overwhelming certainty that most will return to terrorist activity that could result in the death of more Americans. Please do not let this happen. Thank You.



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20515

FRANK R. WOLF
TENTH DISTRICT, VIRGINIA

November 5, 2009

Dear Mr. President:

Please see the enclosed Associated Press article about insurgent violence on the Saudi Arabia-Yemen border.

Does your administration really want to release terrorist detainees from Guantanamo Bay to this country? This is a dangerous policy that could cost American lives.

Best wishes.

Sincerely,

Frank R. Wolf
Member of Congress

The Honorable Barack H. Obama
The President
The White House
Washington DC 20500

BEST WISHES

The Washington Post

Saudis launches offensive against Yemen rebels

By AHMED AL-HAJ and SALAH NASRAWI
The Associated Press
Thursday, November 5, 2009 3:59 PM

SAN'A, Yemen -- Saudi Arabia sent fighter jets and artillery bombardments across the border into northern Yemen Thursday in a military incursion apparently aimed at helping its troubled southern neighbor control an escalating Shiite rebellion, Arab diplomats and the rebels said.

The Saudis - owners of a sophisticated air force they rarely use - have been increasingly worried that extremism and instability in Yemen could spill over to their country, the world's largest oil exporter. The offensive came two days after the killing of a Saudi soldier, blamed on the rebels.

Yemen denied any military action by Saudi Arabia inside its borders. But Yemen's president is a key ally of the Saudis, making it highly unlikely the kingdom would have launched the offensive without tacit Yemeni agreement.

A U.S. government official said the Yemenis were not involved militarily in the fighting. The official spoke anonymously because he was not authorized to discuss the matter publicly.

The offensive immediately raised concerns of another proxy war in the Middle East between Iran and Saudi Arabia, a key U.S. ally. Shiite Iran is believed to favor the rebels in Yemen while Saudi Arabia, which is Sunni, is Iran's fiercest regional rival.

The same dynamic has played out in various forms in Lebanon, where Iran supports the Shiite militant Hezbollah and Saudi Arabia favors a U.S.-backed faction, and in Iraq, where Saudi Arabia and Iran have thrown support to conflicting sides in the Sunni-Shiite struggle.

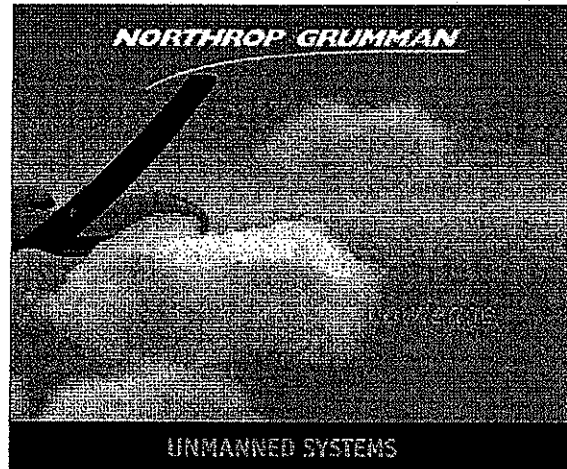
A top Saudi government adviser confirmed "a large scale" military operation underway on the Saudi-Yemeni border with further reinforcements sent to the rugged, mountainous area.

"It is a sustained operation which aims to finish this problem on our border," he said, speaking on condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the issue. He said Saudi troops were coordinating with Yemen's army, but Yemen's defense ministry denied the Saudis were inside the country.

The northern rebels, known as Hawthits, have been battling Yemeni government forces the past few months in the latest flare-up of a sporadic five-year conflict. They claim their needs are ignored by a Yemeni government that is increasingly allied with hard-line Sunni fundamentalists, who consider Shiites heretics.

The rebels said the Saudi airstrikes hit five areas in their northern stronghold Thursday but it was not

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possible to independently verify the reports. They said there were dead and wounded, and that homes were destroyed. The rebels' spokesman said people were afraid to get near the areas being bombed, making it difficult to count the casualties.

"Saudi jets dropped bombs on a crowded areas including a local market in the northern province of Saada," Hawthi spokesman Mohammed Abdel-Salam told The Associated Press. "They claim they are targeting al-Hawthis, but regrettably they are killing civilians like the government does."

He said the attacks were followed by hundreds of artillery shells from the border.

"So far, three killed have been pulled out of the rubble, including a woman and a child who perished when their houses were bombed and burned down," said Abdel-Salam.

The fighting is more than 600 miles from Saudi Arabia's oil fields on the kingdom's eastern Persian Gulf coast. But northern Yemen overlooks the Red Sea, the world's busiest route for oil tankers.

Two Arab diplomats, speaking on condition of anonymity, said Saudi Tornado and F-15 warplanes had been bombarding targets inside Yemen since Wednesday afternoon, inflicting significant casualties on rebels. The diplomats spoke on condition of anonymity because they are not allowed to talk to the media.

They said army units and special forces also had been sent to northern Yemen, and that several Saudi towns on the border had been evacuated as a precaution.

State Department spokesman Ian Kelly told reporters he had no information about whether the conflict had spread across the border but expressed Washington's concern over the situation.

"It's our view that there can be no long-term military solution to the conflict between the Yemeni government and the Hawthi rebels," Kelly said. "We call on all parties to the conflict to make every effort to protect civilian populations and limit damage to civilian infrastructure."

The weak central government of Yemen, which has little control outside the capital San'a, is fighting on multiple fronts including the northern rebels and a separatist movement in the south. But the most worrisome is a lingering threat from al-Qaida militants.

The U.S. also fears any Yemeni fighting could spill over into Saudi Arabia and is concerned that Yemen could become a haven for al-Qaida militants hiding out in the nation, at the tip of the Arabian peninsula.

The Yemeni government openly accuses Iran of arming the Hawththis rebels, but there has been no public evidence to back those claims, said Joost Hiltermann, deputy program director of the Middle East program for the International Crisis Group think tank in London.

"I think Iran is probably pleased with what is happening, but that is not the same as saying they are supporting the Hawththis," Hiltermann said.

Simon Henderson, director of Gulf and energy policy at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy in Washington, agreed that there is no clear evidence that Iran funds the rebels. But he said there is a wide assumption that Iran favors the Hawththis and the Saudis are backing Yemen's Sunni president.

"So it is a Saudi-Iranian proxy war," he said.

Saudi Arabia, rich in oil, has one of the world's most sophisticated air forces but rarely uses it.

The bulk of its air power, with more than 350 combat aircraft, derives from squadrons of F-15s and British-supplied Tornados, according to the military and intelligence analysis group GlobalSecurity.org. The kingdom also for decades has received U.S. military assistance in the form of training.

The Saudi incursion marks the first time since the 1991 Gulf War that the country has deployed military might beyond its borders.

In that war, Saudi forces assisted the U.S. Marine Corps, providing staging grounds for airstrikes and in joint operations targeting Iraqi positions in Kuwait with artillery fire and ground offensives.

The incursion is not, however, Saudi Arabia's first involvement in internal Yemeni conflicts. During Yemen's 1962-70 civil war, sparked by a military coup that overthrew Yemen's royalist government, Saudi Arabia supported the royalists against the Egyptian-backed government.

When civil war erupted again in 1994, it was widely believed that the Saudis sided with southern secessionist rebels against the central government.

A security official told Saudi Arabia's state news agency that the soldier died when gunmen infiltrated from Yemen and attacked security guards patrolling the Mount Dokhan border area Tuesday. Rebels said that area was among the bombing targets Thursday.

The Gulf Cooperation Council, the region's main diplomatic forum, condemned what it called the "violation and infiltration" of Saudi Arabia's borders. "Saudi Arabia is capable of protecting its lands," it warned in a statement.

Nasrawi reported from Cairo. Associated Press Writers Omar Sinan and Ben Hubbard in Cairo and Pamela Hess in Washington contributed to this report.

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FRANK R. WOLF
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COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

SUBCOMMITTEES:

RANKING MEMBER—COMMERCE-JUSTICE-
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TRANSPORTATION-HUD

CO-CHAIR—TOM LANTOS
HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

November 2, 2009

241 CANNON HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-4610
(202) 225-5136

13873 PARK CENTER ROAD
SUITE 130
HERNDON, VA 20171
(703) 709-6800
(800) 945-9653 (IN STATE)

110 NORTH CAMERON STREET
WINCHESTER, VA 22601
(540) 667-0990
(800) 850-3463 (IN STATE)

wolf.house.gov

The Honorable Barack H. Obama
The President
The White House
Washington DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

I write to share my special order statement, delivered on the House floor earlier today, regarding the dangers of releasing detainees from Guantanamo Bay to unstable countries, such as Yemen. This is a dangerous proposition and I am concerned that such a release will ultimately endanger the U.S. and American lives -- military and civilian.

According to a recent *Time* magazine article, "About two-thirds of [Yemen] is out of government control," and "under pressure in Saudi Arabia and Iraq, al-Qaeda is turning the lawless mountain areas of Yemen into a new staging area." Another AFP report last month stated that U.S. counterterrorism officials believe that al-Qaeda's "presence in Yemen threatens to turn that country into a dangerous base for training and plotting attacks."

You will also recall that in September 2008 al-Qaeda terrorists in Yemen attacked the U.S. Embassy with vehicle bombs, rocket-propelled grenades and automatic weapons to mount a coordinated assault, killing 10 guards and civilians. Since that time, al-Qaeda's posture in Yemen has grown stronger with the merger of the Saudi and Yemeni arms of al-Qaeda into one group -- al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula -- with Yemen as its base for training and operations.

The Christian Science Monitor reported last month of the rising threat to Saudi Arabia from the deteriorating security situation in Yemen. Saudi police prevented a bomb attack on October 13, and one of the perpetrators was a former Guantanamo detainee who entered the country from Yemen.

I have read one of the biographies of the Yemeni detainees held at Guantanamo Bay and it was frightening. I urge you to halt the transfer or release of detainees to Yemen immediately.

Additionally, I respectfully request an update with the regard to the status of Yemeni detainees held at Guantanamo Bay as soon as possible. Please do not hesitate to contact me in my Washington, D.C. office at 202-225-5136.

Best wishes.

Sincerely,

Frank R. Wolf
Member of Congress

Please look into who we are sending back to Yemen. They are dangerous.

The Hon. Frank R. Wolf
Five Minute Special Order on Yemen
November 2, 2009

To meet the President's deadline for closing Guantanamo, there has been a rush during the past two months to transfer as many detainees as possible to their home countries, or to third countries that would accept them.

On September 26, the Administration announced that a detainee named Alla Ali Bin Ali Ahmed was transferred to Yemen. The announcement did not reveal the terms of his transfer, but said that the United States has coordinated with the Yemeni Government to ensure that the transfer took place under "appropriate security measures".

There is an ongoing, and VERY REAL concern about detainees returning to terrorism. According to data from the Department of Defense, at least 15 percent of former Guantanamo detainees have returned to terrorist activity.

The 15 percent that have returned to terrorism following release were merely those detainees who were perceived to be low security risks. That's why they were released years ago.

The detainees pending release now are the worst of the worst. Their recidivism rate may be much higher than 15 percent.

If these detainees are to be transferred, they should go only to governments that are willing and able to try, detain, rehabilitate or monitor them.

Yemen does not meet that standard.

An economic crisis, domestic security challenges, and Islamic terrorism are right now threatening to overwhelm the Yemeni government.

The FBI Director recently highlighted Yemen as an area of "persistent Al-Qaeda activity".

Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula openly advertises their intent to attack the United States and our overseas interests, and is able to work in relative freedom in Yemen.

Counterterrorism measures in Saudi Arabia have forced extremists to seek refuge abroad, and many have relocated to Yemen's ungoverned areas.

Known al-Qaeda terrorists, including USS Cole bombers, have escaped from prison in Yemen to return to terrorism.

The Christian Science Monitor reported last month of the rising threat to Saudi Arabia from the deteriorating security situation in Yemen.

Saudi police prevented a bomb attack on October 13, and one of the perpetrators was a former Guantanamo detainee who entered the country from Yemen.

The bottom line is that terrorist detainees should NOT be sent to Yemen where Al-Qaeda operates freely and the Government appears unable to control their actions and movements.

Reuters has reported that the Obama Administration has already cleared 75 of the remaining detainees for transfer abroad, and that that list includes 26 detainees from Yemen.

Based on what we know now -- this Administration is planning to send MORE, PERHAPS MANY MORE, detainees to this lawless country, increasing the risk of future terrorist attacks on Americans.

The Administration should immediately terminate the return of detainees to Yemen, and the Congressional Committees of jurisdiction should investigate and demand a full justification.

The release of ANY detainee to Yemen represents a potentially serious threat to the United States and US citizens -- both military and civilian.

Congress needs to hold hearings and be directly involved in the oversight of detention and release of dangerous detainees held at Guantanamo Bay.

As of now, the Administration is going down a dangerous road -- and Congress is idly allowing them to make these misguided decisions.

FRANK R. WOLF
10TH DISTRICT, VIRGINIA

COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

SUBCOMMITTEES:

RANKING MEMBER—STATE-FOREIGN
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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

October 1, 2009

241 CANNON HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-4610
(202) 225-6136

13873 PARK CENTER ROAD
SUITE 130
HERNDON, VA 20171
(703) 709-5600
(800) 945-9653 (IN STATE)

110 NORTH CAMERON STREET
WINCHESTER, VA 22601
(540) 667-0990
(800) 850-3463 (IN STATE)

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The Honorable Eric H. Holder, Jr.
Attorney General
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Ave NW Rm 5111
Washington DC 20530

Dear Attorney General Holder:

It has come to my attention that at least 27 detainees held at Guantanamo Bay have been cleared for release to Yemen. I received official notification about the release of one of these transfers, Alla Ali Bin Ali Ahmed, but was only made aware of the additional 26 Yemenis allegedly cleared for release after reading a Reuters report titled, "Obama team clears 75 at Guantanamo for release" on September 28, 2009.

I urge you to reconsider any pending or future releases of detainees to Yemen, particularly in light of the country's deteriorating security and growing al-Qaeda presence. Earlier this week, *Time* magazine reported that "about two-thirds of the country is out of government control," and that "al-Qaeda is turning the lawless mountain areas of Yemen into a new staging area." According to an AFP report today, U.S. counterterrorism officials believe that al-Qaeda's "presence in Yemen threatens to turn that country into a dangerous base for training and plotting attacks."

You will recall the September 2008 al-Qaeda attack on the U.S. Embassy in Yemen using vehicle bombs, rocket-propelled grenades and automatic weapons to mount a coordinated assault, killing 10 guards and civilians. Since that time, al-Qaeda's posture in Yemen has grown stronger with merger of the Saudi and Yemeni arms of al-Qaeda into one group -- al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula -- with Yemen as its base for training and operations.

We have seen the consequences of these developments. Last August, a Yemeni al-Qaeda loyalist denoted a suicide bomb in an attempt to kill Saudi Prince Mohammed bin Nayef. He was able to gain access to the prince by pretending to be an al-Qaeda defector before denoting the explosives. This case is particularly concerning because it demonstrates an evolution and sophistication in the type of attacks being planned and launched by al-Qaeda leaders in Yemen.

While I continue to be troubled that, according to the Reuters report, the detainees at Guantanamo Bay currently have more information about their release than do member of Congress or the American people, it is of particular concern that detainees who have spent the last eight years living among the most dangerous terrorists in the world, including Khalid Sheik

The Honorable Eric H. Holder, Jr.

October 1, 2009

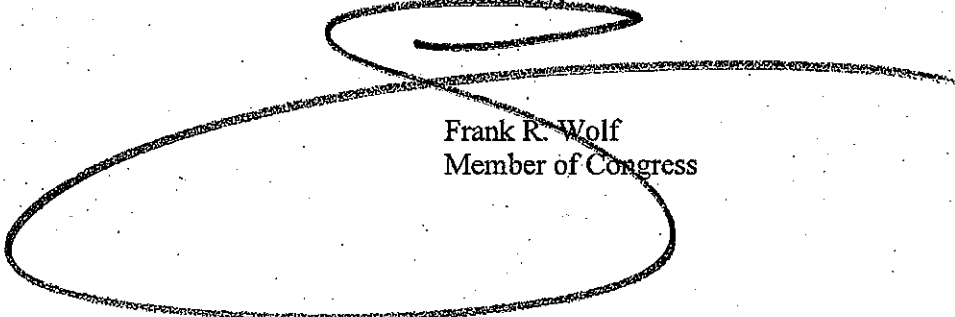
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Mohammed, the mastermind of the 9/11 attacks and who beheaded journalist Daniel Pearl, would be released into countries with a strong al-Qaeda presence. Such a disposition is only adding kerosene to a fire.

Although we have clear differences of opinion on how best to deal with the situation in Guantanamo Bay, I think we can both agree that a rushed release of terrorist detainees to countries with a strong al-Qaeda presence is not in America's best interest. I strongly urge you to halt all transfers of detainees to unstable countries, including Yemen, Afghanistan, and Algeria, until evidence is provided to this Congress demonstrating that the detainee can be properly received and monitored in the receiving country.

I look forward to your response, as well as your responses to my letters to you dated March 13, April 23, May 13, June 8, July 7, July 10, July 17, July 22, and July 31. Please do not hesitate to contact me or my staff member, Thomas Culligan, at 202-225-5136.

Sincerely,



Frank R. Wolf
Member of Congress

This is VERY important
for the safety of
our country.