



Written by [Thomas R. Eddlem](#) on February 15, 2010

U.S.-UK Relations Strained Over Torture of Innocents

U.S. torture tactics have endangered relations with Great Britain in the wake of a decision by a British court to release a summary of the torture of British citizen Binyam Muhamad. "Diplomats and security officials said Wednesday," Reuters wire service reported February 11, that "intelligence ties between London and Washington have been jeopardized by a British court's disclosure that a terrorism suspect was beaten and shackled in U.S. custody."



The British Foreign Office — the British equivalent of the U.S. Department of State — published on its website February 10 a [summary](#) of the treatment of Muhamad. The summary stated: "Although it is not necessary for us to categorise the treatment reported, it could readily be contended to be at the very least cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment by the United States authorities." The publication of even this vague summary of [Muhamad's treatment](#), which included beatings and periodic mutilation of his genitals under U.S. custody, has angered American intelligence officials. "This is more serious than the Cambridge spy ring, this is more serious than Robert Hanssen," London-based former U.S. intelligence officer Bob Ayers [told](#) Reuters. "This has the potential to be far more damaging."

American officials have expressed public outrage at not being able to trust the British government with intelligence data in the wake of the Binyam Muhamad decision. But the reality is that most intelligence officials are running scared because the British documents verify that the U.S. government engaged in [felony torture](#) as a matter of policy, a crime punishable by 20 years in prison (or even the death penalty if it involves a death — and there were [dozens of deaths from torture](#) in U.S. custody during the Bush era).

The British government is so thoroughly under siege for being complicit in the torture of its own citizens by American interrogators that Foreign Secretary David Miliband and Home Secretary Alan Johnson felt compelled to pen a [broad-based denial](#) on the Foreign Office's website last week: "The allegation that our security and intelligence agencies have licence to collude in torture is disgraceful,



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untrue and one we vigorously deny.... It appears that after 9/11 the US authorities changed the rules of engagement for their staff in the fight against international terrorism. When this became clear to us, agency guidance to our own staff was changed to make clear their responsibilities not just to avoid any involvement or complicity in unacceptable practice, but also to report on them.”

Despite the official denials, former Guantanamo detainee [Moazzam Begg](#), an innocent British citizen only released after three years of torture, specifically claims British intelligence complicity in his torture: “I am a British citizen and the British intelligence services were, as far as I’m concerned, complicit in the torture of their own citizens — the ones they’re supposed to protect.” Begg is among 13 British former detainees who are [suing their own government](#) for involvement in the U.S. torture.

Unlike the British media, which has prominently reported American torture, most American citizens remain blissfully unaware of the severity of the torture inflicted in their name upon detainees who later proved to be innocent. Much of the U.S. mainstream media have limited their coverage to the propaganda of Bush-era apparatchiks, who continue to claim — despite all evidence — that everyone at Guantanamo was among the [“worst of the worst.”](#) For example, the neo-conservative Thomas Joscelyn of the Foundation for Defense of Democracies [told Front Page Magazine](#) of Binyam Muhamad: “First, both Mohamed and his lawyer have conceded that he trained at al Qaeda’s al Farouq camp in Afghanistan.”

The problem with Joscelyn’s statement is that it’s entirely false. Muhamad only “confessed” to crimes after U.S. interrogators had beaten him and cut his penis repeatedly with a knife. Since he has been released, Muhamad has repeatedly denied he was ever at the camp. Moreover, Muhamad’s government-appointed military attorney, Lt. Col. Yvonne R. Bradley, [concluded](#):

I think my first initial red flag and the hair standing on the back of my neck was after [Clive](#) emailed me the charge sheet and it had this one large conspiracy that he went to this camp, he went to that camp, and he knew this person, he knew that person. It was like a laundry list of the who’s who in al Qaeda. And it made no sense. This guy was a Westerner, didn’t speak the language, had just converted [to Islam] for nine months. How’s he rubbing elbows with the so-called elite of al Qaeda? Everything on that charge sheet told me there was something wrong.

But most American news outlets did not report this extraordinary news. American citizens have been all but completely sheltered from the crimes of their senior government officials by the mainstream media. Fox News and most other mainstream media have engaged in the most extraordinary censoring of news related to the excesses of torture in the so-called “war on terror.”

Most Americans cannot name any of the innocents tortured at Guantanamo, even those internationally known cases such as [Khalid el-Masri](#) and [Murat Kurnaz](#) of Germany, [Maher Arar](#) of Canada, [Moazzam Begg](#) and the [Tipton Three](#) of Britain, the [17 Uighurs](#) of China, [Omar Deghayes](#) of Libya, and others.

Nor are most Americans familiar with film exposés of the torture of innocents, such as [Road to Guantanamo](#) and [Outlawed](#).

One would think that most Americans would be familiar with the names of their own soldiers and military lawyers who have documented torture to the public and protested the treatment of innocent detainees there. These include former Guantanamo guards [Chris Arendt](#), Brandon Neely (who recently [met with some former detainees in Britain](#)), [Terry Holdbrooks](#), and [James Gilligan](#). Also [Lawrence Wilkerson](#), Colin Powell’s chief of staff, publicly stated that most Guantanamo detainees were innocent. To this can be added the testimony of U.S. military lawyers who have protested the injustice of



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detention and the unfairness of “military commission” trials that the Bush administration tried to run: [Lieutenant Commander Charles D. Swift](#), [Lt. Col. Yvonne R. Bradley](#), [Col. Morris Davis](#) (former chief prosecutor for the tribunals), [Lt. Col. Darrel J. Vandeveld](#), [Major Robert Preston](#), [Major John Carr](#), and [Captain Carrie Wolf](#).

The crime the British media revealed was torture. But the American mainstream media is complicit in a cover-up of that crime.

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