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### Detainees, if Freed, Could Help U.S.

By James Hailer  
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Since the Supreme Court's decision in *Hamdan v. Rumsfeld*, much ink has been devoted to what should be done about prisoners at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. I have a simple solution: Turn 'em loose.

Why? First, I think we may have extracted as much intelligence as we are going to get from these guys. They have served their purpose; they can go.

Second, we could finally shake the albatross of Guantanamo from our neck. A friend of mine who recently returned from Switzerland said that even though Europe was in the middle of World Cup frenzy (with the Swiss playing well), the topic du jour at dinner was not soccer but Guantanamo. Americans, for the most part, ignore Guantanamo, but for the rest of the world, it is front-page news. The sooner we bathe this wound the better.

To those concerned about the danger of letting these men go, I would argue that the world has changed since Camp X-Ray was opened. The concept of suicide bombers has spread far and wide, and thousands of recruits are volunteering for martyrdom. What's a few more? If we're convinced that some of these detainees are real hard cases, then I would argue that we should publicly repatriate them to their home countries, to be dealt with there. For all the bluster, no one in the international community wants these men either. Call their bluff.

Most important, I would argue that the release of the detainees would produce new actionable intelligence -- and internal turmoil for al-Qaeda. Most if not all of the detainees would go back to their old neighborhoods, and in the process of tracking them we might start to see some new faces. I also have to believe that over time we have "turned" some of the detainees, who may be willing to work with us once they are repatriated.

To those who say this is too radical a solution, I would point out that it was tried before, and with great success. The late David Galula, whose book "Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice" is considered by many to be the bible of counterinsurgency, wrote about his experience more than 50 years ago:

"Demoralization of the enemy's forces is an important task. The most effective way to achieve it is by employing a policy of leniency toward prisoners. They must be well treated and offered the choice of joining the movement or of being set free, even if this means that they will return to the counterinsurgent's side. Despite its setbacks in the early stages, this is the policy that pays the most in the long run."

Galula lived through this firsthand after he was captured in 1947 by Mao Zedong's forces in the Chinese civil war. Rather than being dealt with as a prisoner, he was treated as an "honored guest," as were all Chinese Nationalist soldiers in the camp. They were given two weeks of food and indoctrination, and upon completion of their stay, they had the option to return to their units.

As it turned out, many of the prisoners had been in the camps before -- the knowledge that they would be treated well had led them to view surrender as an acceptable option. Eventually they were viewed with suspicion by their own army, and the Nationalists were forced to set up prisoner of war camps for their own people.

Mao had perfected this technique while fighting the Japanese in World War II; many of the postwar leaders of the Japanese Communist Party were "graduates" of these camps. Mao succeeded in changing the minds of kamikazes -- something for us to think about.

Finally, I would make sure that everyone knew that many of the detainees were very cooperative, and I would leave it to al-Qaeda to figure out who was. I would also leak that we had a "classified" ability to track these people no matter where they went. Let the combination of paranoia, fundamentalism and al-Qaeda do its fratricidal work.

Let us move away from the bullets, bombs and prisons that have so alienated those we are trying to convert, and instead move into the minds of our opponents. If this truly is jihad, then let us sow the seeds of dissension, and let al-Qaeda engage in an "internal struggle" to its own bitter end.

*The writer is founder and publisher of Hailer Publishing.*

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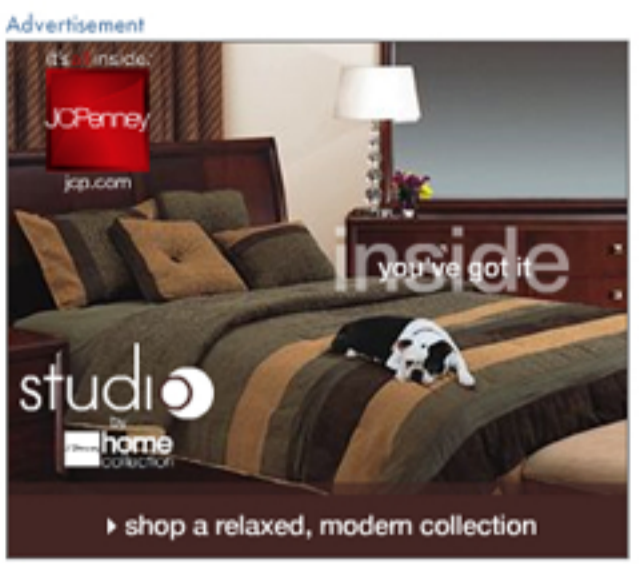
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