

Files on Gitmo transfers detail broader threat

By Oren Dorell
USA TODAY

More than a third of Guantanamo detainees since 2002 have been considered "high-risk," according to 779 individual military assessments obtained by the secrets-spilling organization WikiLeaks and released by several news outlets.

"The more we learn, the more that number grows," says Kyndra Rotunda, a former legal adviser to the camp commander, investigators and prosecutors at Guantanamo Bay detention center.

"A few years ago it was 10%. Then they said 25%. Now it's a third," she said.

The documents were obtained by WikiLeaks and provided by an unidentified source to *The New York Times*, which shared it with several other news organizations, including National Public Radio.

They include detailed accounts of how each detainee was taken into custody, intelligence he provided and his conduct during detention.

Of 600 detainees known to have been transferred out of Guantanamo, at least 160 were listed as high-risk and "likely to pose a threat" if released, including about a dozen who returned to terrorist activities or an association with al-Qaeda, according to NPR. Another 120 still

in custody were listed as "high-risk."

The assessments also detail threats made against guards and interrogators working at Guantanamo.

Yemeni Ahmed al-Hikimi, a 38- or 39-year-old who was among 30 al-Qaeda fighters caught fleeing the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan, had 134 reports of assault in Guantanamo. In an April 16, 2008, incident, "he urinated on the guard force," according to his detainee assessment.

Yasser Talal Al Zahrani, 26, a Saudi, told a guard he would use a knife to cut his stomach open, cut his face off and then drink his blood, smiling as he said it.

Such threats are the reason "we were trying to be very careful to protect the identity of interrogators," Rotunda says.

What the documents really show is "a government attempting to justify its mistakes and detaining, interrogating and abusing men," according to Vince Warren, executive director of the Center for Constitutional Rights, based in New York City.

Christopher Boucek, an associate at the Carnegie Middle East Program, said the cache of documents shows that the best indicator of whether detainees would be released is whether their home country has a program in place to accept them.

"If you come from a country that does not have a program to accept you when you return, like Yemen, you're not going to be sent back," Boucek said. The treatment programs weren't perfect because "a lot of the Saudis went back to reoffend again," he said.

"When stuff like this comes out, it makes it more difficult for third countries to take in some of these people if they're believed to have been involved in terrorist activity," Boucek said.

