



Reunion after Guantanamo

Source: "Guantanamo guard reunited with ex-inmates", BBC News, January 12, 2010



Why would a former Guantanamo prison guard track down two of his former captives - two British men - and agree to fly to London to meet them?

Brandon Neely, center, was a Guantanamo Bay guard, and Ruhul Ahmed, left, and Shafiq Rasul were his former prisoners.

Brandon Neely was 22 when he worked at Guantanamo's Camp X-Ray, set up by George Bush in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks to house suspected "terrorists". He left after six months to serve in Iraq. In 2005, he left the US military to become a police officer in Huntsville, Texas. He has served as the president of the Huston chapter of the Iraq Veterans Against the War and was still struggling to come to terms with his time as a guard at Guantanamo.

He felt anger at incidents of abuse he witnessed. He was deeply ashamed of an incident in which he "slammed" an elderly prisoner's head against the floor.

Last year, he reached out to his former prisoners Ruhul Ahmed and Shafiq Rasul through Facebook. Mr. Rasul and Mr. Ahmed, originally from Tipton, England, had been captured in Afghanistan on suspicion of links to the Taliban. They were beaten by US troops, held at Guantanamo for two years without charges, and then released in 2004.

After several exchanges of emails, the three met in London through an arrangement with the BBC. Mr. Neely said he felt complicit in their detention and acknowledged the wrong they were subjected to. He apologized for his role in the imprisonment. "You know here **I was basically just putting innocent people in cages.**"

On Jan. 22, 2009, **President Obama said Guantanamo prison has "damaged [America's] national security interests and become a tremendous recruiting tool for al Qaeda" and promised to close it in a year.** The deadline has passed, but Guantanamo remains open. On Jan. 11, more than 150 people around the country staged a 12-day fast to protest over Guantanamo prison and extraordinary renditions.
