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Khadr in pain, ex-inmates say

But Canadian officials who visited teen at Guantanamo report his health was good

By COLIN FREEZE

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Three former Guantanamo Bay detainees say that a teenage Canadian captive there is "in constant pain" and being prevented from getting proper medical treatment.

Government officials deny that is the case with 17-year-old Omar Khadr, who was deemed to be in good health by a Canadian intelligence operative who visited in March. But the three former detainees, released from the U.S. naval facility in Cuba that same month, say otherwise.

"He was in constant pain in Guantanamo and still undoubtedly is and they would not give him painkillers," according to a statement written by Rhuheh Ahmed who says he was detained in the cell next to Mr. Khadr.

The 115-page statement alleges widespread mistreatment of prisoners and is being circulated by the New-York-based Center for Constitutional Rights. It is signed by two other British nationals who also spent 2½ years in Guantanamo after being captured in Afghanistan.

The men, from the British Midlands, say they talked frequently with the Canadian teen in Cuba, and describe him as an unco-operative prisoner. They say he was captured in Afghanistan but only after he was "shot three times at point-blank range and his lung punctured and had shrapnel in one eye and a cataract in the other."

This is consistent with accounts by U.S. soldiers who say that their one surviving medic saved Mr. Khadr's life — even after the teen killed another U.S. soldier serving as a medic. This occurred as the Americans raided an al-Qaeda compound in July of 2002. Mr. Khadr was the sole survivor of his faction, and the then-15-year-old is said to have launched a lethal grenade before he was subdued.

The medic's widow is suing the Khadr family, alleging that Mr. Khadr is part of a family of Islamic extremists long coddled by the Canadian government.

Omar is the son of Ahmed Said Khadr, killed last year in Pakistan as a suspected al-Qaeda member. During the 1990s, the Khadr family took their six children from Canada to live in Taliban-controlled Afghanistan, where they lived with Osama bin Laden.

Abdurahman Khadr, a 21-year-old brother who has renounced the views of his family, also says he was mistreated during his nine-month stint in Guantanamo Bay prior to being released last fall.

A U.S. Department of Defence official, who asked not to be named, said, "We don't release the names of the detainees," but denied any mistreatment of prisoners.

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"The claims that they're making, that detainees are being abused or tortured, is simply not true," he said.

Canada's Foreign Affairs Department says one of its officials last visited Omar Khadr on an intelligence-gathering mission in March – the same month the three British nationals were released and an Ottawa man was arrested on terrorism charges.

"While the visits were for intelligence purposes and not consular visits, the visiting official noted that Mr. Khadr seemed well," spokeswoman Kimberly Phillips said.



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