

## Capt. James Yee: Desecration of the Holy Koran led to mass suicide attempts at Gitmo



By Edward Campbell

SEATTLE, Feb. 9 (Al-Masakin)-- Captain James Yee author of *For God and Country: Faith and Patriotism under Fire* said that desecration of the Holy Koran led to mass suicide attempts at the US detention center, Camp Delta, at Guantanamo Bay Cuba. Yee spoke to a packed auditorium Feb. 8 on the University of Washington campus.

As a third generation Chinese immigrant with deep root in the US armed forces, Captain Yee said he was placed in the crosshairs of government investigators both for his Asian ethnic background, his adherence to the Muslim faith, and for advocating the virtues: “diversity, tolerance, religious freedom, humane treatment and justice.” Values to which Yee still claims to strive. According to Captain Yee, he was often referred to as “the Chinese Taliban” by other service members. At Gitmo, Captain Yee reportedly over heard other service members making remarks to the effect: “What’s this Chinese Taliban doing here?” Captain Yee found this treatment disturbing for in addition to having several relatives presently in the US military, and a father who once served in



WWII, Captain Yee went on to graduate from West Point 1990. Later, in 1991, he converted to Islam by way of interfaith dialogue group that challenged his fundamental presuppositions about religion and the doctrine of the Lutheran Church. According to Captain Yee, he was asked with respect to the theological challenge between Islam and Christianity, “How do you judge something without learning about it first.” Captain Yee indulged the dialogue and discovered the many beliefs commonly held between Christians and Muslims, such as the Virgin birth of Christ, the Messianic tradition and the Second coming of Christ, the coming of the Judgment Day, the belief in the Prophets of the Torah and the Unity of God. Through these discussions, he found it necessary to reject the doctrine of the Trinity.

At first Captain Yee wanted to be a Muslim on name only in the same way that some Christians are Christian in name only by adhering to Martin Luther’s justification based on Faith alone. He drew a distinction between religious Christians and ordinary

Christians. “I was content with just being a Muslim,” He said.

His first duty assignment was in Germany and, immediately following the first Gulf War, he was transferred to Saudi Arabia where he was the officer in charge of a Patriot Missile battalion. On base, there was a Muslim cultural center and, unbeknownst to him at the time, there was an official memorandum in effect, signed by the then base commander, that permitted all Muslim service personnel a four day pass to visit the Kaaba in Mecca. Through the course of his duties there, a Saudi acquaintance of his informed him of this privilege, and he was allowed base leave. Captain Yee said that when he entered Mecca he experienced an epiphany in what he described as “a Malcolm X experience” wherein he discovered the diversity and unity of Islam.

Since many thousands of American service men had converted to Islam in the aftermath of the first Gulf War, Captain Yee, thereafter, pondered why there were no Muslim Chaplains in the US military and sought to become the first. After a short period of time working as a salesman in the United States, upon his return, he saved some money and then traveled to Damascus Syria to study Islam in earnest. Four years, in January 2001, later he returned to the United States from Syria.

Shortly after that the 9/11 terrorist attacks took place and he was once again called to duty to be a Muslim Chaplain at the U.S. detention center, Camp Delta,

at Guantanamo Bay Cuba. Because of his exemplary military background, he was “hand picked” for the job by the Army. Captain Yee would fulfill his dream of becoming a Muslim Chaplain in the U.S. military, but would not, however, succeed in becoming the first Muslim Chaplain. In addition to attending to the religious needs of the Guantanamo detainees, he became what he described as a liaison to the media for the U.S. military to the media on the grounds that he was what the US military calls “an on message soldier.”

The detention operation at Gitmo is what he described as a two-part operation, divided between detention and intelligence gathering and his duties were exclusively on the detention side of things. His duties not only included ministering to the detainees, but also to transfer the complaints of the detainees up the chain of command. He was not part of the intelligence gathering apparatus. What he discovered there, however, was that the desecration of the Muslim faith became “Gitmo's secret weapon” in breaking the detainees. In breaking the will of the detainees there, at Gitmo, desecration of the Muslim faith worked works perhaps too well and, in fact, was the singular practice that drove the detainees from simple resistance, to riots, to suicide attempts, and, eventually, to mass suicide attempts.

Among the great number of sacrilegious and unsettling things done to the detainees held at Gitmo was desecration of the Holy Koran. At first by bending

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the book backwards until the bindings broke which caused the pages to fall out on the ground later, the Holy Koran would “accidentally” fall on the floor of a cell, eventually it would be kicked across the cell. Captain Yee said it was the desecration of the Holy Koran that led to the mass suicide attempts at Gitmo. The impious nature of the U.S. military would be altogether confirmed by many irreligious acts. In addition to the aforementioned humiliations, detainees were compelled during interrogations to make sujud (prostration with one's head touching the floor) within a satanic circle and were told that “Satan was now their God, not Allah.” Captain Yee told the audience that female interrogators touched the genitals of the detainees and even forced them to touch the interrogator's breasts. Detainees were also wrapped in the Israeli flag and told not to cooperate with their lawyers because the lawyers, so alleged the interrogators, were all Jewish and were therefore secretly working against them. Yee learned of these events from the detainees, who complained to him about them, and transmitted that information up the chain of command which eventually led to the implementation of several reforms and a new Army doctrine on the treatment of the Koran and Muslim detainees.

In September 2003, when his one year tour of duty at Gitmo had ended, he was intercepted at the Jacksonville airport by customs agents and searched at the behest of the FBI where upon a number of so-called “classified documents” were found in his possession. A great number of agents from an assortment of different federal agencies just happened to be standing by to arrest him. These agents no doubt were actually being

coordinated by the USNCB-Interpol, not the FBI, secretly arrested and disappeared Captain Yee to a supermax naval brig called the Consolidated Naval Brig in Charleston SC where the other “citizen enemy combatants” were being held.

During his transport he was shackled by the hand and foot in what is referred to by law enforcement personnel as a “three piece suit.” He was then subjected to the horrifying sensory deprivation treatment used against the “foreign enemy combatants” we all witnessed, through the media, at the outset of the U.S.-Afghanistan war. He was forced to wear blacked-out goggles and industrial earmuffs in addition to the shackles. Then he was told that he was being charged with espionage and a number of other capital crimes which bring the death penalty in a time of war.

Once inside the naval brig he was systematically denied the very reforms he had once introduced for the detainees at Gitmo, including the knowledge of the direction of the Kabah, the Muslim times of prayer, the right to hear the Adan before prayer, and the right to Halal food. He was imprisoned for 76 days and then suddenly released. The old charges had suddenly been reduced to a minor charge of “mishandling classified documents.” The prosecution, unable to articulate a claim, eventually dropped these charges as well and the case against Captain Yee disappeared as quickly as it had materialized. Captain Yee returned to duty, but later resigned his commission in January 2005. He now seeks an apology from the U.S government.

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