



## Ghost Ships

by: [Alexa](#)

Sun Jul 13, 2008 at 01:36:42 AM EDT

*Brothers that live when we are dead,  
 don't set yourself against us too.  
 If you could pity us instead,  
 then God may sooner pity you.  
 We five or six strung up to view,  
 dangling the flesh we fed so well,  
 are eaten piecemeal, rot and smell.  
 We bones in a fine dust shall fall.  
 No one make that a laugh to tell:  
 pray God may save us one and all.*

The United States is operating "floating prisons" to house those arrested in its war on terror, according to human rights lawyers, who claim there has been an attempt to conceal the numbers and whereabouts of detainees.

Details of ships where detainees have been held and sites allegedly being used in countries across the world have been compiled as the debate over detention without trial intensifies on both sides of the Atlantic. The US government has been urged to list the names and whereabouts of all those detained.



An amphibious assault vehicle leaves the USS Peleliu, which was used to detain prisoners, according to the human rights group Reprieve. Information about the operation of prison ships has emerged through a number of sources, including statements from the US military, the Council of Europe and related parliamentary bodies, and the testimonies of prisoners. (Photograph: Zack Baddor/AP)

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Since 2006, when Stephen Gray's revelations of [Ghost Planes](#) confirmed the suspicions of human rights activists, we have known that our government kidnaps and tortures "suspicious" individuals as a matter of routine. *Extraordinary rendition* is the NewSpeak term used when this practice is denied. The denials and non-denials have become a mockery, a stain on the soul of America, when the truth is brought to light by an individual such as [Maher Arar](#), who lived to bear witness.

And then they would take me back to the interrogation room. Again another set of questions, and the beating starts again and again. On the third day the beating was the worst. They beat me a lot with the cable. And they wanted me to confess that I have been to Afghanistan. This was a big surprise to me because even the Americans who interviewed me, the FBI officials who interviewed me, did not ask

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me that question. **I ended up falsely confessing in order to stop the torture.**  
The torture decreased in intensity.

From that moment on they rarely used the cable. Mostly they slapped me on the face, they kicked me, they humiliated me all the time.

The first 10 days of my stay in Syria was extremely harsh and during that period I found my cell to be a refuge. I didn't want to see their faces. But later on living in that cell was horrible. **And just to give you an idea about how painful it is to stay in that place--I was ready after a couple of months, I was ready to sign any piece of document for me, not to be released, just to go to another place where it is fit for human being.**

**Stephen Grey**, investigative journalist, exposed the CIA's ghost planes with actual flight logs from the air carriers and photographs from hobby "plane spotters." The flight logs were proof.

Proof of kidnapping and torture of so-called suspicious persons? Highly inconvenient for the Torture Administration. They may have started the ghost ships before, but certainly, they have used them extensively as an alternative to air torture and rendition -- and as a matter of expedience.

*Brothers, if that's the word we said,  
it's no disparagement to you  
although in justice we hang dead.  
Yet all the same you know how few  
are men of sense in all they do.  
Pray now we're dead that Jesus well  
of grace shall not run dry nor Hell  
open in thunder as we fall.  
We're dead don't harry us as well:  
pray God may save us one and all.*

**Clive Stafford Smith**, defense counsel to **released prisoner of Guantanamo Sami al-Hajj** and director of the British-based human rights organization Reprieve has said of the ghost ships:

Clive Stafford Smith, Reprieve's legal director, said: "They choose ships to try to keep their misconduct as far as possible from the prying eyes of the media and lawyers. We will eventually reunite these ghost prisoners with their legal rights.

"By its own admission, the US government is currently detaining at least 26,000 people without trial in secret prisons, and information suggests up to 80,000 have been 'through the system' since 2001. The US government must show a commitment to rights and basic humanity by immediately revealing who these people are, where they are, and what has been done to them."

26,000? Think about *that* for a moment.

*Showered and rinsed with rain, we dead  
the sun has dried out black and blue.  
Magpie and crow gouge out each head  
for eyes and pluck the hair. On view,  
never at rest a moment of two,  
winds blow us here or there a spell;  
more pricked than a tailor's thumb could tell  
we're needled by the birds. Don't fall  
then for our brotherhood and cell:*

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*pray God may save us one and all.*

Details of ships where detainees have been held and sites allegedly being used in countries across the world have been compiled as the debate over detention without trial intensifies on both sides of the Atlantic. The US government was yesterday urged to list the names and whereabouts of all those detained.

Information about the operation of prison ships has emerged through a number of sources, including statements from the US military, the Council of Europe and related parliamentary bodies, and the testimonies of prisoners.

The analysis, due to be published this year by the human rights organisation Reprive, also claims **there have been more than 200 new cases of rendition since 2006, when President George Bush declared that the practice had stopped.** [Guardian UK](#)

According to research carried out by Reprive, the US may have used as many as 17 ships as "floating prisons" since 2001. Detainees are interrogated aboard the vessels and then rendered to other, often undisclosed, locations, it is claimed.

**Ships that are understood to have held prisoners include the USS Bataan and USS Peleliu. A further 15 ships are suspected of having operated around the British territory of Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean, which has been used as a military base by the UK and the Americans.**

At this time many people were abducted by Somali, Kenyan and Ethiopian forces in a systematic operation involving regular interrogations by individuals believed to be members of the FBI and CIA. Ultimately more than 100 individuals were "disappeared" to prisons in locations including Kenya, Somalia, Ethiopia, Djibouti and Guantánamo Bay.

Reprive believes prisoners may have also been held for interrogation on the USS Ashland and other ships in the Gulf of Aden during this time.

The Reprive study includes the account of a prisoner released from Guantánamo Bay, who described a fellow inmate's story of detention on an amphibious assault ship. "One of my fellow prisoners in Guantánamo was at sea on an American ship with about 50 others before coming to Guantánamo ... he was in the cage next to me. He told me that there were about 50 other people on the ship. They were all closed off in the bottom of the ship. The prisoner commented to me that it was like something you see on TV. The people held on the ship were beaten even more severely than in Guantánamo." [Reprive](#)

This is your government.

This is your government cracked on power and greed and brutality.

26,000 prisoners on ghost ships. **How many more?**

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**say nothing, say everything** (4.00 / 6)

How many years to discover the full extent of the crimes of this administration? What else have they done **in our names** that we don't even know about yet?

*Prince, Lord of Men, oh keep us well  
beyond the sovereignty of Hell.  
On him we've no business to call.*

*And, men, it's no joke now I tell:  
pray God may save us one and all.*

--Ballade of the Hanged  
(Villon's Epitaph) by Francois Villon

by: *Alexa @ Sun Jul 13, 2008 at 00:39:56 AM CDT*

#### **One of the many many many things (4.00 / 4)**

that will be missing from the Democratic platform is a call for transparency in what we now laughingly call the judicial system.

Why would anyone in their right mind **not** hate us? Excruciating as it is to admit, at this point **I hate us**.

by: *melvin @ Sun Jul 13, 2008 at 00:53:45 AM CDT*

#### **we've become a nation of bloodthirsty monsters (4.00 / 5)**

if I heard someone say they *liked* us, I'd have to look askance.

the 26,000 prisoners is really extraordinary to me. Mik and I used to try to keep a running count of how many at each detention facility, and I've thought for a long time that the prisoners released from Guantanamo were going to Bagram AFB. but the ghost ships tell another story so macabre it's almost impossible to accept. I believe it's true. matters have come to a sad state when no one in America is talking about this except on the Internet. why aren't we out screaming in the streets? obviously, we are all "suspects" now.

by: *Alexa @ Sun Jul 13, 2008 at 01:03:25 AM CDT*

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#### **sadly, i remember rumors about ghost ships (4.00 / 4)**

years ago. at first, i think they were used to hide the really extreme torture. Later, as bush started losing more and more lawsuits, and courts started recognizing rights for prisoners at Guantanamo, bush increased the use of ghost ships, thinking like his pea brain, that if off US soil, then he has total control. that was his thinking for Guantanamo, that if not on US soil, then US legal system can't reach.

just makes me sick.

by: *Patriot Daily @ Sun Jul 13, 2008 at 02:31:59 AM CDT*

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#### **a US ship, however, (4.00 / 3)**

is, in most cases, for most purposes, US territory. I don't think BushCo will fare any better with this argument that it did with its Guantanamo fantasy.

by: *blueness @ Mon Jul 14, 2008 at 19:59:20 PM CDT*

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#### **The very worst aspect of these continuing revelations (4.00 / 4)**

is the worry about what we are missing. Like you said, Alexa

What else have they done in our names that we don't even know about yet?

We may have seen the tip of the iceberg, but we may be years from knowing all the happenings of importance to our lives.

The present is dark indeed, but the future requires lots of sun be shown on actions such as "ghost ships" lest we fall even farther one day. The truth and only the truth shall set us free.

Peace.

*If you must sacrifice your principles in order to win, you have already lost.--J. Northington, May 2008.*

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by: *possum @ Sun Jul 13, 2008 at 06:21:29 AM CDT*

#### **ghost ships (4.00 / 5)**

evil is raining upon the earth when this type of sin plagues humanity. I suppose it goes with out saying that those who do such evil will one day have the opportunity to face and live with what they have done. I can only hope that guilt eats them alive, because death would be too much of a relief. It is as if since 911 something sinister has taken control of our government and our military. One day their crude oil, and their money will be about as useful as paper shoes in a forest fire. and I can not deny that those who do such evil will have earned this fate. I could never approve of any such evil being done on behalf of myself or most Americans. I can not believe the same people are still in charge.

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by: *sandybb @ Sun Jul 13, 2008 at 18:52:13 PM CDT*

#### **gracias - welcome to NION, sandybb (4.00 / 4)**

most Americans don't even seem to care, which is truly sad.

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by: *Alexa @ Sun Jul 13, 2008 at 22:10:21 PM CDT*

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#### **Beyond sad, it is bizarre (4.00 / 3)**

I can't get my mind around it, and it makes me even more frightened. Because the people with the power who are into destroying and torturing get the message that they can do and get away with anything.

hey... also, Alexa, welcome back to NION! Am I a late arrival?

*"In every cry of every man / In every infant's cry of fear / In every voice, in every ban / The mind-forged manacles I hear." -- Invictus*

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by: *Valtin @ Tue Jul 15, 2008 at 02:32:54 AM CDT*

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#### **not late at all, Valtin (4.00 / 2)**

I am expecting some redesign this week and had planned to email our contributing editors and administrators after the makeover, but I'm always very happy to see you!

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by: *Alexa @ Tue Jul 15, 2008 at 02:44:12 AM CDT*

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