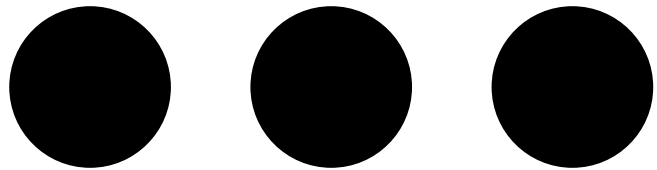




Written by [Thomas R. Eddlem](#) on July 30, 2012

Australian Government Helps Cover Up Guantanamo Crimes

The Australian government folded a civil case against former Guantanamo Bay prison inmate David Hicks after former Guantanamo guard Brandon Neely pledged to testify under oath to conditions Hicks endured at that prison. The move prompted leftists in Australia to [charge](#) that the government was “suppressing evidence” of mistreatment at Guantanamo, a claim that some former Guantanamo guards have affirmed.



Australian national and Muslim convert Hicks had served more than five years in Guantanamo without trial or formal charges after being detained with Taliban forces in 2001, and was released to Australian custody in 2007 after agreeing to plead guilty to terrorism-related charges. The plea bargain was a [political deal](#) struck between then-Vice President Dick Cheney’s office and the Australian government; the military commission charged with prosecuting Hicks had nothing to do with the plea deal. The Australian government released Hicks from custody in December 2007. Hicks now argues that his plea deal was entered under duress, and that pleading guilty after more than five years in legal limbo was the only way to get his day in court.

“Even if Hicks had been acquitted through the [military commission] system, he probably would’ve been detained at Guantanamo indefinitely,” Hicks’ lawyer Steven Glass told the Australian magazine *Lawyers Weekly*. “The only way he was going to get home to Australia was to plead guilty.”

Hicks’ 2010 book *Guantanamo: My Journey* earned some \$10,000 in royalties, but the Australian director of public prosecutions (DPP) [invoked](#) the country’s 2002 “Proceeds of Crimes Act” to try to prevent Hicks from gaining access to the profits from his book. With the government dropping the lawsuit, Hicks will now collect royalties on the estimated 30,000 copies of the book sold.

Hicks acknowledged receiving military training at the hands of the Taliban in Afghanistan in his book, but notes that his military training was not related to terrorism, [telling](#) the *Sydney Morning Herald* in 2010 concerning his book:



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The truth is, I included detailed descriptions in earlier drafts but ended up editing it out. I couldn't imagine the public wanting to wade through pages of anecdotes such as how I learn't to smear mud on my face and camouflage a uniform, or basic map-reading and using compasses. I didn't think the audience wanted to be bored with detail about building strength, stamina and endurance day after day by marching further and further with increasing weight in a backpack. These were situations very far removed from acts of terrorism such as bomb-making, hijacking or targeting civilians.

Neely released a summary of what he would have testified to through his [Twitter feed](#). In that four-page deposition, Neely noted that he was at Guantanamo when Hicks was admitted:

- I escorted the second detainee off the bus, who turned out to be Mr. Hicks.
- The cells at Camp X-Ray were nothing more than wire cages, about 8-9 feet by 5-6 feet in size. Mr. Hicks was fully exposed to the hot and humid weather. The cage had only a small tin roof, so when it rained, the detainees were wet through.
- They were given 3 meals per day, a bucket to use as a toilet, and a shower once per week [despite the sweltering tropical weather].
- Hygiene at Camp X-ray was very poor. The guards sometimes refused to empty the [cell's latrine] buckets, they were so disgusting.
- Detainees were frequently beaten in full view of the other nearby detainees, and blood often had to be cleaned from the cell afterwards.

Former Guantanamo guard Neely told the Australian television station SBS that he had seen a detainee "pretty much beaten to a bloody pulp" less than 15 feet from Hicks' cell for calling a female guard a derogatory name. Neely also told SBS that when he started working as a guard at Guantanamo, he believed all the detainees were among the "[worst of the worst](#)" terrorists. But later, he came to realize that [the majority were just people picked up in the fog of war](#) and put into a legal netherworld where neither military nor civilian detention rules applied. Neely added:

Now, actually, I consider David a friend, and his wife as well. I've gotten to know them on a friendship level.... I've always felt ashamed of stuff I did and what I took part in. To me, it feels like it's harder for them to friend me than it is for me to friend them because I don't know that if I was in their position if I would be able to talk to myself — somebody that took part of the horrors they went through. But at the same time I'm still ashamed of what I took part in and did while I was there. And I've never blamed it on just following orders or being young. You know, I was a man who knew right from wrong. I chose to do what I did. And all I can do is admit that I was wrong and try to move on and fix the problem.

Photo of Camp Delta rec area at Guantanamo Bay



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