

# Shaker's joy as he hugs son he's never met after 14 years in Guantanamo Bay

- Briton reunited with children at secret location
- US-owned London clinic refused to treat him

By **Nick Craven** and **David Rose**

BRITAIN'S last Guantanamo detainee Shaker Aamer finally embraced the teenage son he had never seen yesterday in a tearful meeting on his first full day of freedom in 14 years.

The emotional encounter with 13-year-old Faris, born on Valentine's Day, 2002 – the day Aamer was incarcerated in the brutal US-run prison camp in Cuba – came at a London clinic where the father of four is being treated for a catalogue of physical and psychological illnesses.

Mr Aamer, 48, was reunited with Faris and his other three children after they were picked up by his lawyer en route to a secret rendezvous. The youngsters carried presents for their father.

Faris was joined by sister Johina, 18, and brothers Michael, 16, and Saif, 15.

As Mr Aamer touched down in Britain, more details emerged about the arrangements being made for his new life – and his continuing fears for his safety. The Mail on Sunday can reveal that:

- A private London hospital owned by an American firm – the Hospital Corporation of America

**'He feared he might be poisoned on the plane'**

(HCA) – refused to treat him at the last minute.

- Mr Aamer was so worried about being poisoned by his American captors that he didn't dare eat or drink anything during his private jet flight home.

- A £1 million compensation package has already been agreed with the UK government after he spent nearly 14 years behind bars and suffered torture and solitary confinement without ever being charged or tried.

- A Metropolitan Police investigation into his claims of British complicity in his torture has been closed down, but could be restarted now that he is free.

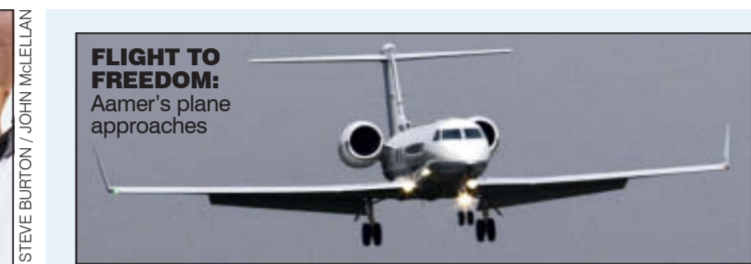
- Mr Aamer – considered a hardened jihadi by the Americans – will be closely monitored by British security services though there are unlikely to be restrictions on his freedom of movement. Given Brit-



**LOST YEARS:** Mr Aamer with Johina, left, now 18, and Michael, now 16



**LONG WAIT:** Faris leaves to meet his father for the first time with, from left, Saif, Michael and Johina



**We must shine a light into the legal black hole he's left behind**

AT FIRST it was merely a speck, but when it grew closer, we could see the Gulfstream's headlights as it descended rapidly towards us. Then Shaker Aamer's plane was on the ground at Biggin Hill – a key RAF base during the Battle of Britain, but now a hub for the private jets of the rich.

**ANALYSIS**

By **DAVID ROSE**

THE MoS WRITER WHO HAS CAMPAIGNED FOR 14 YEARS AGAINST GUANTANAMO BAY

won't be easy,' he said. 'Shaker's got an awful lot to deal with.'

I vividly remember the first of our many conversations about Guantanamo, in the spring of 2002 – a few weeks after this newspaper splashed infamous, horrifying images of bound, blindfolded prisoners kneeling in the Guantanamo dust in orange jumpsuits across several pages, under a one-word headline: TORTURED.

'What's happening here is extraordinary,' Stafford Smith told me then. 'I think it's going to take up a lot of my time as a lawyer, and yours as a journalist, for several years.'

But nearly 14 of them? That would not have seemed possible: How could the United States, with its ringing Constitution and reverence for due process, keep prisoners in a legal black hole for so long? (The saga is not over: despite President Obama's vaunted desire to see Guantanamo shut by January 2010, it still holds more than 100 inmates – most of whom, like Shaker, have not been charged with any crimes.)

Then again, back in 2002, although the Guantanamo concept seemed deeply wrong, we had little idea how

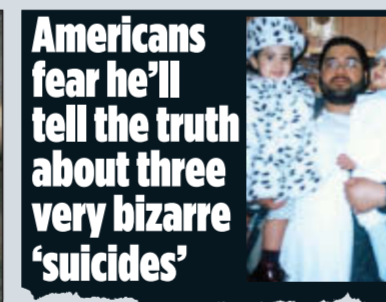
He was smiling, but not beaming. 'The road ahead

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lems trusting doctors after what happened to him at Gitmo'. Doctors supervised force feeding when he was on hunger strike, and medical staff forcibly took his blood.

Mr Aamer was also given five times the normal dose of the controversial anti-malarial drug Mefloquine on arrival at Guantanamo in 2002. The US military stopped using it after it was linked to psychotic episodes in which soldiers who had been given it went on the rampage. There is no risk of malaria in Cuba.

Dr Nicholl said Mr Aamer was suffering from severe, intense headaches, sciatica and back pain, and was undergoing a battery of tests. These included a range of

toxicological tests to confirm he had not been poisoned.

The doctor revealed that the former prisoner 'did not eat or drink anything after boarding the

**'His baggage tag still had Prisoner 239 on it'**

plane at Guantanamo. He was still fearful that they might spike it with something, even at this very late stage.

He said Mr Aamer recognised that 'the psychological impact of what he's been through is going to

be at least as big as the physical one. He really has been to hell and back.'

Dr Nicholl said: 'He has still got a fantastic sense of humour and a beaming smile.' He added: 'He looks a lot older than he does in the familiar pictures. That might just be helpful, because it means it's going to be easier to do what he most needs – to live quietly with his family beneath the publicity radar.'

The doctor said that when Mr Aamer touched down, he had no luggage: Just a small red carry-on holdall containing all his worldly goods from 14 years of imprisonment. The baggage tag had 'Prisoner 239' on it, rather than his name. 'So far as the Americans

were concerned, that's who he was, right to the end,' Dr Nicholl said.

Gareth Peirce, the human rights solicitor leading Mr Aamer's UK legal team, said: 'He's got three priorities. His wife, his children, and his medical condition. That is all I can say.'

Mr Aamer's torture case against the UK Government was partly settled in a £1 million deal brokered by former Cabinet minister Ken Clarke in 2010. Under the terms of the settlement, 16 British citizens and residents held at Guantanamo Bay between 2002 and 2010 agreed to drop their torture claims against the UK government in return for payments of up to £1 million each. The Mail on Sunday understands

that Mr Aamer was a party to the settlement. Meanwhile, his specific allegation that British secret agents were complicit in his torture while he was being held by the Americans in Afghanistan and Guantanamo is being investigated by the Metropolitan Police.

Mr Aamer says that a British officer from MI5 or MI6 was present when he was interrogated and when his head was being banged 'against a wall'.

Last night, a spokeswoman for the Met said they would 'consider any further evidence'.

Mr Aamer's British lawyer in the US, Clive Stafford Smith, said that his client was not interested in money and not looking to persecute

anyone for what had happened to him. He said that Mr Aamer would have known he was about to be freed when he was asked to change from his orange jumpsuit into a white one.

'That is the moment most prisoners finally smell freedom,' he said. 'Then it becomes real that they are going home.'

During his captivity, Shaker was addressed only by his number, but when he boarded his flight home, the captain shook his hand and said: 'Welcome aboard, Mr Aamer.'

Additional reporting: Robert Verkaik, Stephen Adams and Simon Murphy  
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