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**HEADLINE:** There's no escaping Guantanamo;

Without any assistance or support, released detainees are often shunned and left destitute and depressed.

**BYLINE:** Laurel Fletcher and Eric Stover, Laurel Fletcher is a clinical professor of law at UC Berkeley School of Law, and Eric Stover is an adjunct professor of law and public health at UC Berkeley. Their book, "The Guantanamo Effect: Exposing the Consequences of U.S. Detention and Interrogation Practices," is due out in September.

## **BODY:**

Arecent report from the Pentagon found that 74 of the 534 men freed from the Guantanamo Bay detention facility were "confirmed or suspected of re-engaging in terrorist activities."

That may be a high number -- other studies have found that only about 4% of the detainees have returned to terrorism after their release. But any recidivism raises a crucial question: Are the United States and its allies doing enough to prevent released detainees from "returning to the battlefield"?

President Obama has said he will close the Guantanamo prison by January 2010, and it appears likely that a substantial number of the approximately 240 detainees who remain there will be sent home or relocated to third countries. If the past is any indication, these men are likely to have trouble building new lives.

Last year, we interviewed 62 released Guantanamo detainees from nine countries in Europe, the Middle East and Southern Asia. We found that although many harbored negative feelings toward the U.S. government, most simply wanted to reintegrate into their families and communities. But they found it difficult to do so.

Nearly all suffered from what we call the "Guantanamo stigma," a presumption in their communities that they were dangerous men, even though the U.S. had never convicted them of a crime. Only six of the 62 had been able to find permanent jobs. Many had lost property, and their families had been driven into debt during their absence.

One released detainee, a highly educated businessman whose family had lived in Europe while he was in captivity, said his children found it complicated to explain why their father was in Guantanamo, so they simply told people he was in jail. "You can't express to a child that there is something in this world called 'detention without trial,' where the rule of law doesn't exist," he said, noting that children assume that "if you're in jail, you must be bad, because that's what society does to bad people."

Other former detainees reported that they were rejected by their families or were shunned and unable to find wives. The wife of a man from the Middle East left him while he was in Guantanamo and returned to live with her family. Now, he said, "I have a plastic bag that I carry with me all the time. I sleep every night in a different mosque."

A detainee from Europe, a shop owner before his detention, returned home to learn that his father had been murdered weeks before and that his estranged wife had taken their children to another part of the country. No one would

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hire him or lend him money to open a business. "I was living in hell in Guantanamo. And when I returned home, it was another hell," he said.

Yet another man, a highly educated Afghan professional and community leader who, while in Guantanamo, taught many of his countrymen to read and write, expressed frustration that his time in the camp indelibly marred his reputation and career. He returned home to find that his office had been ransacked and shuttered. He is demoralized and withdrawn, and he says he no longer feels able to take an active role in his community.

Two-thirds of the former detainees we interviewed reported psychological problems stemming from their confinement. Memories of being short-shackled in stress positions, subjected to extreme temperatures and exposed to violence by guards remained vivid for many. Others complained of memory loss, depression and nightmares. "I think I'm still back there, with chains and guards swearing at me," said one man.

A man from Europe in his mid-20s said that after being released, he experienced flashbacks to Guantanamo and found it difficult to trust his wife and parents. "I went to see a psychiatrist who told me I was suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder," he said. "But it was expensive. He charged me around \$150. After that, I simply couldn't afford more visits."

Released detainees told us what they wanted most was the opportunity to put Guantanamo behind them and get on with their lives. Yet 45 of the 62 former detainees said they received no significant support from their governments or private charities to help them start anew. "I lost everything as a result of being detained in Guantanamo. I've lost my property. I've lost my job. I've lost my will," said one Afghan detainee, a former medical professional who claims he was sent to Guantanamo because a rival tribe falsely denounced him to the Americans.

The reports are alarming. Without social and psychological support, former detainees often find themselves destitute, which puts them at risk of drifting to radical mosques where, in addition to receiving food and a place to sleep, they listen to anti-American diatribes.

As the U.S. prepares to close Guantanamo, it also needs to plan for post-release services to help detainees reintegrate into their communities. U.S.-supported programs should provide former detainees with job training and psychological support and help them secure stable employment. Such programs are very much in our interest. By helping to re-anchor released detainees in their communities, we will reduce the risk of terrorist attacks against the United States.

**GRAPHIC:** PHOTO: WANT OUT: Chinese Uighurs in Guantanamo, who at the time were cleared for release but had no country to go to, show a note. PHOTOGRAPHER:Brennan Linsley Associated Press

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