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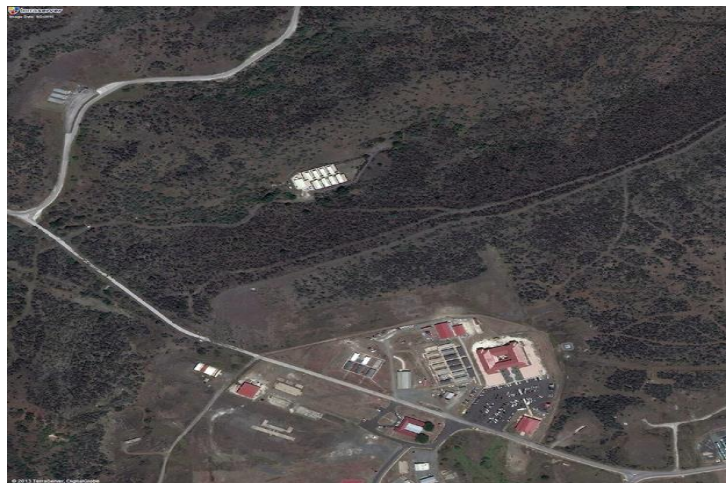
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CIA Used Secret Gitmo Facility To Turn Prisoners Into Double Agents

The agency offered detainees freedom, safety and millions of dollars. Many top al-Qaeda operatives were killed as a result of the risky program.

Jon Passantino

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A satellite image shows the Naval Station at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, including the secret facility known as Penny Lane, upper middle in white.

In the wake of the Sept. 11, 2001 terror attacks, the CIA reportedly used a secret facility at the Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, detention center to turn a handful of prisoners into double agents and then sent them home to help kill terrorists.

The program, which was carried out in a complex known as Penny Lane just a few hundred yards from the administrative offices at the prison, aided in the killing of “many” top al-Qaeda operatives, current and former U.S. officials told the Associated Press.

The eight small cottages, seen in the satellite image above, were hidden behind a ridge covered in thick scrub and cactus. Unlike the prison next door, inside the motel-style complex detainees were treated to comfortable beds, private kitchens, a small patio — even pornography, for those who requested it.

The CIA offered the prisoners freedom, safety for their families and millions of dollars from the agency’s secret bank account, codenamed Pledge, in return for spying for the U.S.

Some of the information provided by the released detainees was used to launch Predator drone strikes, an official said, while other double agents ultimately stopped providing information and lost contact with the CIA.

Al-Qaeda apparently suspected the U.S. may try to infiltrate the group with former Guantanamo detainees and was highly-skeptical of those who returned home. In one instance, an official recalled, the group came very close to discovering a double-agent.

Officials involved with the risky program, which ended in 2006, told the AP their greatest fear was that a former detainee would attack Americans then publicly reveal he was paid by the CIA. There were no known instances in which this occurred.

President Obama made closing Gitmo one of the signature policy priorities of his first run for office, promising to shutter the facility that has become a symbol of the nation’s fight against terrorism.

“I can tell you that the administration remains committed to closing the detention facility at Guantanamo Bay,” deputy White House press secretary Josh Earnest said in March this year.

The two envoys appointed by Obama to lead the effort to close the prison made their first joint visit to the base in Cuba on Monday. The U.S. is holding more than 160 prisoners at the Guantanamo detention center.