

KHADR: “YOU’RE TRYING TO HUMILIATE ME”

If you’ve been following Spencer and Carol Rosenberg, you know that the news from Omar Khadr’s hearing has been dominated by Khadr’s two refusals to come to the hearing room, yesterday because he didn’t want to wear the blackout goggles they use while transporting detainees at Gitmo, today because he didn’t want to undergo a waistband search before being transported to the hearing room.

I certainly can’t say whether Khadr really doesn’t want to undergo these procedures—which the government says are routine—or whether he wants to call the world press’ attention to these procedures (anyway, how do you separate the two?). But in any case, he has succeeded, to some extent, in doing the latter (Spencer tweeted that Gitmo authorities actually explained “which digit gets inserted” in a waistband search).

Both times, the authorities dutifully reported Khadr’s comments about humiliation. Yesterday, he said, “You’re trying to humiliate me,” and today he said, “I want to come to court but I want to come respectfully.”

Here’s how the Toronto Globe and Mail (which in some ways would be the key audience for such a story) reported the repeated refusals:

For the second day in a row, Omar Khadr refused to appear Friday for pre-trial hearing on murder and terrorism charges, claiming he was being subjected to unnecessary and humiliating searches by military guards.

[snip]

“I want to come to court but I want to come respectfully,” Mr. Khadr said,

according to U.S. Marine Capt Laura Bruzzese, who testified at the opening of today's session.

Military Judge Col Patrick Parrish said the hearing would proceed without Mr. Khadr.

"He objects to having his waistband searched" but that is a reasonable security measure, the judge said, adding that Mr. Khadr's objections – unlike those of a day earlier – were unrelated to his eye problems.

[snip]

But Mr. Khadr's condition and his care eclipsed Thursday's hearing. The military judge, Col. Parrish, refused defence requests that a doctor on the defence team be allowed to testify as to the seriousness of Mr. Khadr's eye problems. Mr. Khadr failed to appear for the morning session after he refused to wear the sensory-depriving, blacked-out, ski goggles and earmuffs detainees are required to wear for transport from the prison camps to the courtroom.

Col. Parrish then cancelled it and warned Mr. Khadr's lawyers that unless they persuaded him to attend, he would order him trussed up and brought to the court, at least long enough for him to be told of his right to absent himself. That right was apparently omitted from Mr. Khadr's arraignment.

Col. Parrish rejected defence requests to examine whether Mr. Khadr should be forced to wear the goggles, even while in the back of the armoured vehicle used to transfer prisoners from the camps to the court. The judge said he "wasn't going to second guess the decisions made by security" personnel.

I'm curious what you all make of this. To Americans, certainly, such procedures aren't going to seem out of order—we see US-based prisoners subjected to bureaucratized dehumanization on teevee all the time. That's not as true of the rest of the world. Yet, it seems to detract from the issues specific to Khadr that piss off the rest of the world even more, that the US is trying someone who for actions allegedly committed as a teenager.