EMILY MAITLIS:
We’re going to return now to the story on Shaker Aamer, released – as you heard – from Guantanamo Bay last month after 14 years. Today he gave an exclusive interview to The Mail on Sunday where he claimed British officials had been present in the room whilst he’d been tortured. Well we’re joined now from Aberdeen by Alex Salmond, the former first minister and the SNP’s foreign affairs spokesman. Thanks for joining us, Alex Salmond. What do you make of what you’ve heard or what you’ve read today?

ALEX SALMOND:
Well I mean the first thing to say about the piece in The Mail on Sunday by David Rose - a very well written piece, as you’d expect, incidentally – is that this man seems to have emerged from 5,000 days of illegal captivity both sane and with a remarkable generosity of spirit. It’s an extraordinary piece to read. Of course the real politics of this is what you point to and that’s the allegation that in January 2002
British officials, intelligence officers, witnessed not his abduction – which we knew about – but his torture. And also, as a point of detail, that they came into Bagram air base on the same flight as the then prime minister, Tony Blair. And so the not unreasonable allegation that Shaker Aamer makes is that both the prime minister, Tony Blair, and the then home secretary, Jack Straw, must have known not just about his illegal abduction but also about his torture at the hands of the US authorities.

EMILY MAITLIS:
Does this change anything? What would you want to see happen?

ALEX SALMOND:
Well I think obviously, as in so many things, Messrs. Blair and Straw have a great deal to answer for and they have to be asked the straight question how could they possibly not have known about the fate that had befallen a British citizen. I mean governments have many responsibilities, but the prime responsibility of all governments is to keep their own citizens safe from harm and governments are not meant to collaborate on the illegal abduction and then the torture of one of our own citizens. So both the then prime minister and home secretary have to fess up and tell us exactly what they knew and when they knew it.

EMILY MAITLIS:
As you said, these are allegations at the moment. An extraordinarily humane interview that he’s given, but do you believe what you’re reading is true?

ALEX SALMOND:
Well I can only go … Obviously I’ve not spoken to Shaker Aamer myself - I can only go on what I’ve read in the David Rose interview - but I doubt if anyone reading that comprehensive interview and what he says about other things and the detail which he goes into would doubt the voracity of his comments. Apart from anything else, few – if anybody, maybe with the exception of one of the guests on your programme today – would doubt that this man was held illegally and improperly over a period of 14 years and was held in detention at Guantanamo Bay long after everyone knew he had no connection with terrorism whatsoever. And one of the suspicions that those campaigning for his release have had is there had to be a reason for him not being
released despite being cleared for release twice over that period that’s almost being centered on the revelations it would have about what was going on at Guantanamo Bay. It now appears that a reason might have been what had gone on in January 2002 at Bagram air base.

EMILY MAITLIS:
Alex Salmond, thank you. Thank you for joining us.

INTERVIEW ENDS