



# UNITED STATES ATTORNEY'S OFFICE EASTERN DISTRICT OF VIRGINIA

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**ACTING UNITED STATES ATTORNEY DANA BOENTE**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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## **Civilian Contractor Pleads Guilty to Voluntary Manslaughter of Afghan Detainee**

(Alexandria, Va.) – Don Michael Ayala, a civilian contractor stationed in Afghanistan, pleaded guilty today to voluntary manslaughter in U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, in the death of Abdul Salam while on patrol in Chehel Gazi, Afghanistan, on November 4, 2008. According to court documents, Salam had doused Ayala's civilian contractor teammate, Ms. Paula Loyd, with gasoline, ignited it and fled in the direction of Ayala and several U.S. soldiers. Ayala and the soldiers tackled Salam and restrained him. Minutes later, when Ayala was informed of Ms. Loyd's condition and while Salam was still restrained, Ayala fired a single round in to Salam's head, killing him instantly. The maximum sentence Ayala could receive is 15 years.

Ms. Loyd, 36, suffered second- and third-degree burns over 60 percent of her body and was subsequently evacuated to Brooke Army Medical Center in San Antonio, Texas, where she died from her injuries on January 7, 2009.

U.S. District Judge Claude M. Hilton set a sentencing date of May 8, 2009. Dana J. Boente, Acting United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia, and Rita M. Glavin, Acting Assistant Attorney General of the Criminal Division, made the announcement.

This case is being investigated by the U.S. Army Criminal Investigation Division and is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Michael E. Rich, Special Assistant United States Attorney Zachary Richter and former Domestic Security Section Trial Attorney Christopher Graveline.

A copy of this press release may be found on the website of the United States Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of Virginia at <http://www.usdoj.gov/usao/vae>. Related court documents and information may be found on the website of the District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia at <http://www.vaed.uscourts.gov> or on <http://pacer.uspci.uscourts.gov>.

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