

PRESS RELEASE

June 05, 2006

Hicks' Dad Doubts Open Letter's Effect

THE father of Australian Guantanamo Bay detainee David Hicks has welcomed an open letter to Prime Minister John Howard which argues the US detention of his son is illegal, but doubts it will make a difference to the Federal Government.

The letter, with 76 signatories including four former Supreme and Federal Court judges, demands a fair trial for David Hicks.

It was penned by the president of the Australian section of the International Commission of Jurists, John Dowd QC.

David Hicks' father, Terry Hicks, said he doubted the letter would change the minds of Mr Howard or Attorney-General Philip Ruddock.

"I would like to think the Government will look at it and do something, but Mr Ruddock is really on-side with the military commissions," he said.

"I think if you had 50,000 signatories he (Mr Ruddock) still wouldn't change his views."

<http://www.cageprisoners.com/articles.php?id=14248>

SOURCE: Border Mail

Pentagon Seeks To Omit Detainee Rules

New effort aims to dump policy in Geneva pact
By Julian E. Barnes, Los Angeles Times

WASHINGTON -- The Pentagon plans to omit from new detainee policies a key tenet of the Geneva Convention that bans "humiliating and degrading treatment," according to military officials. Such a step would mark a shift from strict adherence to international rights standards.

Such a decision would also culminate a debate within the Department of Defense, but would not become final until the Pentagon makes new guidelines public.

The State Department fiercely opposes the military's decision to exclude Geneva Convention protections, and has been pushing for the Pentagon and White House to reconsider, Defense Department officials said.

For more than a year, the Pentagon has been redrawing policies on interrogation, and intends to issue a new Army field manual, which, with directives, represents core instructions to US soldiers.

The process has been beset by debate, but the decision to omit Geneva Convention protections from a directive was made as criticism has increased about US detention practices.

The directive on interrogations, a Defense Department official said, is being rewritten so that detainees are treated humanely but can be questioned effectively.

President Bush's critics and supporters have debated whether it is possible to prove a direct link between administration statements that it will not be bound by Geneva and events such as the abuses at Abu Ghraib or the killings of civilians last year at Haditha, Iraq, allegedly by Marines.

But the exclusion of the Geneva provisions may make it more difficult for the administration to portray such incidents as aberrations. And it undercuts arguments that US forces follow the most broadly accepted standards in war.

The detainee directive was due to be released in April along with the Army Field Manual on interrogations. But objections from several senators on other Field Manual issues forced a delay. Senators objected to provisions allowing harsher interrogation techniques.

The lawmakers argue that differing standards of treatment allowed by the Field Manual would violate an antitorture measure advanced by Senator John McCain, Republican of Arizona.

Last year, McCain pushed Congress to ban torture and cruel treatment and to establish the Army Field Manual as the uniform standard for treatment of all detainees. Despite administration opposition, the measure passed and became law.

For decades, it was the policy of the US military to follow standards for treating detainees as laid out in the Geneva Convention.

But in 2002, President Bush suspended portions of the Geneva Convention for captured Al Qaeda and Taliban fighters. Bush's order superseded military policy, touching off debate over US obligations under the Geneva accord, a debate that intensified after reports of abuses at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, and at Iraq's Abu Ghraib prison.

Among directives rewritten after Bush's 2002 order is one governing US detention operations. Military lawyers and other Defense Department officials wanted the redrawn version of the document, Directive 2310, to again embrace the Geneva Convention.

That provision is known as a "common" article because it is part of each of the four Geneva pacts approved in 1949. It bans torture and cruel treatment. Unlike other Geneva provisions, Article 3 covers all detainees, whether unlawful combatants or traditional prisoners of war.

However, the move to restore US adherence to Article 3 was opposed by Vice President Dick Cheney's office and by the Pentagon's intelligence arm, government sources said.

David Addington, Cheney's chief of staff, and Stephen Cambone, the Defense Department's undersecretary for intelligence, argued that it would restrict the United States' ability to question detainees.

<http://www.cageprisoners.com/articles.php?id=14241>

SOURCE: Boston Globe

Dozens End Guantanamo Fast

By Associated Press

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico -- Dozens of Guantanamo Bay detainees have abandoned a hunger strike, lowering the number of captives refusing food to 18, a US military spokesman said yesterday in a telephone interview from Cuba.

The strike had jumped from three participants in May to 89 on Thursday. No details were given on why the prisoners stopped the strike. It was the biggest of the year at the US prison in Cuba, where about 460 men are being held on suspicion of links to Al Qaeda or the Taliban.

<http://www.cageprisoners.com/articles.php?id=14240>

SOURCE: Boston Globe

June 06, 2006

Pentagon's Interrogation Manual Dodges Geneva Ban

Julian Borger in Washington

The Pentagon is drafting a new rulebook for military interrogators which omits the Geneva convention ban on "humiliating and degrading treatment", it was reported yesterday.

According to the Los Angeles Times, the army field manual on interrogation has not been finalised, and state department lawyers are fighting to have the convention protections restored.

Pentagon officials said yesterday that a final version should be published in the next few weeks.

A spokesman, Lieutenant Colonel Mark Ballesteros, said: "The document you refer to remains in coordination and it would be premature to comment on it prior to its release. The department of defence remains committed to the humane treatment of all its detainees."

Pentagon lawyers have spent more than a year trying to draw up the manual in the wake of the abuse scandal at Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq.

Hardliners in the military and in Dick Cheney's office want to give US intelligence officials the freedom to question suspected terrorists, labelled "unlawful combatants", effectively. Others in the administration are concerned that if the constraints are deliberately loosened the administration would be politically and legally liable for any abuse scandals.

Administration critics say a legal memorandum produced by the justice department in the 2002, suggesting that the president was not constrained by the Geneva convention, paved the way for the maltreatment of inmates in Abu Ghraib, Afghanistan and Guantánamo Bay.

Military lawyers, known as judge advocates general (JAGs), tried to resist the removal of the Geneva safeguards, but were reportedly overruled.

"The JAGs came to the conclusion that this was the best they can get," an unnamed participant familiar with the debate told the LA Times. "But it was a massive mistake to have withdrawn from Geneva. By backing away, you weaken the proposition that this is the baseline provision that is binding to all nations."

<http://www.cageprisoners.com/articles.php?id=14256>

SOURCE: The Guardian

Pentagon Endorses Force-Feeding Hunger Strikers

By Will Dunham

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - A Pentagon document setting rules for medical professionals in detainee operations endorses force-feeding hunger strikers, a practice criticized by rights activists, U.S. officials said on Monday.

The policy decree, set to be unveiled on Tuesday, is one of three long-awaited documents on detainee operations being formulated by the Pentagon, along with the still-pending Army Field Manual and a directive guiding interrogation practices.

Human rights activists have said U.S. medical personnel have been complicit in detainee abuse, and have denounced force-feeding of prisoners as a violation of international codes of medical ethics.

The Pentagon said in a statement the new document "reaffirms the policy to prevent injury or loss of life of hunger strikers by involuntarily feeding those at serious risk of injury or death, as approved by the detention facility commanding officer or designated senior officer."

Many foreign terrorism suspects held at the U.S. naval base at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, have engaged in hunger strikes their lawyers call a protest of their conditions and lack of legal rights. The military has involuntarily fed some hunger strikers through tubes inserted through the nose and into the stomach.

Critics note that ethical codes endorsed by the American Medical Association, including a declaration by the World Medical Association, state that if a doctor considers a hunger striker "capable of forming an unimpaired and rational judgement concerning the consequences of such voluntary refusal of nourishment, he or she shall not be fed artificially."

'A HASSLE'

Authorities at Guantanamo have said they have strapped some detainees into "restraint chairs" during involuntary feeding and isolated them after determining some had been purposely vomiting the liquid they had been fed. A senior general told reporters some detainees subsequently decided taking part in the hunger strike had become "too much of a hassle."

Writing in March in the British medical journal The Lancet, 263 doctors from seven countries called on the United States to stop force-feeding detainees and using restraint chairs.

"It seems like the motive (for force-feeding detainees) is to prevent embarrassment to the United States government because they don't appear to be waiting until someone's life or health is in significant danger," said Leonard Rubenstein, executive director of the group Physicians for Human Rights.

Detainees' lawyers have previously accused the military of violently shoving tubes through the men's noses and into their stomachs without anaesthesia or sedatives and then hurling religious taunts at them when they vomited blood.

Navy Cmdr. Robert Durand, a spokesman at Guantanamo, said this weekend the number of hunger strikers there had dropped from 89 as of last Thursday to 18.

"The hunger strike technique is consistent with al Qaeda practice and reflects detainee attempts to elicit media attention to bring international pressure on the United States to release them back to the battlefield," a military statement said.

The new policy directive also "reaffirms the responsibility of health care personnel to protect and treat all detainees under their care in keeping with the established principles of medical practice and humane treatment," the Pentagon said.

Pentagon guidelines do not prohibit medical personnel from assisting interrogations by using knowledge of a prisoner's medical or mental condition.

<http://www.cageprisoners.com/articles.php?id=14255>

SOURCE: Reuters

US Military Moves To Condone "Humiliating and Degrading" Treatment of prisoners

By Joe Kay

The US military is preparing a new version of the Army Field Manual that will eliminate language prohibiting "humiliating and degrading treatment" of prisoners held in US custody, according to a report published Monday by the Los Angeles Times. The new manual would be a further step in the repudiation of international law and the codification of torture as a component of US interrogation policy.

Summarizing the essence of the discussions, the Times quotes an individual described as being familiar with the debates in the Pentagon as saying: "The overall thinking is that they need the flexibility to apply cruel techniques if military necessity requires it."

By altering the language of the Field Manual, which is the standard of conduct for all US soldiers on the ground, the Pentagon is sending a signal to the military as a whole: prisoner abuse will continue to be tolerated and encouraged.

The new version of the Army's manual on interrogation was due out earlier this year but has been delayed amidst disputes within the political establishment over how to formulate interrogation policy. One of the issues in this dispute, according to the Times, centers on language in the manual that repeats standards included in Common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions.

Common Article 3 prohibits "at any time and in any place whatsoever...violence to life and person, in particular murder of all kinds, mutilation, cruel treatment and torture, [and] outrages upon personal dignity, in particular, humiliating and degrading treatment." This passage was intended as a basic standard for the humane treatment of all prisoners, whether or not they were officially classified as POWs, who under the Geneva Conventions are accorded more extensive rights.

The Times does not state explicitly how the Pentagon is seeking to modify the language—whether the entire passage from Common Article 3 will be eliminated or only the final clause. Regardless, the effect of the change will be to condone a number of techniques that, in fact, amount to torture.

According to the Times, "The military has long applied Article 3 to conflicts—including civil wars—using it as a minimum standard of conduct, even during peacekeeping operations.... But top Pentagon officials now believe Common Article 3 creates an 'unintentional sanctuary' that allows Al Qaeda members to keep information from interrogators."

The new language would be only the latest in a series of moves by the Bush administration to undercut international law and legitimize torture as an instrument of US policy, using the "war on terrorism" as a pretext.

Shortly after the invasion of Afghanistan, the Bush administration declared that prisoners captured during the conflict (including those the US government decided to identify as either Taliban or Al Qaeda) would not be given POW status under the Geneva Conventions. At the same time, it declared that these prisoners would be denied protections under Common Article 3, on the spurious grounds that this section applied only to "armed conflicts not of an international character."

The basic intent of the Bush administration's argument was to create a category of prisoner, the "unlawful combatant," who would be completely outside of any protections under international law. These combatants could include anyone, including US citizens, picked up in any part of the world. At the same time, administration lawyers, including then-White House counsel and current Attorney General Alberto Gonzales, were drafting memoranda that argued for the president's constitutional authority as commander-in-chief to order torture.

One problem that the administration confronted, however, is the fact that the military's own guidelines, included in the Army Field Manual, contain language prohibiting the types of techniques that the Pentagon has begun to employ. While the manual is not US law, it is a critical formulation of military policy and is also considered important in determining "common law," the set of basic human rights principles to which all countries are considered bound under international law.

The language in the Army manual was highlighted in March of this year, when a group of military lawyers (judge advocates general), who have on a number of occasions come into conflict with the administration on the question of torture, submitted a memo to the Senate Armed Services Committee concluding that several of the techniques employed at Guantánamo Bay violated the manual because they are "humiliating and degrading."

The Washington Post reported on March 16 that the lawyers "wrote that forcing a detainee to wear a woman's bra and thong underwear on his head, insulting a detainee's mother and sister, calling a detainee a homosexual and implying that others know he is a homosexual, forcing a detainee to perform dog tricks, and forcing a detainee to stand naked in the presence of female soldiers would not be consistent with the Army's policy." All of these techniques have been used on prisoners in Guantánamo Bay. They are not far removed from the techniques photographed at Abu Ghraib.

One argument the administration has employed to get around the Army Field Manual has been that the manual supposedly applies only to prisoners protected by the Geneva Conventions.

This was one of the central issues behind a dispute that emerged within the political establishment last year over an amendment that would require the military to follow the field manual for all prisoners under its control. The amendment, attached to the Defense Appropriations bill last year and associated primarily with Republican Senator John McCain, prohibits torture and states that no person under the control of the Department of Defense "shall be subject to any treatment or technique of interrogation not authorized by and listed in the United States Army Field Manual on Intelligence Interrogation."

At the time, Vice President Dick Cheney strongly opposed the amendment, intervening personally in an attempt to get McCain to drop support for it, and the Bush administration threatened a veto. After it was nevertheless passed by Congress with a veto-proof majority, Bush, upon signing it, declared that it would be interpreted in a manner that did not violate the constitutional powers of the President as commander-in-chief—powers that administration lawyers have argued include torture.

In part as a response to the amendment, the Pentagon has moved to include wording in the Army Field Manual to allow the sorts of techniques that it has already been using—including, in particular, sexual humiliation.

Cheney has reportedly been principally behind the attempt to eliminate the Common Article 3 language from the new manual. The Times reports that the inclusion of the Geneva Convention language was “opposed by officials from Vice President Dick Cheney’s office and by the Pentagon’s intelligence arm, government sources said. David S. Addington, Cheney’s chief of staff, and Stephen A. Cambone, defense undersecretary for intelligence, said it would restrict the United States’ ability to question detainees.”

The aim of these officials is not only to specifically eliminate the language on humiliation, but more generally to break the correspondence between the provisions of the Army manual and the Geneva Conventions. This is intended to underscore the fact that the US does not consider itself to be bound by international law and human rights standards.

The divisions within the political establishment over this issue do not reflect fundamental differences over policy, but rather the gloss that this policy is given publicly. On the one hand, Vice President Cheney and his staff, along with Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and Attorney General Alberto Gonzales, have been pushing for a more open declaration of the US government’s right to abuse prisoners picked up in the “war on terrorism.” In addition to the desire to create a pseudo-legal foundation for torture, there is concern within these circles that administration officials could end up being prosecuted for authorizing techniques that are blatantly illegal.

On the other hand, officials within the State Department and some in Congress have raised concerns that the open disavowal of international law in relation to prisoner abuse has undermined the human rights pretenses of the United States. The LA Times notes in its article that revisions in the manual “may make it more difficult for the administration to portray such incidents [as Abu Ghraib and the massacre of Iraqi citizens in Haditha] as aberrations. And it undercuts contentions that US forces follow the strictest, most broadly accepted standards when fighting wars.”

What the discussions over the Army manual reveal, however, is precisely that these incidents are not aberrations, but products of a definite policy—a policy that includes the assertion of unlimited powers of the president as commander-in-chief, the practice of rendition to countries that practice torture, the setting up of CIA prisons around the world where prisoners are held in secret and abused, and the assault of democratic rights within the United States.

<http://www.cageprisoners.com/articles.php?id=14251>

SOURCE: World Socialist Website

June 07, 2006

Military Alters the Makeup of Interrogation Advisers

By NEIL A. LEWIS

WASHINGTON, June 6 — Pentagon officials said Tuesday that they would try to use only psychologists, and not psychiatrists, to help interrogators devise strategies to get information from detainees at places like Guantánamo Bay, Cuba.

The new policy follows by little more than two weeks an overwhelming vote by the American Psychiatric Association discouraging its members from participating in those efforts.

Dr. William Winkenwerder Jr., assistant secretary of defense for health affairs, told reporters that the new policy favoring the use of psychologists over psychiatrists was a recognition of differing positions taken by their respective professional groups.

The military had been using psychiatrists and psychologists alike on behavioral science consultation teams, called "biscuit" teams because of the acronym, to advise interrogators on how best to obtain information from prisoners.

But Dr. Steven S. Sharfstein, recent past president of the American Psychiatric Association, noted in an interview that the group adopted a policy in May unequivocally stating that its members should not be part of the teams.

The counterpart group for psychologists, the American Psychological Association, has endorsed a different policy. It said last July that its members serving as consultants to interrogations involving national security should be "mindful of factors unique to these roles and contexts that require special ethical consideration."

Stephen Behnke, director of ethics for the organization, said psychologists knew not to participate in activities that harmed detainees. But Dr. Behnke also said the group believed that helping military interrogators made a valuable contribution because it was part of an effort to prevent terrorism.

Former military interrogators at Guantánamo told The New York Times last year that some psychiatrists and psychologists had advised them on how to "break" detainees to make them more cooperative. The former interrogators said they had been counseled on how to use a detainee's fears and longings to increase distress. One example was their taking advantage of a prisoner's fear of the dark, known from his medical records.

Dr. Winkenwerder, the Pentagon official, disputed those assertions Tuesday, saying he did not believe that such counseling had occurred. He said the biscuit teams gave interrogators advice only on how to establish a positive rapport with detainees.

<http://www.cageprisoners.com/articles.php?id=14275>

SOURCE: New York Times

Hunger Strike Against Horror At Guantánamo

Desperate inmates protest conditions at U.S. prison camp

By Nicole Colson

NEARLY 90 detainees at the U.S. prison camp in Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, are protesting conditions and their indefinite detention by going on hunger strike.

This latest hunger strike, which U.S. military officials admitted involved at least 89 detainees as Socialist Worker went to press, was sparked off last month when as many as four prisoners were driven to attempt to commit suicide on May 18. That same day, when a group of about 10 prisoners in another section of the camp reportedly rioted after guards tried to prevent another detainee from hanging himself, the guards used pepper spray, rubber bullets and at least one "sponge grenade" to subdue them.

Navy Commander Robert Durand called the latest hunger strike at Guantánamo an "attention-getting" tactic to step up pressure for the inmates' release. But defense attorneys and human right activists say that the camp's estimated 460 detainees--many of whom have been imprisoned for four years with no end in sight--are under enormous psychological strain and increasingly desperate to put an end to their misery, even if that means suicide.

So far, only 10 Guantánamo prisoners have been charged with any crimes and face trial before military tribunals. The rest live in a legal limbo.

Hunger strikes have been used several times by dozens, and sometimes hundreds, of prisoners to protest their treatment at the hands of the U.S. When these hunger strikes have gained notice in the media, U.S. officials have responded with tactics that amount to little more than torture.

Last fall, for example, when as many as 210 prisoners went on hunger strike, the military began using force feedings to compel prisoners to stop their protests.

Defense lawyers said their clients reported that U.S. troops violently inserted dirty nasogastric tubes up detainees' noses and into their stomachs. "When they vomited up blood, the soldiers mocked and cursed at them, and taunted them with statements like 'Look what your religion has brought you,'" according to notes by defense lawyer Julia Tarver, which were declassified late last year.

The number of hunger-striking prisoners reportedly had recently dropped down to single digits. But now, with the numbers back on the rise, the military admits that at least six detainees are once again being subjected to force feedings--and that number is likely to go up if this latest hunger strike continues.

The most recent revelations about the number of detainees driven to hunger strike come as new allegations surface about the number of children that the U.S. has imprisoned at Guantánamo.

According to a recent report in Britain's Independent, as many as 60 children under the age of 18 may have been detained at the prison camp at various times over the past four years. At least 10 detainees still held at the camp are thought to have been 14 or 15 years old when they were first seized--"including child soldiers who were held in solitary confinement, repeatedly interrogated and allegedly tortured," reported the Independent.

One child, Mohamed el-Gharani, is alleged to have been involved in a 1998 al-Qaeda plot in London--but, according to the London-based human rights group Reprieve, he was just 12 years old at the time and living with his parents in Saudi Arabia. After being arrested in Karachi in October 2001 when he was 14 years old, el-Gharani was shipped to Guantánamo--where he has since spent several years in solitary confinement.

Another child, 15-year-old Canadian-born Omar Khadr, was arrested in 2002, accused of killing a U.S. soldier with a grenade. Khadr also has been kept in solitary confinement and placed at the top of the Bush administration's list of detainees to face prosecution.

Because detainees have been held for so long, all of the children thought to have been held at Guantánamo are now believed either to have reached their 18th birthdays or been released.

Both the United Nations (UN) and Geneva Conventions prohibit holding children in such detention centers, and the UN Committee on Torture recently called for Guantánamo to be shut down--in part because of interrogation techniques at the camp that it says constitute inhumane treatment.

Yet Pentagon officials defend the practice of imprisoning children at the camp. "There is no international standard concerning the age of an individual who engages in combat operations," senior Pentagon spokesperson Lt. Commander Jeffrey Gordon told the Independent. "Age is not a determining factor in detention [of those] engaged in armed conflict against our forces or in support to those fighting against us."

But as Clive Stafford Smith, a defense lawyer for several detainees and a legal director for Reprieve, said, "Even if these kids were involved in fighting--and Omar is the only one who the military pretends was--then there is a UN convention against the use of child soldiers. There is a general recognition in the civilized world that children should be treated differently from adults."

But there's nothing "civilized" about the U.S. treatment of prisoners in its "war on terror."

<http://www.cageprisoners.com/articles.php?id=14273>

SOURCE: Socialist Worker.org

Physicians for Human Rights Denounces New Pentagon Instructions on Medical Support for Interrogation

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Physicians for Human Rights (PHR), a health professional organization that has served as a leading voice against torture and abuse of detainees in US custody, today denounced new Defense Department guidelines on the role of health personnel in interrogations, calling them "an assault on medical ethics, the professional integrity of military health personnel, the Geneva Conventions, and on US military tradition and discipline."

"The DoD directive released today by Assistant Secretary of Health Affairs, William Winkenwerder, Jr., puts doctors and other health professionals in the untenable position of assisting in the infliction of harm," said Leonard Rubenstein, Executive Director of Physicians for Human Rights. "This policy takes the United States further away from the most basic medical ethical and legal standards"

These new guidelines directly involve certain military health personnel, particularly mental health professionals, in the interrogation of detainees, making them active parts of the Behavioral Science Consulting Teams (known as "BSCTs"). "Military medical leadership ought to protect the ethical commitments and honor of our dedicated military health personnel," said Brigadier General Stephen N. Xenakis, MD (USA—RET), an Advisor to Physicians for Human Rights. "Instead, they are subverting the essence of the Hippocratic Oath and compromising the integrity of the health professions as a whole."

"The Pentagon policy also explicitly allows clinical information from medical records to be used in interrogation, in violation of core ethical principles protecting the confidentiality of information provided by patients to their health care providers," said Rubenstein.

Rubenstein noted that the guidelines conflict directly with new policies issued last month by the American Psychiatric Association (APA) and World Medical Association (WMA), which prohibit psychiatrists and physicians, respectively, from directly supporting individual interrogations in any way. The WMA amended part of the Declaration of Tokyo, setting forth medical ethics regarding prisoners and detainees, to provide that "physicians should be particularly careful to ensure the confidentiality of all personal medical information" and that "[t]he physician shall not use nor allow to be used, as far as he or she can, medical knowledge or skills, or health information specific to individuals, to facilitate or otherwise aid any interrogation, legal or illegal, of those individuals." The American Medical Association is a member organization of the WMA.

"The WMA and APA position recognizes that even lawful interrogation is an inherently adversarial and coercive process," Rubenstein said, "and that there can be no ethical role for a health professional in the inevitable, ensuing infliction of stress and harm to a subject's health and dignity. The only way to protect the health professional's essential function as healer is to protect them from the interrogation process altogether, as the WMA and APA have done."

The threat to health professional ethics extends even further, Rubenstein explained. The Pentagon guidelines do not follow universally recognized standards of medical ethics to guide the conduct of the BSCTs or any other health personnel, nor do they require the BSCTs to comply with international humanitarian and human rights law endorsed or ratified by the United States, such as the Geneva Conventions or the Convention Against Torture. Instead, BSCT health professionals are authorized to engage in any interrogation-related activity that complies with "applicable" US law.

"The problem with that standard," Rubenstein warns, "is that the Bush Administration has interpreted US law on psychological torture in a way that violates the Convention Against Torture, as was recently reported by the UN Committee Against Torture. The Administration has further denied the applicability of the Geneva Conventions to many detainees and, according to news reports, has sought to delete the most basic tenets of the Conventions from the sections of the revised Army Field Manual that govern interrogations. What's more, the Administration has sought to undermine the enforcement of the 'McCain Amendment,' passed by Congress last year to reaffirm the absolute ban on cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment by all US personnel. The net result is that health personnel participation in psychological forms of torture are not prohibited by these guidelines because they do not violate the Administration's interpretations of US law."

The Pentagon directive also instructs health professionals to violate ethical standards regarding hunger strikes, Rubenstein added, by instructing them to force-feed detainees who protest against their conditions of confinement by denying nutrition. Earlier this year, PHR and 250 leading doctors from around the world condemned the brutal force feeding methods used by military personnel in a campaign to break the will of hunger strikers at Guantanamo Bay.

The American Medical Association has also clarified that medical ethics generally prohibit force feeding hunger strikers. In a March 10, 2006 statement, the AMA said that the Association "has shared with U.S. military officials its position on hunger strikes or feeding individuals against their will. Specifically, the AMA endorses the World Medical Association's Declaration of Tokyo, which states:

'Where a prisoner refuses nourishment and is considered by the physician as capable of forming an unimpaired and rational judgment concerning the consequences of such a voluntary refusal of nourishment, he or she shall not be fed artificially. The decision as to the capacity of the prisoner to form such a judgment should be confirmed by at least one other independent physician.'"

"The new Pentagon directive flies in the face of these established ethical guidelines, Rubenstein said, "and open the door to painful and abusive force-feeding methods intended to discourage detainees from calling attention to

inhumane conditions of confinement through this form of protest. It is beyond ironic for the Pentagon to justify its unethical force-feeding policy by claiming concern about the health and well-being of detainees."

Physicians for Human Rights (PHR) mobilizes the health professions to advance the health and dignity of all people by protecting human rights. As a founding member of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines, PHR shared the 1997 Nobel Peace Prize.

<http://www.cageprisoners.com/articles.php?id=14271>

SOURCE: PHRusa.org

June 08, 2006

Petition To Free Guantanamo Detainees

By KANWAL TARIQ HAMEED

PEOPLE in Bahrain and the Arab region were urged yesterday to back a petition calling on the US government to shut down Guantanamo Bay.

The Bahrain-based 10,000 voices for Justice Petition, also calls for the release of all detainees or to be brought to trial in line with international standards if there are charges against them.

Launched by Amnesty International (AI) Bahrain, the petition will be sent to the US Congress once 10,000 signatures have been collected.

About 100 people from Bahrain, Palestine, Iraqi Kurdistan, Syria and the UK signed the petition on the first day of its release, activists said yesterday (jun7).

People in Bahrain and the region need to show their support, AI Bahrain's awareness and training co-ordinator Nasser Burdestani told the GDN.

"We would like in fact to have the voices from our region to be heard in the world relating to Guantanamo," he said.

"The action so far has been organised by Western people and organisations, and we are glad to put some efforts into this campaign as a way of having solidarity with the victims of torture.

"We would like to have more participation from people in the Arab world.

"If we can get 80 per cent (of signatories) from the region then it will really be a good achievement for us."

The petition is part of AI Bahrain's campaign against torture leading up to the United Nations (UN) International Day in Support of Victims of Torture on June 26, said Mr Burdestani.

"Guantanamo nowadays is the worst example of torture in the world and that's why we are campaigning against it.

"It represents exactly what human rights organisations have been fighting in the last decades under the umbrella of torture.

"That's why it is so important.

"We have sent a sample letter to partner organisations all over the world working for human rights, justice and issues related to torture, and peace.

"We are asking them to forward this message to all their friends, contacts and colleagues so the message is spread all the world to stop the torture in Guantanamo and free the detainees."

The petition can be signed at www.amnestybahrain.org.

<http://www.cageprisoners.com/articles.php?id=14321>

SOURCE: Gulf Daily News

Leahy Demands Answers From Pentagon About Letters From Guantanamo Detainees

**By Adam Silverman
Free Press Staff Writer**

Lawyers for alleged "enemy combatants" in military custody in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, have accused the Pentagon of systematically withholding letters detainees have written to members of Congress.

Sen. Patrick Leahy, D-Vt., alerted to the situation by a Vermont lawyer representing a detainee, demanded answers this week in a letter to Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld. Leahy's was the first inquiry into the allegations, a Pentagon spokesman said Wednesday night.

"I am not aware that the Department of Defense has a written or unwritten policy banning all such communications," wrote Leahy, the senior Democrat on the Judiciary Committee, "nor am I aware of any legal authority that would permit the Department of Defense to impose a total ban of that sort."

At the bottom of the typed, one-page letter, Leahy scrawled next to his signature, "Is this really happening!"

Pentagon spokesman Cmdr. J.D. Gordon said that Leahy's letter, dated Monday, had not been received Wednesday. A call from The Burlington Free Press, Gordon said, was the first Pentagon and Guantanamo officials had heard of a potential problem with letters to Congress from detainees.

"This allegation is new," he said. "Lawyers for detainees continually make allegations that often turn out to be unsubstantiated."

Guantanamo detainees, who number about 460, sent and received 10,000 pieces of mail during a six-month period in 2005, Gordon said, although he did not know whether any of that correspondence involved legislators.

"The detainees are in very close contact with their families if they choose to be, and many of them have lawyers," Gordon said. "To say they're being held incommunicado is completely false."

Leahy and his staff remained concerned Wednesday about what they called a continuing pattern by the administration of President Bush to obfuscate and keep silent on matters important to the public.

"If true, this would be yet another unilateral action by the Bush-Cheney administration to withhold information from Congress, without consultation with Congress," Leahy spokesman David Carle said. "If this is a new unwritten policy that is part of that pattern, Congress and the American people deserve to know what the policy is, and what their justification for it is."

David Sleight of St. Johnsbury, one of three Vermont lawyers representing Guantanamo detainees in cases challenging the legality of their incarceration, said he informed Leahy's office about the mail problems. Sleight said he learned through conversations with an attorney for another detainee that a letter the suspect sent 98 members of Congress never was delivered.

"It's exasperating," Sleight said. "I just don't understand any reason for it. These are the senators who are charged with overseeing the executive branch, and I think they're entitled to information from any source."

Gordon said Pentagon staffers will "look into the matter" and prepare a response when they can. Leahy asked for a reply within a week.

Contact Adam Silverman at 660-1854 or asilverm@bfp.burlingtonfreepress.com LEAHY'S LETTER To see Sen. Patrick Leahy's letter to Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, go to <http://www.burlingtonfreepress.com/assets/pdf/BT3051867.PDF>.

Hicks 'Must Get Fair Trial'

THE president of the Baptist Union of Australia has written to Prime Minister John Howard urging him to ensure Guantanamo Bay detainee David Hicks receives a fair trial.

Hicks has been incarcerated at the American military prison in Cuba for four years, accused of training with the Taliban in Afghanistan.

Baptist Union of Australia president Ross Clifford said he had written to Mr Howard endorsing a letter sent to the prime minister last week by the president of the Australian section of the International Commission of Jurists, John Dowd QC.

Dr Clifford said the Federal Government must respect the principles of the rule of law and uphold the freedom enshrined in international law treaties when it came to Hicks' case.

"Whether or not David Hicks is guilty of the crimes he is accused of committing, he should have his day in court," Dr Clifford said in a statement.

The letter from Mr Dowd contained 76 signatories, including four former Supreme and Federal Court judges.

Tipton Trio Call For Camp Closure

Three former Guantanamo Bay detainees from the West Midlands say the best compensation they could receive would be the closure of the camp.

Shafiq Rasul, Asif Iqbal and Rhuhel Ahmed are bringing a \$10m (£5.3m) lawsuit against the US government for violating their religious beliefs.

The Tipton trio say they were forced to shave off their beards and were not allowed to pray in the camp in Cuba.

They told BBC News their religious beliefs and practices were abused.

Mr Rasul said: "Initially, they (the guards) did not allow us to pray. They abused the Koran.

"They were shaving our beards as punishment even when told them our beards are part of our religion."

Physical abuse

The three Black Country men also made a claim of physical abuse, but these were thrown out by the US court system.

They said they would be punished for petty things, such as talking to the person in the next door cell, and would never know when it was going to happen.

"I was dragged out of my cell, thrown on the floor and there would be five guards sitting on me and another guy kicking me," Mr Rasul said.

The men now live their lives in seclusion, despite making attempts at training and getting jobs.

They also said they find it difficult to put the affair behind them.

"There are 500 people still there," Mr Iqbal said.

"They are part of me because it was my life for two and a half years with them. They are like part of my family.

"Until it is closed down there will not be an end to this story."

The four men were taken to Guantanamo from Afghanistan after the US invaded the country.

They stayed for nearly three years before being released without charge in 2004.

<http://www.cageprisoners.com/articles.php?id=14298>

SOURCE: BBC News

Gitmo Detainee Says Clash Involved Qurans

By **BEN FOX**

Associated Press Writer

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico (AP) - A Guantanamo Bay detainee who participated in a clash with U.S. military guards last month said it was sparked when guards tried to search prisoners' Qurans, contradicting the military's account of the melee, his defense attorney said Wednesday.

The detainee also denied the contention by military officials that prisoners in the May 18 clash in Guantanamo Bay lured guards into a cell by staging a suicide attempt, defense attorney Kristin Wilhelm told The Associated Press.

The military, in its account soon after the clash occurred at the prison in southeast Cuba, said 10 prisoners used makeshift weapons to battle 10 guards. It was one of the most violent incidents at Guantanamo Bay, where the U.S. holds about 460 men on suspicion of links to al-Qaida and the Taliban.

Wilhelm said the detainee, a Yemeni whom she could not further identify because of Pentagon rules, told her the guards demanded that prisoners turn over their Qurans so they could be searched for hoarded medicine, which the military said had been used in two suicide attempts earlier in the day elsewhere at the prison camp.

One detainee offered to collect the Qurans and search them in front of the guards, but the military guards refused and entered the cell block, setting off the fight, she said. She said the prisoners used only a floor lamp against the guards and that it quickly ended when one detainee succumbed to pepper spray used by military police.

"There was no mention of a suicide attempt and there was no mention of luring a guard into the cell block," the attorney said of her conversations with her detainee client.

Wilhelm and another lawyer from her firm, John Chandler, met with the detainee on May 26. Their notes from the meeting were declassified by the military on Wednesday. Their firm represents five prisoners from Yemen.

Wilhelm and Chandler were among the first defense lawyers to visit Guantanamo after the May 18 clash and provided the first detainee account of the incident.

Navy Cmdr. Robert Durand, a base spokesman, said he would respond "soon" to the detainee's allegations. Durand earlier said that officials from the military's Joint-Detention Task Force and an interagency task force were conducting an internal review of the incident.

Former detainees at Guantanamo have alleged in the past that military personnel at Guantanamo have desecrated the Quran by stepping on the book and throwing it into a toilet. U.S. military officials said no Guantanamo Bay guard had tossed a detainee's Quran into a toilet, but acknowledged there were instances in which Qurans were abused by guards, intentionally or accidentally. U.S. officials have said that all troops at the prison are instructed to handle the Quran with respect.

<http://www.cageprisoners.com/articles.php?id=14291>

SOURCE: The Guardian

June 09, 2006

Law Council Calls For Hicks Action

From: AAP

AUSTRALIA'S peak legal body has called on the Blair government to act swiftly to process terrorist suspect David Hicks' British citizenship.

The British Court of Appeal last month ruled the 31-year-old from Adelaide was entitled to British citizenship because his mother is from the United Kingdom.

Hicks, who has been held in Guantanamo Bay in Cuba for more than four years, hopes Britain will lobby for his release from the US detention camp, as it did for nine UK detainees.

Australian Law Council president John North today said he had met UK Attorney-General Lord Goldsmith in London to ask him to hasten Hicks' return to Australia.

"Given Mr Hicks has spent four-and-a-half years in detention, it's only fair that authorities move as quickly as possible to process his case," Mr North said.

If released, Hicks hopes to return to his family in Australia.

"We know from talking to Mr Hicks' lawyers that, more than anything else, he wants to be with his family once he is released," Mr North said.

"Then, we hope, all it would take is for Britain to put Mr Hicks on a plane to Australia after his release."

Mr Hicks was captured in Afghanistan in December 2001, allegedly fighting with the ousted Taliban regime, and is now awaiting trial by a US military commission.

<http://www.cageprisoners.com/articles.php?id=14339>

SOURCE: News.com.au

Govt Denies Hicks Treated Like 'Lab Rat'

The federal government says it has no evidence to support new claims Guantanamo Bay detainee David Hicks has been tortured and treated like a "lab rat".

Attorney-General Philip Ruddock on Friday said he had no knowledge of evidence backing the claim, made in the latest issue of the recently launched Australian publication, The Monthly Magazine.

Mr Ruddock said it was very difficult to deal with the matters raised "in generalised terms" by the article.

"The idea that somebody is detained seems to me to be the very basis of the complaints," he told ABC radio.

"Inevitably if you are detained you are isolated from others and if you were held in a jail in Australia you are detained, you are isolated from your family."

The article alleged Hicks had suffered eight months of total isolation in a windowless cell at the US naval base in Cuba where he has been held for four and a half years.

The former Adelaide chicken processor, who was captured fighting with the Taliban in Afghanistan in late 2001, is facing trial by a US military commission on charges of conspiracy to commit war crimes, attempted murder and aiding the enemy.

The magazine said Hicks was sold by a Northern Alliance warlord to US forces for \$1,000 in mid-December 2001.

Once in US custody he is then said to have been subject to rendition, a process by which terror suspects are sent overseas for interrogation in countries which are not subject to rules banning torture.

Hicks' medical records were also being used against him inside Guantanamo, the article claimed.

Prime Minister John Howard has also denied the claims, particularly suggestions Hicks had been subjected to torture since he was handed over to the US in 2001.

"That is not a view that is shared by the American administration and I don't accept uncritically everything that is said about the Americans by Mr Hicks' lawyers," he said.

Hicks' father, Terry Hicks, alleged the rendition referred to in the article related to two 10-hour beatings his son endured at the start of his detention by the United States.

Mr Hicks also said he believed the US paid \$5,000 to the Northern Alliance for Hicks. "Westerners were worth more than others," he said.

The Law Council of Australia has meantime called on the UK government to act swiftly to process Hicks' British citizenship.

The British Court of Appeal last month ruled Hicks was entitled to British citizenship because his mother is British.

Hicks hopes citizenship will mean British authorities will lobby for his release from Guantanamo Bay, as it has done for its own citizens.

<http://www.cageprisoners.com/articles.php?id=14335>

SOURCE: The Age

The Silent World of Sami

Clive Stafford Smith

He is no terrorist. They did not ask him about the charges. They wanted only to turn him into an informer, writes Clive Stafford Smith

I write this from Guantanamo Bay. Today, I saw my client Sami al-Hajj, a cameraman for al-Jazeera who has been locked up here for more than four years. Under the rules, which I have no choice but to obey, I cannot tell you a word of what he said. Everything is censored. My notes are sent by snail mail to Washington. A month later, I get back those parts that the government allows.

If, hypothetically, my client tells me about an abuse committed by a member of the US forces - some kind of torture - there is little chance that the perpetrator will face charges, but I face 40 years in prison if I reveal the crime. The military may dissemble for weeks, and I am forbidden to tell the truth.

Last week, the military reported that the prisoners went on a rampage in a premeditated attack against the soldiers. They say that various scheming terrorists attempted suicide by swallowing their hoarded medicines, to lure the guards into the cells. The disturbance had to be quelled with tear gas and rubber bullets. You are the judge. You hear one side of the story, carefully tooled by military public relations. Do you buy it?

War on free speech

Naturally, Sami was an eyewitness to the truth. Under the normal course of events, as a journalist, he could describe his version. But because the military makes up the rules, he is gagged. Sami and I talked for several hours today, and in a free society I could tell you what he said. But I don't have the right to free speech either.

In 1789, the US cobbled together a document that has defined and preserved rights more effectively than anything Europe achieved in the two centuries that followed. The First Amendment, enshrining freedom of speech and religion, was perhaps the most significant jewel in the Bill of Rights.

It is particularly tragic that the Bush administration has declared a war on free speech when it comes to Sami al-Hajj and al-Jazeera. Many of the station's journalists previously worked for the BBC, but were made redundant in 1996 when Saudi Arabia ended the BBC's Arabic-language TV service. Prior to 11 September 2001, the US lauded al-Jazeera as the only beacon of free speech in the Middle East.

It has been attacked from all sides, from Kuwait complaining about pro-Iraq bias, to Saddam Hussein condemning a report on his lavish birthday celebrations. Six years on, Bahrain has banned al-Jazeera for "suspicious" links with Israel, and the station's offices have been shut in Algeria, Jordan, Iran, Kuwait, Iraq, Palestine and Sudan.

President Bush has allied himself with these voices. His most celebrated excess came in his chat with Tony Blair where he mooted the idea of bombing the station's headquarters. Bush's spin-doctors said he was only joking. Four times the US authorities have had the al-Jazeera offices searched, or the website hacked, because of its criticism of the Iraq war. Three al-Jazeera journalists have been arrested by US forces. Worst of all, al-Jazeera's offices in Afghanistan and Iraq have both been bombed.

CIA target

Meanwhile, Sami al-Hajj sits in Guantanamo. He is no terrorist, as illustrated by his first interrogation (first of many): not one question was asked about the allegations. His interrogators wanted only to turn him into an informant against al-Jazeera. He learned that his calls to his wife while he was posted in Afghanistan had been monitored by the CIA. It was strange to think, when I went to Qatar to give a talk to his colleagues, that there were US informants in the audience.

Bizarrely, it was Osama Bin Laden who came to Sami's defence. In a recent tape, he seemed put out that some Guantanamo inmates "oppose al-Qaeda's methodology of calling for war with America". He singled out "those . . . in the media, like Sami al-Hajj".

Bush's vitriol has frightened many journalists. Perhaps this explains why none has gone out to bat for Sami. It would be a fine moment if someone in the western press plucked up the courage to defend him now.

Clive Stafford Smith is the legal director of Reprieve, a UK charity fighting for the lives of people facing the death penalty and other human-rights abuses. He represents 36 of the prisoners in Guantanamo. He will be writing this column monthly. [http://www.reprieve.org.uk or contact Reprieve at PO Box 52742, London EC4P 4WS. Tel: 020 7353 4640]

<http://www.cageprisoners.com/articles.php?id=14316>

SOURCE: The New Statesman

June 10, 2006

Chinese Delegation in Albania, Talk of Gitmo 5 Likely

TIRANA, Albania-A delegation of Chinese parliamentarians will visit Albania Friday, the first official visit since five Chinese Muslims sought asylum here after being released from the U.S. prison at Guantanamo Bay.

The delegation, invited by the Albanian Parliament Speaker Jozefina Topalli, will also meet Saturday with President Alfred Moisiu and Prime Minister Sali Berisha, the parliament said.

Though officially the case of the ethnic Uighurs is not on the agenda of the trip, Albanian parliament officials did not deny that would be one of the main topics.

China has demanded the return of the five, detained during the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan following the Sept. 11 attacks, and criticized the U.S. decision to allow them to seek asylum in Albania, where they went on May 5.

U.S. authorities allowed the men to go to Albania after concluding they posed no terrorist threat to the United States but might face persecution if they returned to China.

China has said the five, members of the Uighur ethnic minority, are suspected of links to the East Turkestan Islamic Movement, a group accused by Beijing of waging a violent separatist campaign in China's northwestern Muslim region of Xinjiang and of being close to Osama bin Laden's al-Qaida terror network.

Albania has said the issue ought not to affect China's ties with the tiny Balkan country, adding officials were assured by the U.S. authorities that the five Uighurs had no terrorist connections. It has urged the Chinese to present evidence to prove the contrary.

The five are being sheltered at a refugee center in the suburbs of Tirana awaiting authorities' decision on their future. Journalists are not allowed to meet with them.

After the break with the former Soviet Union in 1961, Albania became a close ally with China. Beijing supported Tirana financially until 1978, when the two countries broke ties after political disputes.

China is post-communist Albania's fourth-biggest trading partner. It exported some US\$150 million (euro118 million) worth of goods to the Balkan country in 2005.

<http://www.cageprisoners.com/articles.php?id=14367>

SOURCE: Serbianna.com

Senators Queries Pentagon on Letters From Detainees

BY CAROL ROSENBERG
Knight Ridder Newspapers

MIAMI - Democrat Sen. Patrick Leahy is asking the Pentagon to explain why the military is withholding letters a Guantanamo detainee wrote U.S. lawmakers from behind the razor wire at Camp Delta.

``Is this really happening?" the Vermont senator and senior Democrat on the Senate Judiciary Committee scrawled across the bottom of a letter this week to Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld.

He asked for an answer by Monday.

At issue are 98 handwritten letters that Pakistani captive Saifullah Paracha, 58, wrote between February and May to most of the U.S. senators and Eleanor Holmes Norton, the District of Columbia's delegate to Congress.

``He says that he and all the others demand justice," Paracha's attorney Gaillard Hunt told The Miami Herald in a telephone interview Friday, explaining that the man accused of terrorist ties sent him the letters a month ago for delivery.

Under federal Guantanamo security procedures, all attorneys handling captives' habeas corpus petitions must initially keep their clients' case material at a federal security locker near Washington, D.C.

That includes letters, notes from client interviews and other information they receive from Guantanamo. The items are initially classified as secret and must be declassified for public release.

But Hunt said, the military is refusing to clear the letters to Congress.

At the Pentagon Friday, Navy Cmdr. J.D. Gordon said Paracha violated prison camp regulations by trying to send his letters through his lawyer.

Guantanamo captives sent and received 10,000 pieces of mail in the past six months, Gordon said. But, he added, ``They have to use the appropriate procedure in order to have their mail sent. It's clearly inappropriate to give your lawyer your letter to mail."

The military censors all detainee mail - both coming and going, including Red Cross messages - and deletes any security details or suspected secret messages.

All of Paracha's messages are virtually identical, said Hunt, characterizing them as ``pleas for some activity. He talks about how tedious it is being down there with no activity and no employment."

Paracha, a U.S. green card holder, was a New York-based shipper and broker between Pakistan and the United States from 1970 until the mid `80s. He says that masked men grabbed him in Thailand, soon after he left Bangkok Airport in July 2003, and took him to the U.S. interrogation center at Bagram, Afghanistan.

He was transferred to Guantanamo in September 2004, aboard the last flight carrying prisoners to the island prison - and is considered a possible candidate for trial by U.S. military tribunal.

The U.S. alleges Paracha was an associate of Osama bin Laden and other al-Qaida leaders and was part of a plot to smuggle explosives into the United States. Hunt says Paracha admits to meeting bin Laden at a public audience, long before the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks, but in his capacity as a businessman, not to plot terror.

The United States is holding about 465 enemy combatants at the remote Navy base in southeast Cuba, 10 of whom have been charged as alleged war criminals before President Bush's Military Commissions.

Pretrial hearings resume Monday at Guantanamo, ahead of a Supreme Court ruling later this month on whether the formula the Pentagon adopted to prosecute war crimes is constitutional.

In the meantime, President Bush said Friday that the U.S. was engaged in negotiations to repatriate some Guantanamo captives.

``We'd like it to be empty," Bush told reporters Friday at Camp David, with Danish Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen at this side.

``But there are some that, if put out on the streets, would create grave harm to American citizens and other citizens of the world. And, therefore, I believe they ought to be tried ..." he said. ``We're waiting on our Supreme Court to act."

<http://www.cageprisoners.com/articles.php?id=14362>

SOURCE: Centre Daily

US Denies Quran Abuse Claims

Washington - The US military on Thursday flatly denied accusations by detainees at the "war on terror" prison camp in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, that US soldiers have desecrated copies of the Koran.

Officials at the US naval base in Guantanamo announced earlier that prisoners and guards clashed on May 18 in an incident they described as "staged".

"Joint Task Force Guantanamo stands by our original report: our guard force responded to a staged suicide attempt and was ambushed by detainees in a well-planned operation," the military said in a statement.

Ambush plan

Several of the inmates involved in the incident "have informed us that part of the ambush plan was to claim abuse of the Holy Koran to rally detainees to fight and as a cover story after the incident ended," the statement said.

"Seeing these false allegations come to light confirms what detainees told us: some detainees would falsely claim abuse of the Koran to elicit worldwide media attention with hopes of inciting violence in the Islamic world.

"Calling the ambush a spontaneous act by detainees is simply not true. Calling this a spontaneous act by detainees in defence of the Koran is also not true."

According to the statement, "the Koran is shown tremendous respect at Guantanamo. Our guard force does not touch or handle the detainees' Korans, period".

Prison's 'most violent outbreak'

Guards fired rubber bullets and six prisoners suffered minor injuries in what Rear Admiral Harry Harris, commander of Joint Task Force Guantanamo, on May 19 called "the most violent outbreak" at the prison since it was opened in January 2002.

Detainees smothered the floor with human excrement and soapy water to make it slippery before guards rushed in believing they were saving a man from hanging himself, said Harris.

Minimum force

The guards were then attacked with "broken light fixtures, fan blades" and other improvised weapons, Harris told a telephone press conference from Guantanamo.

Harris insisted however that "minimum force was used to quell the disturbance".

Only 10 inmates have been formally charged as terror suspects among the some 460 held there as "enemy combatants" since the camp opened after the attacks of September 11, 2001.

<http://www.cageprisoners.com/articles.php?id=14356>

SOURCE: News24.com

US Working To Close Guantanamo, Bush Says

Washington - US President George W Bush said Friday that his administration would like to see Guantanamo close, but the most dangerous detainees still must be prosecuted.

Bush, during a press conference at Camp David with Danish Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen, said the United States was working with other countries to see if they can take some of the detainees

Bush said Rasmussen, a close US ally who has contributed troops to Iraq and Afghanistan, raised his concerns about the controversial Guantanamo prison camp in Cuba, where 500 detainees are being held in the war on terrorism.

'I assured him that we would like to end the Guantanamo,' he said. 'We'd like it to be empty.'

Bush said his administration is waiting for a Supreme Court decision on whether military tribunals are justified for prosecuting the roughly dozen detainees who have been charged.

'There are some that if put out on the streets could create grave harm to American citizens and other citizens of the world,' he said.

The meeting at Camp David comes two days after US forces killed Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, al-Qaeda's top operative in Iraq who has directed some of the bloodiest attacks against civilians and coalition forces.

Al-Zarqawi was killed in an airstrike near the city of Baquba, northwest of Baghdad.

Bush said he was 'thrilled' that al-Zarqawi was dead, but said he wanted the American public to understand that challenges remain in combating the insurgency and building up Iraqi security forces.

'I don't want the American people to think that a war is won with the death of one person ... we have still more work to do,' he said.

Al-Zarqawi's death took place amid an ongoing investigation into allegations that US Marines murdered 24 Iraqi civilians in Haditha, which has added to the criticism of US forces that emerged after the Abu Ghraib prison scandal.

Rasmussen said it is essential that any soldiers deemed involved in the killing be held responsible.

'When unacceptable events happen in Abu Ghraib, and when allegations are made about horrific events in Haditha, it is not only a tragedy for the victims,' Rasmussen said. 'It is damaging to our own efforts and an offence to our very own values.'

'The president has assured me that all allegations will be investigated, and if there has been wrongdoing, then the responsible will be prosecuted,' he said.

Denmark has 530 troops in Iraq and 360 soldiers in Afghanistan. The meeting at Camp David, a presidential retreat which lies outside Washington, shows how closely Bush regards US-Danish relations. Bush rarely meets with foreign leaders at Camp David.

<http://www.cageprisoners.com/articles.php?id=14354>

SOURCE: DPA via MonstersandCritics

Amnesty International Responds to Detainee Deaths in Guantanamo Bay

To: National Desk

Contact: Amnesty International USA Press Office, 202-544-0200 ext. 302

WASHINGTON, June 10 /U.S. Newswire/ -- Jumana Musa, Amnesty International USA's advocacy director for Domestic Human Rights and International Justice, made the following statement in response to the deaths of three detainees held in U.S. detention at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba:

"These apparent suicides, while regrettable, are the tragic results of years of arbitrary and indefinite detention, and the latest chapter in the human rights travesty that has emerged from years of the administration's attempts to circumvent the rule of law. Amnesty International, the International Committee of the Red Cross, detainees' attorneys and others have long expressed grave concern over the psychological deterioration that results from prolonged detention without charge, trial, or any indication that their situation will be resolved.

"Amnesty International called for the closure of Guantanamo over a year ago, and the UN, the EU, and several U.S. allies have echoed that call. While the United States has an obligation to protect its citizens and those living within its borders from attacks by armed groups, that obligation does not relieve it from its absolute responsibility to comply with human rights and the rule of law. By rounding up men from all over the world and confining them in an isolated penal colony without charge or trial, the United States has violated several U.S. and international laws and treaties.

"Simple statements by the administration that these men are 'enemy combatants,' 'terrorists,' or 'very bad people' does not justify the complete lack of due process rights. Amnesty International calls on President Bush to close the detention facilities in Guantanamo, and either charge detainees with a recognizable criminal offense and give them a fair trial, or release them unconditionally. The President recently stated that he would like to 'end the Guantanamo.' He does not have to wait for the Supreme Court or any other governmental body to make it happen. Guantanamo and all of the various processes that came with it were a creation of the President and the executive branch, and the administration can choose to end this ill-advised policy.

"The Administration should stop trying to minimize the desperate actions of detainees with language that does not reflect the seriousness of the matter at hand. Colorful euphemisms such as 'manipulative self injurious behavior' and 'hanging gestures,' both used by the administration to refer to suicide attempts in the past, only belittle the gravity of the situation that detainees are facing and the extreme measures they are willing to take to escape the hopelessness with which they view their situation.

"Today's reported suicides of detainees in Guantanamo should serve as a wake up call to President Bush and his administration that Guantanamo is not just a public relations problem, but instead an indictment on its deteriorating human rights record."

<http://www.cageprisoners.com/articles.php?id=14376>

SOURCE: USnewswire.com

June 11, 2006

Third Batch of Saudis To Be Freed From Guantanamo

By Mariam Al Hakeem, Correspondent

Riyadh: The third batch of Saudi detainees at the United States military prison at Guantanamo Bay will be released shortly.

"Some 15 detainees will most probably be released within one week," the local Saudi press reported quoting reliable sources.

Kateb Al Shammari, the Saudi lawyer representing Saudi detainees in Guantanamo, told Gulf News that the release of 15 Saudi detainees last month was made possible by the concerted efforts of the Saudi government.

The second batch returned home from Guantanamo, leaving another 105 Saudis behind the bars. "The release of the remaining detainees can also be possible through the efforts of the government as this is a political issue and there are no legal cases pending against them," he said, referring to their detention without the framing of any charges and the fact that they have not been taken to any civil court for trial.

The US Department of Defence released a list of Guantanamo detainees for the first time on April 20. There are 490 people still being held among a total of 558 detainees, of whom 68 were either released or transferred to the custody of other governments to be put on trial on terror charges.

Power of attorney

The Guantanamo detainees belong to about 40 nationalities, of whom 130 Saudis comprise the largest contingent, followed by 125 Afghans and more than 100 Yemenis.

Kateb Al Shammari said that about 85 per cent of Guantanamo detainees, who do not want to be represented by American lawyers, asked their families to cancel the power of attorney given earlier to American lawyers. Al Shammari, who visited the detainees at the Saudi prison in Hair near Riyadh following their return, commended the special treatment the returnees are receiving in the prison.

He thanked the Ministry of Interior for offering free airline tickets, transportation and accommodation for family members of returnees residing outside Riyadh and for granting week-long visiting rights.

<http://www.cageprisoners.com/articles.php?id=14377>

SOURCE: Gulf News

Inmate Lawyers Demand Suicide Probe

LAWYERS representing inmates held at the US "war on terror" prison in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba called on the government overnight for immediate hearings and trials following the suicide of three prisoners.

There are some 460 prisoners are being held at the military-run prison at Guantanamo Bay, located on a US naval base on the southeastern tip of Cuba.

Only 10 have been formally charged as terror suspects since the camp opened in February 2002. No detainee has gone on trial.

The Centre for Constitutional Rights, a New York-based advocacy group, represents some 200 Guantanamo inmates and helps private attorneys representing other inmates.

Centre legal director William Goodman was saddened but not surprised to hear about the suicides.

"These deaths reflect the desperation for a basic human need -- a need for justice, a need to have someone hear what they have to say," he said.

All the inmates see "is blind, indefinite detention without any possibility of justice in the future," he said.

Gita Gutierrez, a Centre attorney who also handles Guantanamo cases, repeated calls that her group has been making since the site opened: that the men be released or be given a fair trial.

"The United States is morally responsible for detaining these men without a fair hearing for such an extensive period of time," she said.

Josh Colangelo-Bryan, who represents several Guantanamo inmates, witnessed one of his clients try to commit suicide during a visit on October 15.

"This is something that I have feared hearing about since that day in October," he said.

The inmates have been held "without a trial, without fair hearing, without charges, and in the majority of cases without even being accused of committing any hostile act against the US and their allies.

"They've been told that while they're held at Guantanamo they have absolutely no rights as human beings.

"In the words of one of my clients, 'I would simply rather die than live her without rights.'"

Mr Colangelo-Bryan said he feared more suicides in the future.

Officials said last month that there had been 41 suicide attempts by 25 prisoners.

<http://www.cageprisoners.com/articles.php?id=14375>

SOURCE: The Australian

Saudi Authorities To Receive 20 Guantanamo Bay Detainees

Riyadh - Saudi authorities are to receive between 15 and 20 Saudi nationals held at the US-run detention camp at Guantanamo Bay in Cuba, a top Saudi security official said.

'Contact between Saudi Arabia and the US concerning this group (of detainees) is underway to determine the time of their return,' the official was quoted on Saturday by the Saudi daily Okaz as saying.

On May 18, the kingdom received 15 Saudi detainees, the fourth such group to be released from the prison that is believed to hold until present 104 inmates from different national backgrounds.

The Saudi authorities allowed the released detainees to meet their relatives at al-Ha'er prison south of Riyadh.

The kingdom's top religious cleric, the Mofti Sheikh Abdel Aziz Ben Abdullah Al al-Sheikh, called on the returned Saudis to 'thank God for his bounty and for their return to their country,' stressing the role of the Saudi government in protecting them and bringing them back.

'They have to vow piety to God and thank him for his bounty, and this (case) is an example to warn others not to follow misleading calls,' al-Sheikh told the newspaper.

<http://www.cageprisoners.com/articles.php?id=14374>

SOURCE: DPA via Monstersandcritics.com

Former Guantanamo Detainee Available for Comment on Guantanamo

To: National and Assignment Desks

Contact: Jessica Love, 202-321-8295 (cell)

News Advisory:

Shafiq Rasul, a British citizen who was held at Guantanamo Bay for two years before being released without charge, is available for comment on the tragic suicides committed today at the U.S. military prison in Guantanamo Bay.

Captured by the Northern Alliance while in Afghanistan to conduct humanitarian work with close friends, Rasul was taken to Guantanamo Bay on Jan. 13, 2002. After enduring two years of torture and accusations of actions that he never committed, Rasul was released on March 5, 2004. He was taken back to England and interrogated once more in London by the Anti-Terrorist squad, then released the next day without charge.

Rasul is available for comment from his home in England by telephone or via satellite from London. To schedule an interview, please contact Jessica Love at 202-321-8295 (cell).

<http://www.cageprisoners.com/articles.php?id=14373>

SOURCE: USNewswire.com

US Alleges Hanging, More Details on Deaths in Guantanamo Suicides

June 10 (Bloomberg) -- Three detainees hanged themselves in their cells at the U.S. military prison at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, using their clothing and bedsheets, the U.S. military said.

Two Saudis and a Yemeni were found not breathing or responsive in their cells, and attempts to resuscitate them weren't successful, said General John Craddock, commander of U.S. Southern Command, in a conference call. Their names aren't being released, the military said.

"These were the first three detainee deaths at Guantanamo, despite numerous attempts by inmates to commit suicide," Craddock said.

The U.S. State Department said it has notified the governments of Saudi Arabia and Yemen.

The U.S. Naval Criminal Investigative Service has begun an investigation to determine the cause of death for the three detainees who were being held at Camp 1 at Guantanamo and autopsies will be performed, the military said.

The men, who were found just after midnight, had been in the camp for about four years, and were classified as enemy combatants captured on the battlefield, said Rear Admiral Harry Harris, commander of the joint task force at Guantanamo.

Suicide Notes

One of the men was a mid- to high-level operative with al-Qaeda, while the others were involved with terrorists groups in Afghanistan and the Middle East, he said.

"We have men here in Guantanamo who are committed jihadists who support al-Qaeda and the Taliban," Harris said. "This was not an act of desperation but an act of asymmetric warfare."

The men left suicide notes written in Arabic, Harris said. The contents of the notes weren't released.

All three had participated in hunger strikes, with the Yemeni refusing to eat starting late last year and ending last month, Harris said. The men were involuntarily fed during those strikes, he said.

Guantanamo has been controversial since it opened in January 2002 to hold those described by Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld as the "worst of the worst."

Called a "gulag of our times" by the human-rights organization Amnesty International, the camp has been criticized for holding detainees under inhumane conditions outside the protections of U.S. law and the Geneva Conventions governing the treatment of prisoners of war.

War-Crimes Trials

The war-crimes trials the military plans to hold for some detainees may be halted by the U.S. Supreme Court, while the release of other prisoners is causing concern that they may be tortured by their governments or resume terrorist activities.

President George W. Bush wants to close the prison although a \$30 million construction project to upgrade the facility is almost complete.

More than 300 detainees, 10 of whom have been charged with war crimes, are being held at the 45-square-mile (116 kilometer) naval base the U.S. has leased from Cuba since 1903. More than 250 have been released to their countries of origin, and 140 others may be in coming months.

<http://www.cageprisoners.com/articles.php?id=14372>

SOURCE: Bloomberg.com

Three Guantanamo Detainees Die, US Army

MIAMI (Reuters) - Three foreign prisoners being held at the U.S. navy base at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, died on Saturday in apparent suicides, the U.S. military said.

"Two Saudis and one Yemeni, each located in Camp 1, were found unresponsive and not breathing in their cells by guards," U.S. Southern Command said in a statement.

The military said attempts to resuscitate the detainees failed and they were pronounced dead by a physician at Guantanamo, which holds just under 500 foreigners captured mainly in the U.S. war against the Taliban in Afghanistan.

The Pentagon scheduled a briefing for later Saturday.

Bush, spending the weekend at Camp David, was notified of the incident. The State Department was consulting with the governments of the home countries of the three prisoners, whose names were not being released.

The military said in its statement that "all lifesaving measures had been exhausted" in the attempt to revive the detainees. The remains were being treated "with the utmost respect," an issue important to Muslims. A cultural adviser was assisting the military.

Though the military termed the deaths suicides, the Naval Criminal Investigative Service was investigating to establish the official cause and manner of death.

A U.N. panel said May 19 that holding detainees indefinitely at Guantanamo violated the world's ban on torture. The panel said the United States should close the detention center.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel, Danish Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen and British Attorney General Lord Goldsmith are among those who also recently have urged the United States to close the prison.

On Friday, after the prison came up during a meeting with Fogh Rasmussen at Camp David, Bush said his goal is to do just that.

"We would like to end the Guantanamo — we'd like it to be empty," Bush said. But he added: "There are some that, if put out on the streets, would create grave harm to American citizens and other citizens of the world. And, therefore, I believe they ought to be tried in courts here in the United States."

Bush said his administration was waiting for the Supreme Court to rule whether he overstepped his authority in ordering the detainees to be tried by U.S. military tribunals. "We're waiting on our Supreme Court to act," he said.

Moazzam Begg, 37, a British Muslim who spent three years in U.S. detention, including two years at Guantanamo before being released in 2005, told The Associated Press, "We all expected something like this but were not prepared. It's just awful. I hope the Bush administration will finally see this is wrong."

There have been increasing displays of defiance from Guantanamo Bay prisoners, who have been held for up to 4 1/2 years with many claiming their innocence.

Until now, Guantanamo officials have said there have been 41 suicide attempts by 25 detainees and no deaths since the U.S. began taking prisoners to the base in January 2002. Defense lawyers contend the number of suicide attempts is higher.

On May 18, in one of the prison's most violent incidents, a detainee staged a suicide attempt to lure guards into a cellblock where they were attacked by prisoners armed with makeshift weapons, the military said. Earlier that day, two detainees overdosed on antidepressants they collected from other detainees and hoarded in their cells. The men have since recovered.

There also has been a hunger strike among detainees since August. The number of inmates refusing food dropped to 18 by last weekend from a high of 131. The military has at times used aggressive force-feeding methods, including a restraint chair. Force-feeding is performed through tubes inserted into the nose.

Physicians for Human Rights has called on the United States to halt the "brutal and inhumane force-feeding tactics." U.S. officials have said the measures are "safe and humane" and have been used in American civilian prisons.

Associated Press writer Paisley Dodds in London contributed to this report.

<http://www.cageprisoners.com/articles.php?id=14371>

SOURCE: Reuters and Associated Press

Cageprisoners Calls for the Immediate Release of Guantanamo Deceased

CAGE PRISONERS

PRESS RELEASE: Sunday 11th June 2006

URGENT

Cageprisoners Calls for the Immediate Release of Guantanamo Deceased

Three detainees held in illegal and inhumane conditions at Guantanamo Bay, have died under mysterious circumstances. The U.S government has been quick to label their deaths as suicide.

Their deaths are symbolic of the extreme conditions under which the detainees have now been held for nearly five years without charge or trial. Harrowing evidence has revealed time after time that detainees are subjected to both physical and psychological torture at Guantanamo.

The Bush regime is entirely culpable for their deaths; they have constructively killed them by creating an atmosphere which for all intents and purposes had already taken their lives. Their blood is on the hands of the Bush regime and their deaths will fuel the anger of the global Muslim community.

We note with repugnance the comments of the camp Commander Harris, labelling the deceased as terrorists - an allegation unproved in any recognised court of law (kangaroo or otherwise) - and attempting to sidestep his responsibility by calling their deaths an act of 'asymmetric warfare.'

Cageprisoners immediately calls:

1. . On the US to release the names of the deceased, and not to cruelly and unnecessarily prolong the agony for hundreds of families, speculating that it concerns their family members.
2. For an independent inquiry into the cause of death by a competent third party, due to the necessity for

transparency and the failure of military justice to provide adequate answers in the past. This must be done with full disclosure of the complete medical and psychological records held by the US.

3. That the bodies should be released at the earliest opportunity to their home countries of Yemen and Saudi Arabia. It is imperative that the religious beliefs of the deceased be honoured and for there to be all expediency in the burial in accordance with Islamic beliefs under the supervision of their families.

Mankind must realise that Guantanamo is more than an anomaly: it is a cancerous growth on our common humanity. Blame for these deaths lies with the US administration, yet we all partake in this blame, as we watched whilst these men languished. Their deaths are a clarion call, that Guantanamo must be closed before more deaths occur.

Cage Prisoners is a human rights organisation that exists solely to raise awareness of the plight of the prisoners at Guantanamo Bay and other detainees held as part of the War on Terror. We aim to give a voice to the voiceless.

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<http://www.cageprisoners.com/articles.php?id=14378>