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US Blasts UN Report on Guantanamo Prison

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WASHINGTON, Feb 13, 2006 (AFP) - The United States denounced Friday a UN report on the US "war on terror" prison at Guantanamo Bay that has yet to be released, saying the authors never visited the camp and based their document on rumors.

A draft of the United Nations report concludes that the US treatment of Guantanamo detainees violates their rights to physical and mental health and, in some cases, constitutes torture, the Los Angeles Times reported Monday.

The text also urges the United States to close the prison at the US naval base in Cuba and try the detainees on US territory, charging that Washington's justification for the continued detention is a distortion of international law, the Times said.

State Department spokesman Sean McCormack complained that the authors wrote the report without seeing the prison.

"When people hear these press reports about these outcomes and when they actually view the final report, I would urge them to look at it in the context of the fact that nobody who wrote this report actually went to Guantanamo," McCormack said.

"So this is baseless assertion, at least what we have seen so far," he said.

UN human rights experts cancelled a scheduled visit to Guantanamo late last year after failing to secure assurances from the United States that they could speak freely to prisoners.

"We invited these individuals to visit Guantanamo Bay. They refused the invitation," McCormack said Monday. "We believe that we made a good-faith offer based on international obligation as well as our policies."

The US spokesman lamented that the UN officials decided to write the report based on testimony from former prisoners and attorneys.

"As a result, we're probably going to see a report that's based on hearsay and assertion," he said.

Guantanamo holds about 500 detainees, most of whom were captured in Afghanistan after the September 11, 2001, attacks on the United States. Some detainees are holding a hunger strike.