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Rooms With a View, and More, at Guantanamo

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SAN JUAN, PUERTO RICO -- The U.S. military plans to ease conditions for some detainees in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba -- housing them in a renovated section with televisions, stereos and a view of the Caribbean, the detention center's commanding officer said in court papers.

For the past several weeks, the military has been renovating Camp Iguana for detainees who are no longer deemed a threat to the United States, Brig. Gen. Jay Hood said in an affidavit filed Tuesday in federal court in Washington, D.C.

The renovations are scheduled to be finished next week, and some of those designated "No Longer Enemy Combatants," or NLECs, will be able to live in communal housing with air conditioning, unlimited showers and additional food, Hood said.

"The living conditions for NLECs have been evolving and will continue to do so," the general said in the affidavit.

Camp Iguana, which was previously used for daytime recreation for Guantanamo detainees considered the most compliant, has been closed for six months. The reasons for the closure and the cost of the upgrade were not immediately available, a military spokesman said Wednesday.

Hood's affidavit was filed by the government in the case of two Chinese Uighurs, A'Del Abdu Al-Hakim and Abu Baker Qassim, who the government says were captured in Pakistan as they fled a Taliban training camp near Tora Bora, Afghanistan, in 2001.

The military has determined that the Uighurs, a persecuted minority in their native China, are no longer enemy combatants, but under U.S. law can't be deported back to their native China because they could face persecution or torture.

U.S. officials say they are trying to find another country to accept the two men and other Uighurs who have been detained at the prison for terror suspects.

Sabin Willett, a lawyer for the two Uighurs, has argued that while authorities try to figure out where to send the men the government should either release them on bond in the United States, place them in a less restrictive facility for illegal migrants at Guantanamo or let them live among military personnel at the base. A federal judge held a hearing on the matter last week but has not issued a ruling.

Hood's affidavit argues for placing them in the refurbished Camp Iguana, on a cliff overlooking the Caribbean Sea, along with at least two other Uighurs.

The United States holds about 520 detainees at Guantanamo Bay, but the State Department says it is negotiating with a number of countries to return their nationals.