

The following text may be printed, copy/pasted, or downloaded and emailed.

Bush Seen Signing Bill Requiring Humane Detainee Treatment

Liz Sidoti

Associated Press

December 22, 2005

WASHINGTON (AP)--President George W. Bush is expected to sign a voluminous defense bill that requires the humane treatment of foreign terrorism suspects even though the measure rebukes some of his wartime policies.

On a voice vote, the Senate late Wednesday approved the bill setting Pentagon policy, sending it to the president's desk for his signature. The House passed the legislation Monday.

The Bush administration initially threatened to veto any bill limiting how the United States detains, interrogates or prosecutes terror suspects.

But last week, Bush reluctantly endorsed the ban on cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment of foreign detainees amid pressure from the Republican-controlled Congress and U.S. allies.

The chief sponsor, Arizona Republican Sen. John McCain, had the votes in both the House and Senate to override a veto despite early lobbying against the ban by Vice President Dick Cheney.

The ban was part of a broader package of provisions that seek to standardize interrogation techniques and heal a U.S. image tarnished by the Abu Ghraib prison abuse scandal in Iraq and allegations of prisoner abuse at the U.S. naval base at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

In an attempt by Congress to increase its oversight during wartime, the measure includes language directing the president to submit quarterly reports to Congress on U.S. policy and military operations in Iraq.

That provision also puts Congress on record saying that 2006 should be a period of significant transition to full Iraqi sovereignty, with Iraqi security forces taking the lead to create conditions for the phased withdrawal of U.S. forces from Iraq.

The detainee provisions also were included in a separate \$453 billion defense spending bill. On Wednesday, the Senate passed that measure, which includes \$50 billion more for wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, but only after stripping out a provision that would have allowed oil drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

Because of the change, the House needs to sign off on the final version of the spending measure - expected Thursday - before it goes to the president for his signature.

The detainee provisions prohibit "cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment" of anyone in U.S.

government custody anywhere in the world. They also require that service members follow procedures in the Army Field Manual during interrogations of prisoners.

In addition, the measure narrows a 2004 Supreme Court ruling that gave Guantanamo detainees the right to fight the legality of their detentions in any federal court. Instead, the bill limits their ability to appeal their detention status and punishments to a federal appeals court in Washington.