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Reports: Berlusconi Tells Al-Jazeera that U.S. Prison Camp at Guantanamo should be Closed

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ROME (AP) - Italian Premier Silvio Berlusconi, a staunch U.S. ally, has told Al-Jazeera television in an interview to be aired later this week that the U.S. prison camp at Guantanamo Bay should be closed immediately, Italian news reports said Thursday.

Asked by an Al-Jazeera interview if the prison should be shut down, Berlusconi replied: "Yes, I have spoken about it with many of my colleagues, and I, too, think that one should move with maximum speed toward closing down these centers where incidents condemned by the whole world have occurred," the Italian news agency ANSA quoted the premier as saying.

The interview was conducted on Tuesday and is expected to be shown by the Arab TV station on Friday.

Officials in the premier's office described the Italian news agencies' account of the Guantanamo quote as accurate.

ANSA later quoted Franco Frattini, a former Italian foreign minister who is vice president of the European Commission as backing Berlusconi on Guantanamo.

Berlusconi's request is "also that of Europe and of the international community," Frattini was quoted as saying on the sidelines of an event in Rome attended by several Arab ambassadors to Italy.

FBI agents reportedly warned military interrogators at the Guantanamo prison camp that their aggressive methods were legally risky and likely to be ineffective, according to FBI memos made public on Thursday.

Berlusconi is scheduled to hold talks with U.S. President George W. Bush in Washington on Tuesday on a range of issues, including Iraq.