

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

McCain Still Concerned About Guantanamo

PAISLEY DODDS
Associated Press
January 27, 2006

Sen. John McCain said Friday that interrogation techniques at the U.S. prison camp in Guantanamo Bay are still of concern, and the prisoners held there should have their cases processed after spending up to four years in detention without charge.

The remote prison camp in eastern Cuba, where some 500 men accused of links to Afghanistan's ousted Taliban regime or al-Qaida are held, crept into debates at the World Economic Forum on Friday. Only a handful of the prisoners have been charged.

"What I was concerned about and continue to be concerned about is interrogation methods," McCain, R-Ariz., told The Associated Press on the sidelines of the forum.

"Now, if they want to keep them in Guantanamo or Des Moines, Iowa, that's not a critical issue to me. What is critical is that we adhere to treaties that we are signatories to and observe basic human rights and obey the law that we just passed concerning cruel and inhumane and degrading treatment."

McCain was the chief sponsor of a bill that President Bush signed last month banning cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment of foreign detainees.

The former Vietnam War POW called for more congressional involvement concerning Guantanamo and said the prisoners' cases should be processed and heard.

"All human beings, no matter how evil they are, have the right to some kind of adjudication ... There should be some kind of system set up so their cases can be decided," he said.

Sen. John Sununu, R-N.H., said the U.S. Congress would be diligent in ensuring that human rights were protected at Guantanamo.

"I think everyone understands that it has served an important purposes in dealing with enemy combatants," he told AP. "But everyone also hopes and believes that we'll reach a point where the progress in our effort to combat terrorism makes it unnecessary."

The U.S. government has classified the men "enemy combatants," a designation that does not afford them the same legal protections as under the Geneva Conventions. Many have little contact with lawyers or the outside world.

FBI documents sent to The Associated Press in 2003 showed cases of prisoner abuse shortly after the camp opened in January 2001. Additional documents showed other cases as the detention mission grew, specifically with the use of female guards and interrogators using aggressive and sexually charged techniques with the detainees, most of whom are Muslim.

Maj. Gen. Geoffrey D. Miller, who ran the Guantanamo camp from October 2002 to March 2004 and has been linked to the abuse scandal, is declining to answer questions in two courts-martial cases involving the use of dogs during interrogations at the camp.

Former Presidents Clinton and Carter have called for the prison camp to be closed, and British Prime Minister Tony Blair has called the prison an "anomaly."

Afghanistan President Hamid Karzai, however, said Friday that the camp would cease to be on his country's radar once the 100 or so Afghan prisoners were returned.

"When the Afghans leave that facility, it's none of our business what happens there," Karzai said at a news conference at the forum.

He said he expected a facility to house the Afghan prisoners to be completed within two years.

Many of them are expected to be held at Kabul's Policharki Prison, where seven Taliban rebels escaped Sunday. Six months earlier, four al-Qaida members, including a top lieutenant of Osama bin Laden in Southeast Asia, broke out of a jail at Bagram, the U.S. military's headquarters north of Kabul.

The prison, which is undergoing rehabilitation for the transfer, was once the scene of summary executions under former regimes, including the hard-line Taliban.