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## **Judge Rejects US Defense To Keep Guantanamo Names Secret**

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NEW YORK (AP)--A federal judge, ruling on a lawsuit filed by The Associated Press, came a step closer Wednesday to forcing the government to reveal the names of hundreds of Guantanamo Bay detainees by rejecting its contention that identifying them would violate their privacy.

The some 500 prisoners at the U.S. prison camp in eastern Cuba have been held for several years without being publicly identified, which has troubled human rights groups. Most have not been charged.

U.S. District Judge Jed S. Rakoff said in his ruling that the government hadn't backed up its claim that prisoners faced retaliation by terrorist groups if their identities became known.

"The Department of Defense has failed to come forward on this motion with anything but thin and conclusory speculation to support its claims of possible retaliation," Rakoff wrote.

The AP filed its Freedom of Information Act lawsuit against the Department of Defense to have government documents related to military hearings for Guantanamo Bay detainees made public.

Dave Tomlin, the AP's general counsel, applauded the judge's decision.

"Many of these detainees are begging for the world to know where they are," Tomlin said. "The court was right to reject the government's pose as guardian of privacy rights when what it's really guarding is its own secrecy."

The judge's ruling means the world is closer to knowing the identities of those held in the detention center, said David A. Schulz, an attorney who is pursuing the AP's lawsuit. Many of the detainees were captured in Afghanistan. The detainees are from Afghanistan, the Persian Gulf, Russia and a host of other countries.

"This is a significant step forward," Schulz said in a telephone interview. "The court rejected the DoD's claim of authority to withhold all these names on a blanket basis and he said it's inconsistent with the public's right to know."

In the ruling, the judge stopped short of ordering the information released, saying instead that further court proceedings were necessary.

"The government is making the case that they're trying to protect the detainees by keeping their names quiet, when it's clear to us that...the more that is known about them, the better they can be protected," said James Ross, a senior legal analyst with Human Rights Watch.

Megan Gaffney, a spokeswoman for federal prosecutors, had no immediate response.

Last year, the judge ordered the government to ask each detainee whether they wanted identifying information about themselves to be turned over to the AP as part of the lawsuit.

Of 317 detainees who received the form, 63 said yes, 17 checked no, 35 returned the form without answering and 202 declined to return the form, the judge noted in his six-page ruling.

The judge said none of the detainees, not even the 17 who said they didn't want their identities exposed, had a reasonable expectation of privacy during the tribunals.

After the AP brought its lawsuit, the government released the transcripts of 558 tribunals but redacted facts about each detainee's identity.