

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

Guantanamo Chaplain Recalls Ordeal

BEN FOX
Associated Press
October 5, 2005

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico -- Army Capt. James Yee had just arrived at the U.S. prison for terror suspects at Guantanamo Bay when he got his first hint of trouble.

The man Yee would replace as Muslim chaplain showed him around the high-security base on the eastern edge of Cuba, and gave him a warning.

"This is not a friendly environment for Muslims, and I don't just mean for the prisoners," Yee recalled hearing from the outgoing chaplain. "You need to watch your back."

The exchange, which Yee recounts in a new book on his experiences at Guantanamo, would prove to be prophetic.

The new chaplain soon grew increasingly disturbed by the treatment of prisoners and what he perceived as military hostility to Muslim personnel at the base. Yee's biggest shock came later, when he was arrested on suspicion of espionage and held in solitary confinement for 76 days.

The case unraveled and authorities eventually dismissed the charges. Yee received an honorable discharge from the service and now lives in Washington state, but he was left with deep concerns about the treatment of prisoners and anger over his own treatment at the hands of military authorities.

Got close to detainees

"What happened to me was a gross miscarriage of justice," he said Tuesday in a phone interview from New York, where he was promoting his book, *For God and Country*, which went on sale this week. "I don't want what happened to me to ever happen to anyone else."

Yee wrote that his concern about the conditions at the prison developed within weeks of his arrival in November 2002 after he became acquainted with the detainees -- who confided in him because of their shared faith.

"I had the unique position of being very close to the detainees, on a personal level, a level no one else had with the detainees," Yee said.

The guards would harass prisoners, mock their religion and use unnecessary force at the slightest infraction, he wrote.

Army Col. Joseph Curtin said Yee has the right to publish his book but the military would not comment on such a personal account.