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## **Bush Administration Will Seek Dismissal of Guantanamo Lawsuits**

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Jan. 4 (Bloomberg) -- The Bush administration said it will ask a federal court to throw out lawsuits by suspected terrorists who claim they are being illegally held at the U.S. naval base in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

Legislation signed by President George W. Bush on Dec. 30 eliminates U.S. court jurisdiction over suits filed by more than 150 prisoners at the base challenging their confinement, White House Counsel Robert Loeb said in a letter to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit.

The Defense Department holds about 500 people at Guantanamo, including many captured after the U.S. ousted Afghanistan's Taliban regime following the Sept. 11 attacks. Most are being held without charges. While detainees' lawyers have sought their trial or release, the U.S. says they are "enemy combatants" whose detention is necessary in the war on terrorism.

The government "will use whatever tool they think they might have to get these cases out of the federal courts," said Kristine Huskey, a Washington lawyer for six Guantanamo detainees. "The courts have done a good job of balancing" presidential power and individual rights, she said.

A provision in the fiscal 2006 defense authorization bill bars detainees from going to U.S. courts to challenge their confinement. The measure, sponsored by Republican Senator Lindsey Graham of South Carolina and Democrat Carl Levin of Michigan, calls for them to go through a military-based system of hearings and trials. It allows Guantanamo inmates to seek review of military verdicts in U.S. appeals courts.

"The government anticipates filing with the court no later than the week of Jan. 9, 2006, a motion to govern further proceedings in these cases," Loeb said in the letter yesterday.

The Supreme Court said Nov. 7 it will hear arguments on whether the Bush administration can use military tribunals to try terrorism suspects held at Guantanamo. A date for the argument hasn't been set.

A group of detainees at Guantanamo began a hunger strike on Dec. 25, trying to pressure the U.S. to release them. About 84 prisoners, or about one-sixth of the internment center's inmates, are refusing food, according to the military.