

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

U.S. nun among protesters against treatment of Guantanamo prisoners

By Regina Linskey

Catholic News Service
December 15, 2005

WASHINGTON (CNS) -- A nun from the United States stood with 25 marchers at the foot of the U.S. detention facility in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, protesting the treatment of prisoners by the U.S. government.

Sacred Heart Sister Anne Montgomery called the actions against prisoners "pretty sickening" torture.

They tie "people in painful positions, (the prisoners) soil themselves," and treatment includes humiliation, sleep deprivation and beatings, Sister Montgomery told Catholic News Service Dec. 13 in a telephone interview from Cuba.

Torture "is not the way to get information, this is counterproductive. They (the prisoners) will say what they can to get out of the torture; it's creating more terrorism around the world," she said.

Most of the detainees at the U.S. detention facility were captured in Afghanistan after the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on the United States.

"We are not saying everyone is innocent," Sister Montgomery said, adding that the prisoners should get a "fair trial just as we would want if our soldiers were imprisoned in another country."

The protesters, members of the U.S. group Witness Against Torture, marched 50 miles from Santiago, Cuba, to put "pressure on our government and other governments," she said, adding that the U.S. government should be true to its values. She said she wants the United States to set the standard of treatment for prisoners and not be "the least common denominator."

Sister Montgomery -- who also is a member of the Christian Peacemaker Teams, an international organization that sends people to live in conflict zones and

advocate for nonviolent solutions -- said the group camped in the backyards of those who gave permission, and participants carried their own food.

The marchers called the White House and the naval base to voice their opinions, but had not been able to get through, she said.

Another marcher, Patricia Santoro, said the aim of the protesters was to enter the base and talk with some of the prisoners, but the U.S. government denied their request.

Santoro, an associate professor in modern classical languages and literature at Jesuit-run St. Peter's College in Jersey City, N.J., said the marchers planned to stay outside the gates for several days to pray and fast for an end to torture.

She said the Cuban government did nothing to prevent them from going to the base.

Meanwhile, in a procedural vote, the U.S. House of Representatives endorsed a ban on cruel and inhuman treatment of terrorist suspects Dec. 14. This provision and others, if included, will be attached to a military spending bill and will standardize U.S. interrogation techniques, The Associated Press reported Dec. 14. Passage of the ban is spearheaded by Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., a former prisoner of war.