

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

Hayes, Butterfield Will Tour Guantanamo

Lawmakers among group looking at controversial prison

TIM FUNK
Charlotte Observer
June 23, 2005

WASHINGTON - U.S. Reps. Robin Hayes, a Republican from Concord, and G.K. Butterfield, a Democrat from Wilson, will be part of a congregational delegation touring Guantanamo Bay prison this weekend.

Both are members of the House Armed Services Committee, as are the nine other House members who've signed up to go.

The U.S. Navy prison in Cuba, which houses about 520 detainees suspected of links to al-Qaida and other terrorist groups, has been at the center of a recent controversy.

Former President Jimmy Carter, Sen. Mel Martinez, R-Fla., and others have called on the Bush administration to close the detention facility, citing allegations of abuse as well as the fact that prisoners have been held -- some of them for years -- without being charged in court.

The White House and Pentagon have denied abuse allegations and say information obtained during prisoner interrogations have saved lives in the war on terror.

"With all the controversy swirling around the treatment of prisoners in Cuba, this is an opportunity to gain some firsthand perspective," Butterfield said in a statement.

A spokeswoman for Hayes said he'll give a report of what he sees at a Monday news conference in his district.

The 16-hour trip is expected to include a briefing at the Navy base and a fact-finding tour that will visit the prison hospital, interrogation area and an unoccupied cell block.