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## An Endgame for Guantanamo

Editorial  
Cincinnati Post  
February 27, 2006

The Bush administration is proud of its professed immunity to international pressure and world opinion, but in the case of the Guantanamo Bay prison in Cuba, perhaps it should start listening. And, increasingly, the opinion of our friends and allies is: Close it.

A British Cabinet minister said the prison should be closed and thought that British Prime Minister Tony Blair agreed. Blair, our closest ally in the war on terror, wouldn't go that far publicly, but called Guantanamo "an anomaly, and sooner or later it's got to be dealt with." It's clear that the thinking within his Cabinet is that the facility should be closed.

U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan denounced the policy of detaining individuals "in perpetuity," and said the 500 or so inmates, some of them incarcerated now for four years, should be charged, prosecuted or released. He too said Guantanamo would have to be closed sooner or later, and preferably "as soon as possible."

He spoke after the release of a report by investigators for the U.N. Human Rights Commission denouncing the treatment of the Guantanamo inmates and also calling for closing the prison and quickly trying or releasing the inmates. The commission may not be the most credible organization - Sudan and Zimbabwe are members - and the investigators did not visit the prison because they objected to the Pentagon's ground rules. Still, their findings were consistent with what has been alleged by other human-rights groups, freed inmates, the inmates' lawyers and U.S. military trial counsels.

White House spokesman Scott McClellan dismissed the report as "a rehash of allegations" - just because they're repeated doesn't make them wrong - and suggested it was all an al-Qaida plot: "We know that al-Qaida detainees are trained in trying to disseminate false allegations." If so, they're remarkably good at sticking to their story.

No one is suggesting that the inmates be simply dumped on the streets, even if many of them do not appear to be the hardened terrorists the Bush administration insists they are. But after four years, there should be an efficient mechanism in place to dispose of their cases, resulting in either repatriation or lawful imprisonment, and a plan in place to close Guantanamo. Its continued existence is not worth its cost to our moral authority, and this mess should not be left for the next president to clean up.

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