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## Gitmo Mails to React

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A NAVAL commander at the notorious Guantanamo Bay detention centre e-mailed The Daily Telegraph today to give his view on Australian detainee David Hicks' conditions.

We reported how Hicks had been in solitary confinement in a windowless cell for the past month because of a protest over a towel.

His conditions were confirmed by a US commander of the facility Colonel Mike Bumgarner, who said: "He was upset that he had not been issued a second towel, one beyond that which the other detainees had been issued. And so he refused to turn in his laundry."

But today, another commander at the military jail, which houses some of the world's most dangerous terrorists, sent us an e-mail to give the official line.

This is the e-mail from US Navy Commander Robert T. Durand, from the Joint Taskforce - Guantanamo, in full:

"The current story on your website regarding David Hicks, a detainee at Guantanamo, is highly inaccurate.

"It contains excerpts from a radio interview that asked about two different topics. Mixed together and out of context, it creates the false impression that Mr Hicks was sent to solitary confinement over a towel.

"Mr. Hicks is not being punished. He is not in solitary confinement.

"Detainees are never in solitary confinement in Guantanamo, period.

"It is irresponsible and misleading to use the term 'solitary confinement' to describe Mr Hicks' living conditions.

"'Solitary confinement' is not merely the act of living in a single cell, but isolation from others.

"Mr Hicks can and does freely communicate with other detainees on his cell block. He can and does communicate with other detainees while recreating and exercising.

"Camp 5 is a state-of-the-art facility completed in May 2004 and based upon a modern maximum-security design used for US federal penitentiaries.

"Detainees in Camp 5 have the opportunity to use a recreation yard for two hours per day. The exercise yard is equipped with exercise bicycles, elliptical trainers and soccer balls.

"Mr Hicks was moved to Camp 5 from Camp 3 for two reasons: As part of a camp consolidation from older to newer facilities, and, consistent with Army regulations, individuals in a pre-trial status are separated from the general population.

"He is on a block with the other detainees charged by the Office of Military Commissions. These pre-trial measures are largely for the protection of the detainee.

"In the new camp, Mr Hicks has access to a reading room in addition to the many books in his cell.

"Regarding the towel: Mr Hicks' attorney claimed that he was wearing soiled clothes, and asked why.

"Mr Hicks chose not to turn in his clothes for laundry service, apparently to protest not being provided with more towels than detainees are provided.

"He also chose not to wash his clothes by hand in his sink, as some detainees choose to do.

"Robert T. Durand  
Commander, US Navy  
Director of Public Affairs  
Joint Task Force - Guantanamo  
'Honor Bound to Defend Freedom'"