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## **Gonzales Defends Transfer of Detainees**

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Attorney General Alberto R. Gonzales yesterday defended the practice of "extraordinary rendition," the process under which the United States sometimes transfers detainees in the war on terrorism to other nations where they may undergo harsh interrogation, trial or imprisonment.

The government has not said how many detainees have been transferred and has not articulated the precise legal basis for the practice, but the persistence of such transfers has been demonstrated by frequent flights of a plane the intelligence community uses to transport the prisoners.

U.S. officials have privately described the threat of rendition as a powerful tool in prying loose information from suspects who fear torture by foreign countries. But Gonzales, speaking to reporters at the Justice Department yesterday, said that U.S. policy is not to send detainees "to countries where we believe or we know that they're going to be tortured."

That represents a slight modification of his congressional testimony in January that renditions would not be made to countries where it is "more likely than not" they will be tortured. Gonzales added yesterday that if a country has a history of torture, Washington seeks additional assurances that it will not be used against the transferred detainee.

At the same time, he said, the administration "can't fully control" what other nations do, according to accounts of his remarks by wire services. He added that he does not know whether countries have always complied with their promises.

Gonzales, who was sworn in on Feb. 14, also said he is awaiting a report by subordinates on the issue of detainee abuse by U.S. personnel and did not wish to comment on allegations of CIA involvement in detainee abuse.

He also reiterated a statement he made during his January confirmation hearings that e-mailed reports by FBI field agents of abuse of detainees at the U.S. military prison at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, were "totally inconsistent" with what he saw during a visit there.