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National Briefing Washington: Rules Could Allow Guantanamo Executions

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The Army has issued new regulations for carrying out military executions that could allow the death penalty to be administered at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, where more than 500 foreign terrorism suspects are being held. The regulations, issued last week, give the secretary of the Army authority to designate locations for military executions, replacing old rules that required them to take place at Fort Leavenworth, Kan. That could open the way for executions of detainees at Guantanamo, although none of the 10 prisoners there who have been charged with war crimes are facing capital punishment. A law signed by President Bush in December bars federal courts from hearing habeas corpus petitions from Guantanamo detainees challenging their confinement.

Eugene Fidell, a Washington specialist in military law, said the Bush administration might have feared that bringing detainees to the United States for execution would allow them to challenge their sentences in federal court once they were no longer at Guantanamo.