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## **Rumsfeld Says No U.N. Access to Guantanamo Inmates**

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WASHINGTON - Spurning a request by U.N. human rights investigators, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld said on Tuesday the United States will not allow them to meet with detainees at the Guantanamo prison for foreign terrorism suspects.

Rumsfeld also told a Pentagon news conference that prisoners at the U.S. naval base at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, were staging a hunger strike that began in early August as a successful ploy to attract media attention.

The three U.N. investigators, including one who focuses on torture, said on Monday they would turn down an invitation extended by the Pentagon on Friday to visit Guantanamo unless they were permitted to interview the detainees. The invitation came nearly four years after the visits were first requested.

Rumsfeld said the U.S. government will not change its policy of giving such access to detainees only to the International Committee of the Red Cross, a neutral body that keeps its findings confidential.

"There's got to be a limit to how one does that," Rumsfeld said of providing access to detainees.

"And the ICRC has been doing it for a great many years and has had complete and total access ever since Guantanamo was opened. And so we're not inclined to add (to) the number of people that would be given that extensive access."

The invitations went to Austria's Manfred Nowak, special investigator on torture, Pakistan's Asma Jahangir, who focuses on religious freedom, and Algeria's Leila Zerrougui, who looks into arbitrary detention.

### **27 DETAINEES ENGAGED IN HUNGER STRIKE**

Human rights activists have criticized the United States for the indefinite detention of the roughly 505 detainees held at Guantanamo. Former prisoners have stated they were tortured there, and the ICRC last year accused the U.S. military of using tactics "tantamount to torture" on Guantanamo prisoners. The military has denied torture has occurred.

The U.N. investigators said they proposed a Dec. 6 visit but would go only if permitted to talk to the prisoners.

Zerrougui said on Monday the U.N. investigators had never agreed to visit a place where they would not have full access to all detainees, and asked the United States to provide such access "in the spirit of compromise."

The military said on Tuesday 27 detainees currently were engaging in the hunger strike, including 24 receiving forced-feedings. Detainees' lawyers estimated that about 200 are taking part. These lawyers said the strike was a protest of the prisoners' conditions and lack of legal rights.

Asked about the motivation of the hunger strikers, Rumsfeld said, "Well, I suppose that what they're trying to do is to capture press attention, obviously, and they've succeeded."

He added, "There are a number of people who go on a diet where they don't eat for a period and then go off of it at some point. And then they rotate and other people do that."

U.S. District Court Judge Gladys Kessler last week ordered the government to provide medical records on Guantanamo prisoners who are being force-fed and to notify their lawyers about forced feedings.

The judge said detainees' lawyers had presented "deeply troubling" allegations of U.S. personnel violently shoving feeding tubes as thick as a finger through the men's noses and into their stomachs without anesthesia or sedatives, with detainees vomiting blood as U.S. personnel mocked them.

Rumsfeld appeared to distance himself from the decision to force-feed detainees.

"I'm not a doctor and I'm not the kind of a person who would be in a position to approve or disapprove. It seems to me, looking at it from this distance, is that the responsible people are the combatant commanders. And the Army is the executive agent for detainees," Rumsfeld said.