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Walnut Creek Dem Heading to Guantanamo Bay Prison

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U.S. Rep. Ellen Tauscher is touring the Guantanamo Bay prison this weekend with the House Armed Services Committee delegation, which has been looking into allegations of prisoner abuse at the site in Cuba.

Tauscher, a Democrat from Walnut Creek and a member of the armed services committee, has called for better oversight at U.S. prisons around the world and recently introduced a bill with 23 cosponsors calling on the Pentagon to share reports from human rights and other organizations about treatment of detainees.

The delegation to Cuba is seeking more information about conditions at the prison and the credibility of tribunals review individual cases.

Amnesty International has called the Guantanamo Bay prison -- where about 540 terrorism suspects are held, some of them for three years without being charged with a crime -- "the gulag of our time."

Former President Jimmy Carter and others have called for closing it in light of allegations of abuse by interrogators, but Vice President Dick Cheney and many top Republicans in Congress have opposed that suggestion.