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Guantanamo: Time for Trials

Editorial
Seattle Post-Intelligencer
February 21, 2006

A panel appointed by the United Nations concludes that the United States must immediately close down its prison at Guantanamo Bay and either bring all the detainees held there to trial or set them free. The panel alleged that the detention and interrogation practices at the U.S. facility "amount to torture."

No one on the panel has been to Guantanamo, mind you, or visited the prison or witnessed the treatment meted out there. So its judgment seems dismissively arbitrary. U.S. military officials invited the panel members to come and inspect the prison for themselves, but stopped short of allowing prisoners to be interviewed.

What can be judged from any distance, however, is that it's wrong to continue to hold those men without charges and without trial.

"These are dangerous terrorists that we're talking about," declared White House spokesman Scott McClellan. But isn't that the point - are they really "dangerous terrorists"? How do we know, if they've not been brought to trial?

We don't know what brand of democracy and freedom the Bush administration planned to deliver the Iraqis at the point of a gun, but around here, as goofy as it may sound, we don't accept the fact that somebody's guilty just because the government says so. And around here we believe in the presumption of innocence and place the burden of proof upon the state to convince a judge or jury that the accused is guilty as charged.