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## **U.S. Delays Guantanamo Bay Inmate's Trial**

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Associated Press  
November 3, 2004

GUANTANAMO BAY NAVAL BASE, Cuba - The U.S. military trial of an Australian cowboy accused of fighting for Afghanistan's ousted Taliban regime was delayed Wednesday to allow his lawyers more time to interview witnesses and review evidence.

Army Col. Peter E. Brownback, the presiding officer for the first U.S. military commissions to be held since World War II, granted the delay to allow for "full and fair" proceedings for David Hicks. His Jan. 10 trial was delayed until March 15.

Brownback also deferred decisions on several other pretrial motions for Hicks, including defense requests to drop charges of attempted murder, aiding the enemy and conspiracy to attack civilians, commit terrorism and destroy property, which could bring a life sentence. Hicks has pleaded innocent to all charges.

"One of the difficulties of this case is that it is a worldwide investigation," Maj. Michael Mori, Hicks' military-appointed defense lawyer, told The Associated Press.

"We need to talk to witnesses. We'll need to travel to several places. We may need time to get translators and we'll likely move to suppress some of the information," said John Dratel, Hicks' civilian attorney.

The government has accused Hicks, 29, of taking up arms against U.S. and coalition forces, and training with the al-Qaida terror network - allegations his defense team says should not be considered war crimes or tried in a military commission.

The defense has not received a complete list of government witnesses, or been shown all the evidence. The attorneys may see the classified evidence but not share it with Hicks.

Pretrial hearings in Hicks' case began Monday. His attorneys argued that charges involving conspiracy and terrorism weren't valid under international law.

They also attacked the contention that U.S. laws do not apply to some 550 detainees from more than 40 countries imprisoned at the outpost in Cuba.

Three others have been charged, including Osama bin Laden's driver, Salim Ahmed Hamdan. Pretrial motions hearings for the 34-year-old Yemeni begin Monday.

Hearings for the other two prisoners - Ali Hamza Sulayman al-Bahlul, a Yemeni accused of developing propaganda for al-Qaida, and Ibrahim Ahmed Mahmoud al-Qosi, a Sudanese accused of being an al-Qaida paymaster - have not been scheduled, but a tentative trial date has been set for Feb. 8, 2005.

Also, six men accused of aiding al-Qaida and fighting against U.S. forces in Afghanistan declined to appear before a U.S. military review panel here, said Lt. Cmdr. Daryl Borgquist, a spokesman for the Combatant Status Review Tribunals.

The panel is to determine whether the detainees should continue to be held as enemy combatants - which offers fewer legal protections than prisoners of war get. The tribunals are separate from the military commissions.