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## **U.N. Draft Rips U.S. on Cuba Base**

Treatment of detainees at Guantanamo Bay violates law, report says

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UNITED NATIONS -- The Bush administration's treatment of prisoners at the U.S. military detention center at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, violates international law and in some cases constitutes a form of torture, according to a draft U.N. report.

Five U.N. human rights investigators appealed to the administration to close the Guantanamo Bay prison and try detainees in the United States.

"The U.S. government should either expeditiously bring all Guantanamo Bay detainees to trial ... or release them without further delay," the draft report recommended.

The findings emerged from an 18-month investigation that included interviews with former U.S. prisoners in France, Spain and Britain, and lawyers and relatives of detainees. The report concluded that some practices -- including the force-feeding of hunger strikers -- "must be assessed as amounting to torture."

President Bush voiced concern about the panel's findings -- which were first reported in the Los Angeles Times -- during a meeting Monday with U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan.

Annan responded that he had not seen the report and that the U.N. investigators who authored the report were independent from his office, according to an official who attended the meeting.

State Department spokesman Sean McCormack challenged the findings, saying "no one who wrote this report actually went to Guantanamo."

The U.N. investigators, known as special rapporteurs, declined in November to accept an offer from the United States to make a one-day visit to the facility on the grounds that they could not speak privately with prisoners.

"They are taking assertions by individuals who have left Guantanamo, as well as their lawyers, as fact," McCormack told reporters. "And, as we have seen over the past year, there have been a number of baseless claims about what went on at Guantanamo."

The United States has provided access to detainees at Guantanamo to the International Committee of the Red Cross, which never publishes reports on prison conditions.

The confidential draft, which was obtained by The Washington Post, notes that two of the U.N. investigators concluded that the "legal regime applied to these detainees seriously undermines the rule of law and a number of fundamental universally recognized human rights, which are the essence of democratic societies."

The report's authors also criticized U.S. doctors and nurses at Guantanamo Bay, citing testimony that they violently force-fed some of the 100 hunger strikers against their wills.

McCormack challenged that charge, saying the feeding of the hunger strikers was done in a "humane way, according to international practice."

