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## **U.N. Invited to Guantanamo Bay Prison**

JOSH WHITE  
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WASHINGTON - The U.S. government has invited three United Nations human rights experts to visit the detention center at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, amid growing concerns of rights violations and claims that the health of some hunger-striking detainees is deteriorating.

It is unclear whether the three U.N. special rapporteurs will accept the invitation — which was extended Friday after nearly four years of U.N. requests to inspect the facility — because the Defense Department plans to impose fairly strict guidelines on any visit. Guantanamo Bay holds more than 500 detainees and current guidelines would not allow the U.N. experts direct access to prisoners.

The Defense Department so far has allowed only the International Committee of the Red Cross to fully examine the facility, but the results of its regular visits are kept confidential under the ICRC policy of not reporting abuses or its concerns publicly.

Calls to two U.N. officials Friday were not returned.

Defense officials said Friday that the U.N. visit would allow the experts to "observe operations" at the facility and to "ask questions of the command, staff and U.S. officials who would accompany them."

Such a visit could be similar to the tour that members of Congress and the media have taken in recent months. It includes very limited viewing of the lowest-security prisoners from a distance, examining empty cells and vacant cell blocks and perhaps observing an interrogation. Visitors are not provided direct contact with detainees.

Tom Malinowski, Washington advocacy director for Human Rights Watch, said Friday that it is unlikely the U.N. rapporteurs would be satisfied with a cursory look at Guantanamo.

"Even in places like China, the rapporteurs on torture and arbitrary detention have been able to speak privately to prisoners in the facilities they've been allowed to visit," Malinowski said, "and even then they haven't been fully satisfied with the access they've gotten."