

## Terrorism suspects may be detained forever

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Bush Administration officials are preparing long-range plans for indefinitely imprisoning suspected terrorists whom they do not want to set free or turn over to courts in the US or other countries.

The Pentagon and the Central Intelligence Agency have asked the White House to decide on a more permanent approach for potentially lifetime detentions, including for hundreds of people now in military and CIA custody whom the Government does not have enough evidence to charge in courts. The outcome of the review, which also involves the State Department, would also affect those expected to be captured in the course of future counter-terrorism operations.

A senior Administration official involved in the discussions said the current detention system has strained US relations with other countries. "Now we can take a breath. We have the ability and need to look at long-term solutions."

One proposal under review is the transfer of large numbers of Afghan, Saudi and Yemeni detainees from the military's prison camp in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, into new US-built jails in their home countries. These would be operated by those countries but the State Department, where this idea originated, would ask them to abide by recognised human rights standards and would monitor compliance.

In addition, the Pentagon, which holds 500 prisoners at Guantanamo Bay, plans to ask Congress for \$US25 million (\$32 million) to build a 200-bed prison to hold detainees who are unlikely ever to go through a military tribunal for lack of evidence. The new prison, dubbed Camp 6, would allow inmates more comfort and freedom than they have now, and would be designed for prisoners who the US Government believes have no more intelligence to share. It would be modelled on an American jail and allow socialising among inmates.

"Since the global war on terror is a long-term effort, it makes sense for us to be looking at solutions for long-term problems," said Bryan Whitman, a Pentagon spokesman. "We are at a point in time where we have to say, 'How do you deal with them in the long term?'"

The Administration considers its toughest detention problem to involve the prisoners held by the CIA. The CIA has been scurrying since September 11, 2001, to find secure locations abroad where it could detain and interrogate captives without risk of discovery, and without having to give them access to legal proceedings.

Little is known about the CIA's captives, the conditions under which they are kept or the procedures used to decide how long they are held or when they may be freed. That has prompted criticism from human rights groups, and from some in Congress and the Administration, who say the lack of scrutiny or oversight creates an unacceptable risk of abuse.

The CIA is believed to be holding most, if not all, of the senior captured al-Qaeda leaders, including Khalid Sheik Mohammed, Ramzi Binalshibh, Abu Zubaida and the leading South-East Asia figure Hambali.

Places of detention include Afghanistan, ships at sea and Diego Garcia, in the Indian Ocean.

### The Washington Post

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