

## Pentagon Finds Guantánamo Follows Geneva Conventions

By WILLIAM GLABERSON

A Pentagon report requested by President Obama on the conditions at the Guantánamo Bay detention center, concluded that the prison complies with the humane-treatment requirements of the Geneva Conventions. But it makes recommendations for improvements including increasing human contact for the prisoners, according to two government officials who have read parts of it.

The review, requested by Mr. Obama on his second day in office, is to be delivered to the White House next week.

The president's request, made as part of a plan to close the prison within a year, was widely seen as an effort to denounce accusations that there were widespread abuses at Guantánamo, and that many detainees were suffering severe psychological effects after years of isolation.

The report, by Adm. Patrick M. Walsh, the vice chief of naval operations, describes steps that could be taken to allow detainees to speak to one another more often and to engage in group activities, the government officials said. For years, critics have said that many detainees spend as many as 23 hours a day within the confines of cement cells and often were allowed to exercise alone in fenced-off outdoor pens.

The report is being presented to a White House that some government officials have described as caught off-guard by the extreme emotions and political crosscurrents provoked by its plan to close the Guantánamo prison. Some critics said the report's conclusions could intensify the debate about the prison, and put the Obama White House for the first time in the position of defending it.

The report came as officials separately said on Friday that the Obama administration had decided on the transfer of the first Guantánamo detainee since the president took office, a former British resident, Binyamin

Mohamed. Lawyers for Mr. Mohamed had drawn wide attention with accusations that he was tortured in Morocco on instructions from American intelligence agencies.

Mr. Mohamed, who is to be returned to Britain, was originally charged with plotting to detonate a radioactive "dirty bomb" inside the United States. But the Pentagon official in charge of the Bush administration's military commission system for conducting war-crimes trials dismissed those charges in October.

Also on Friday, Attorney General Eric H. Holder Jr. announced the creation of a task force to begin reviewing the cases of the remaining 245 detainees. The group, which is to include representatives of military, intelligence and other agencies, is to be led by a career federal prosecutor, Matthew G. Olsen, who has been a senior Justice Department lawyer dealing with national security issues.

The administration's plan to close Guantánamo includes a new effort to decide whether detainees can be released, transferred to the custody of other countries or prosecuted. In the report on the conditions at Guantánamo, Admiral Walsh reviewed many accusations of abuse that critics have made about the prison, said one Pentagon official who has seen the report.

The report concluded that the Pentagon was in compliance with the requirements of the Geneva Conventions. The review included some of the most contentious issues, including the forced feeding of hunger-striking detainees and claims that many prisoners were suffering from psychosis as a result of conditions in the detention center.

According to one official, the report noted that some detainees had difficulty communicating from cell to cell, a contention that many detainees' lawyers have also made. The Pentagon has long insisted that no detainees are held in solitary confinement.

Military officials have said instead that the prisoners are held in "single-occupancy cells."

Some Pentagon officials have continued to press the case that the Bush administration's approach to detainee issues — and the Guantánamo Bay prison itself — should not be abandoned. The report is likely to accelerate that behind-the-scenes struggle.

The White House had no comment Friday.

One Pentagon official, speaking on the condition of anonymity because of the sensitivities involved in challenging the White House plan to close the prison, argued that the report showed that the Bush administration had created a humane detention camp. Speaking of the remaining detainees, this official said the report showed that if the men were moved, they might "go from a humane environment to a less humane environment."

Critics of the Guantánamo Bay detention center, which is on the grounds of the American naval base at the eastern end of Cuba, have been preparing for Admiral Walsh's report. They said they were concerned that the new administration would use it to avoid major alterations to the Guantánamo detention camp during its final year.

Ghanjali Gutierrez, a lawyer for Guantánamo detainees at the Center for Constitutional Rights, said that she and other lawyers found that conditions have remained bleak since the start of the new administration.

Ms. Gutierrez said that a report by the rights center, to be released next week, asserts that two major Guantánamo prison buildings, known as Camp 5 and Camp 6, should be closed immediately. She said prisoners there continue to be held in isolation for as long as 24 hours a day, that psychological difficulties are treated as disciplinary infractions, and that many cells are windowless.

Ms. Gutierrez said detention camp officials have recently informed

increased detainees' opportunities for recreation and social interaction. She said detainees' lawyers have been concerned that some of those moves were in anticipation of visits now being made by senior members of the new administration. The attorney general is to visit Monday.

"This is really running the risk that the review is just a big whitewash," Ms. Gutierrez added, "and we expect more of the new administration."



LOS ANGELES

A detainee praying in his cell at the Guantánamo Bay detention center. A review of conditions there is to be released next week.



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