

What President Obama's Plan to Close Gitmo Detention Center Means for Islamist Detainees

Tuesday morning, President Obama addressed the media at the White House to inform them his administration has presented Congress with a plan to close down the Islamist detention center at Guantanamo Bay.

During a lengthy speech, the president said the Camp Delta detention facility at "Gitmo" was undermining national security, not advancing it. He said that was an opinion shared by many experts as well as "many in our military."

"It's counterproductive to our fight against terrorists because they use it as propaganda in their efforts to recruit," he said. "It drains military resources, with nearly \$450 million spent last year alone to keep it running, and more than \$200 million in additional costs needed to keep it open going forward for less than 100 detainees."

"Guantanamo harms our partnerships with allies and other countries whose cooperation we need against terrorism. When I talk to other world leaders, they bring up the fact that Guantanamo is not resolved."

"Moreover, keeping this facility open is contrary to our values. It undermines our standing in the world. It is viewed as a stain on our broader record of upholding the highest standards of rule of law."

"As Americans, we pride ourselves on being a beacon to other nations, a model of the rule of law. But 15 years after 9/11—15 years after the worst terrorist attack in American

history—we're still having to defend the existence of a facility and a process where not a single verdict has been reached in those attacks—not a single one.”

According to the Department of Defense, the Bush administration transferred more than 500 detainees out of the detention center. The Obama administration has transferred nearly 150, leaving just 91 detainees in the facility.

The president noted that the Defense Department has put together a proposal for Congress as part of its upcoming budget. The plan details a threefold effort to affect the permanent closure of Camp Delta:

- identifying transfer opportunities for detainees designated for transfer;
- continuing to review the threat posed by those detainees who are not currently eligible for transfer and who are not currently facing military commission charges; and
- continuing with ongoing military commissions prosecutions and, for those detainees who remain designated for continued law of war detention, identifying individualized dispositions where available, including military commission prosecution, transfer to third countries, foreign prosecutions or, should Congress lift the ban on transfers to the United States, transfer to the United States for prosecution in Article III courts and to serve sentences.

“Notwithstanding these efforts, the administration expects there to remain a limited number of detainees who will not be designated for transfer, subject to ongoing military commission prosecutions, serving any adjudged sentences, or candidates for prosecution in Article III courts, and who cannot safely be transferred to third countries in the near term,” the Defense proposal states. “For these detainees, the administration intends to work with the Congress to relocate them from the Guantanamo Bay detention facility to an

appropriate site in the continental United States while continuing to identify other appropriate and lawful dispositions.”

The report does not specify which stateside facilities would house Guantanamo detainees, if the Camp Delta facility were closed.