Cuba: al-Qaida Detainees at Guantánamo

Legislative Context: No Congressional Members have raised objections regarding the use of Guantánamo Naval Base in Cuba to detain al-Qaida, Taliban, and other detainees. Senator Specter, who recently traveled to Cuba and met with Castro, was impressed by Cuba's decision not to object to this use of Guantánamo.

Talking Points:

- Guantánamo is, in the words of Secretary Rumsfeld, the "least worst place" to hold these detainees.

- The detainees will be treated humanely, and the ICRC will be given access to the base.

- Cuba has indicated that it will not object to this use of the base.

Issue Background:

Guantánamo Naval Base was selected as the site for detaining captured al-Qaida, Taliban, and other detainees. Initially, the detainees are being held at "Camp X-Ray," 8'x 6'x 6' chain link units; by February 8, there will be room for 640 detainees in 320 units. DoD tasked the JTF commander with eventually housing up to 2,000 detainees. There are ongoing discussions about building larger and more durable detention facilities.

The JTF commander is also responsible for ensuring that Guantánamo retains capacity for migrant surge operations.

Cuba did not object to this use of the base, and has even allowed limited use of Cuban airspace to permit safer approaches by arriving heavy U.S. military transport aircraft. Its unexpectedly cooperative attitude might be traced to the regime's desire to encourage Congressional support for legislative efforts to break down the embargo and travel restrictions.

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