

Tillery, Monica J

From: Schou, Nina E (SBU)
Sent: Thursday, December 11, 2003 1:20 PM
To: Harris, Robert K (SBU); Dolan, JoAnn (SBU); Dorosin, Joshua L (SBU); Buchwald, Todd F (SBU); Witten, Samuel M (SBU)
Cc: Brancato, Gilda M (SBU)
Subject: RE: U.S. urged not to send Uyghur detainees back to China

LIST

this is also the subject of an incoming inquiry from the Special Rapporteur on Torture which also addresses other issues re. treatment of detainees at Gtmo.

L/HRR and L/PM will need to work together on the response.

-----Original Message-----

From: Harris, Robert K (SBU)
Sent: Thursday, December 11, 2003 1:13 PM
To: Schou, Nina E (SBU); Dolan, JoAnn (SBU); Dorosin, Joshua L (SBU); Buchwald, Todd F (SBU); Witten, Samuel M (SBU)
Subject: FW: U.S. urged not to send Uyghur detainees back to China

FYI

-----Original Message-----

From: Osullivan, Susan X (DRL)
Sent: Thursday, December 11, 2003 12:44 PM
To: Miller, Ronald W; 'pprosper@hotmail.com'; Morrow, Holly H (EAP/CM); Harris, Robert K (SBU); Dugan, Elizabeth X (DRL); (@), User Template
Cc: Craner, Lorne W (DRL); Jackson, Robert P (DRL)
Subject: FW: U.S. urged not to send Uyghur detainees back to China

RFA report on Uighurs in Guantanamo.

-----Original Message-----

From: Nury A. Turkel [mailto:nuryturkel@hotmail.com]
Sent: Wednesday, December 10, 2003 11:36 PM
Subject: U.S. urged not to send Uyghur detainees back to China

U.S. urged not to send Uyghur detainees back to China

2003-12-10

Human rights groups and members of the small overseas community of ethnic Uyghurs are urging the United States to scrap any plans to send back to

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE
 REVIEW AUTHORITY: FRANK E SCHMELZER

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China ethnic Uyghur prisoners now held by U.S. forces in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, RFA's Uyghur service reports.

More than a dozen Uyghurs are said to be among the detainees at the U.S. naval base, where Washington has held suspected al-Qaeda and Taliban fighters. They were reportedly training in Afghanistan with Uyghur groups seeking independence or greater autonomy from China's far-western Xinjiang Autonomous Region.

In a Dec. 8 letter to U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell, the Washington-based Uyghur-American Association said it was "deeply disturbed" by reports that the United States is considering a Chinese request to repatriate any Uyghurs held in Guantanamo Bay.

"Members of the Uyghur American Association together with many human rights activists around the world are concerned that the detainees will be mistreated if they are returned to China," Nury Turkel, general secretary of the association, wrote. The organization represents the several hundred ethnic Uyghurs now living in the United States.

"Moreover, there is no way for the United States and international organizations to guarantee the fairness of the trial and the treatment that the detainees will receive once they are returned to China. Experience tells us that any appeals and suggestions made by international organization and United States on their behalf will fall upon the deaf ears of Chinese officials."

The German-based East Turkestan National Congress has also launched a letter-writing campaign to U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan to protest China's heavy-handed treatment of its Uyghur people and Washington's plans to send the detainees back. "Most annoying for us is the reports about returning of an unspecified number of Uyghurs who fled the Chinese persecution and were caught by the U.S. forces in Afghanistan... to the cruel disposal of the Beijing regime by the most powerful democracy of the world," president Enver Can wrote in his letter to Annan.

Other Uyghur associations in Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, and Turkey said Wednesday they were also drafting letters of protest that they would deliver to U.S. Embassy personnel in each of those countries, while Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch have also urged the Bush administration to rebuff Chinese requests to send the Uyghur detainees back to China.

"While Amnesty International has been calling for, and would welcome, releases of detainees from the base, it is concerned that some detainees may face serious human rights abuses, including torture and execution, if returned to their countries," Amnesty said in a statement Dec. 4. The London-based group stopped short of saying where the Uyghurs might be sent.

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Separately, New York-based Human Rights Watch on Nov. 27 called on Washington not to repatriate any Uyghurs held at Guantanamo Bay. "China has a long and well-documented history of repression of the Uyghurs, a Muslim, Turkic-speaking community," the group said in a statement. "The death penalty has been used against those found guilty of separatist activities after trials that do not meet international fair trial standards."

"The United States should not even contemplate returning Uyghurs to China," said Brad Adams, executive director of Human Rights Watch's Asia division. "Any assurances from China that it will not mistreat returnees would not be worth the paper they are written on."

Unnamed U.S. military officials have been quoted as saying the United States was preparing to release 140 prisoners from Guantanamo, calling them "the easiest 20 percent" of the estimated 660 people held there. China has urged the United States to repatriate all Uyghur detainees and said it would handle their cases in accordance with domestic and international law.

Administration officials contacted repeatedly by RFA correspondents have declined to comment on the fate of the Uyghur detainees.

Uyghurs constitute a distinct Muslim minority in northwestern China and Central Asia. They declared a short-lived East Turkestan Republic in Xinjiang in the late 1940s but have remained under Beijing's control since 1949. According to a Chinese Government white paper, in 1998 Xinjiang comprised 8 million Uyghurs, 2.5 million other ethnic minorities, and 6.4 million Han Chinese—up from 300,000 Han in 1949. Most Uyghurs are poor farmers, and at least 25 percent are illiterate.

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