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THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

February 7, 2002

FACT SHEET

Status of Detainees at GuantanamoUnited States Policy.

- The United States is treating and will continue to treat all of the individuals detained at Guantanamo humanely and, to the extent appropriate and consistent with military necessity, in a manner consistent with the principles of the Third Geneva Convention of 1949.
- The President has determined that the Geneva Convention applies to the Taliban detainees, but not to the al-Qaida detainees.
- Al-Qaida is not a state party to the Geneva Convention; it is a foreign terrorist group. As such, its members are not entitled to POW status.
- Although we never recognized the Taliban as the legitimate Afghan government, Afghanistan is a party to the Convention, and the President has determined that the Taliban are covered by the Convention. Under the terms of the Geneva Convention, however, the Taliban detainees do not qualify as POWs.
- Therefore, neither the Taliban nor al-Qaida detainees are entitled to POW status.
- Even though the detainees are not entitled to POW privileges, they will be provided many POW privileges as a matter of policy.

All detainees at Guantanamo are being provided:

- three meals a day that meet Muslim dietary laws
- water
- medical care
- clothing and shoes
- shelter
- showers
- soap and toilet articles

- foam sleeping pads and blankets
- towels and washcloths
- the opportunity to worship
- correspondence materials, and the means to send mail
- the ability to receive packages of food and clothing, subject to security screening

The detainees will not be subjected to physical or mental abuse or cruel treatment. The International Committee of the Red Cross has visited and will continue to be able to visit the detainees privately. The detainees will be permitted to raise concerns about their conditions and we will attempt to address those concerns consistent with security.

Housing. We are building facilities in Guantanamo more appropriate for housing the detainees on a long-term basis. The detainees now at Guantanamo are being housed in temporary open-air shelters until these more long-term facilities can be arranged. Their current shelters are reasonable in light of the serious security risk posed by these detainees and the mild climate of Cuba.

POW Privileges the Detainees will not receive. The detainees will receive much of the treatment normally afforded to POWs by the Third Geneva Convention. However, the detainees will not receive some of the specific privileges afforded to POWs, including:

- access to a canteen to purchase food, soap, and tobacco
- a monthly advance of pay
- the ability to have and consult personal financial accounts
- the ability to receive scientific equipment, musical instruments, or sports outfits

Many detainees at Guantanamo pose a severe security risk to those responsible for guarding them and to each other. Some of these individuals demonstrated how dangerous they are in uprisings at Mazar-e-Sharif and in Pakistan. The United States must take into account the need for security in establishing the conditions for detention at Guantanamo.

Background on Geneva Conventions. The Third Geneva Convention of 1949 is an international treaty designed to protect prisoners of war from inhumane treatment at the hands of their captors in conflicts covered by the Convention. It is among four treaties

concluded in the wake of WWII to reduce the human suffering caused by war. These four treaties provide protections for four different classes of people: the military wounded and sick in land conflicts; the military wounded, sick and shipwrecked in conflicts at sea; military persons and civilians accompanying the armed forces in the field who are captured and qualify as prisoners of war; and civilian non-combatants who are interned or otherwise found in the hands of a party (e.g. in a military occupation) during an armed conflict.

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