

U.S. President Rejects Pentagon Plan to Close Guantanamo Prison



Washington, December 2 (RHC)-- The White House has reportedly rejected the Pentagon's proposed plan to close the U.S. military prison at Guantanamo and build a replacement in the United States.

The Department of Defense's cost estimate for shutting down the notorious detention facility came as high as \$600 million and was rejected by the White House as too expensive, according to a report by the Wall Street Journal. Administration officials said the proposal has been sent back to the Pentagon for revisions.

More than half of the estimated cost-- \$350 million -- was related to building a new detention facility in the U.S., something that Congress and state officials vehemently opposed.

In addition, the Pentagon's plan would require another \$300 million per year in operating costs, an official told the Journal. The annual cost of running the facility in Guantanamo is about \$400 million.

The cost dispute marked the latest setback to closing the Guantanamo prison, a top campaign promise of President Barack Obama in 2008 and one of his first executive orders when he took office in January 2009.

The estimated costs caused Obama to reject the proposal last month, a move that further delays the submission of a plan to Congress. The Pentagon's plan is likely Obama's last chance to get legislative approval for closing Guantanamo before leaving office.

The White House says the Guantanamo prison cannot be closed without transferring some detainees to U.S. soil. Congressional Republicans have repeatedly blocked the president's attempts to shutter the facility.

The U.S. currently holds 107 prisoners at Guantanamo -- located on illegally held Cuban territory on the southeastern side of the island. At the height of the prison's population, 775 inmates were detained at the U.S.-run prison.

Some 48 inmates have been cleared for release but are languishing in the prison which has become synonymous with prisoner abuse and torture.

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