

Dan Inouye

U.S. SENATOR FROM HAWAII



Contact: Lori Hamamoto, 202-224-3934

SENATE PASSES INOUYE MEASURE THAT WITHHOLDS FUNDING FOR CLOSURE OF GUANTANAMO PRISON

*Inouye Introduced Amendment to Prevent Supplemental Appropriations Bill
From Getting 'Bogged Down' in Shutdown Debate*

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

WASHINGTON --- By a vote of 90 to 6, the Senate today passed the Inouye amendment that withholds the \$80 million that the Administration had requested to begin the process of closing the prison for terrorism suspects at the U.S. Navy base at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

The funding that the Administration had sought was part of the supplemental appropriations bill for the Iraq and Afghanistan wars that the Senate is now considering. The supplemental cleared the House last week without any funds for the closure of the Guantanamo Bay prison.

“Despite some of the rhetoric on this issue, this amendment is not a referendum on closing the Guantanamo Bay prison,” Senate Appropriations Chairman Daniel K. Inouye said today. “Instead, it should serve as a reality check since, at this time, the Administration has not yet forwarded a coherent plan for closing the prison.”

Chairman Inouye, who has long played a leading role in the Senate on security and defense issues, continued: “In the Committee mark up of the supplemental, I included language which would have delayed the obligation of funding for Guantanamo until the Administration forwarded such a plan. I also included provisions which would not have

allowed prisoners to be relocated to the United States or released if they still pose a threat to our nation. But after listening to the debate and reading media reports it was clear that this message was not getting through. Rather than cooling the passions of those who are justifiably concerned with the ultimate disposition of the prisoners, the funding which remained in the bill became a lightning rod far overshadowing its impact and dwarfing the more important elements of this critically needed legislation. Instead of letting this bill get bogged down over this matter, as Chairman I determined that the best course was to eliminate the funds in question. The fact that the Administration has not offered a workable plan at this point made that decision rather easy.

“But let me be clear. We need to close the Guantanamo prison. Yes, it is a fine facility. I, too, have visited the site. Yes, the detainees are being well cared for. Our servicemen and servicewomen are doing great work. But the fact of the matter is Guantanamo is a symbol of the wrongdoings which have occurred, and we must eliminate that connection.

“Guantanamo serves as a sign to many in the Arab and Muslim world of the insensitivities that some under our command demonstrated at the Abu Ghraib prison. It is a constant reminder that what we call ‘enhanced interrogation techniques’ is referred to nearly universally elsewhere in the world as torture. And we should not kid ourselves. The fact that Guantanamo remains open today serves as a powerful recruiting tool for Al Qaeda.

“We Americans have short memories, but that is not so in other cultures. When the Japanese Prime Minister visited Yasukuni Shrine which commemorates Japanese soldiers from World War II, the Chinese are outraged. This continues a controversy for events that are now more than 60 years old.

“In Korea, the name of Emperor Toyotomi Hideyoshi is still remembered today for the thousands of ears which were cut off of Korean citizens and sent to the Emperor to prove to him how many Koreans his soldiers had killed. That atrocity is still remembered today by millions of Koreans even though it occurred more than 400 years ago.

“For us the dehumanizing photographs of detainees at Abu Ghraib are no longer fresh in our minds. But that is not true in the Middle East where the populace remembers the degradation with disgust. When they think of Guantanamo, they remember those photos; those images are still crystal clear to them. The wrongdoing has not been forgotten.

“The closure of Guantanamo is a requirement for this country to help overcome some of the ill will which is still felt by many in the Muslim world. To many, Guantanamo is considered an affront to the Muslim religion. Stories of improper respect for the Koran by prison officials, even though inaccurate, serve as a reminder to millions of Muslims that this prison must be closed.

“Many of my colleagues are justifiably concerned about how the terrorists at Guantanamo will be handled. They deserve answers, but so, too, we must begin planning to close the prison. That work needs to begin soon for the good of our nation and the men and women still serving in harm’s way. It is up to the Administration to fashion a plan which can win the support of the American people and its congressional representatives. As we approach the Fiscal Year 2010 budget, this will be a key element of our continued review of this matter.”