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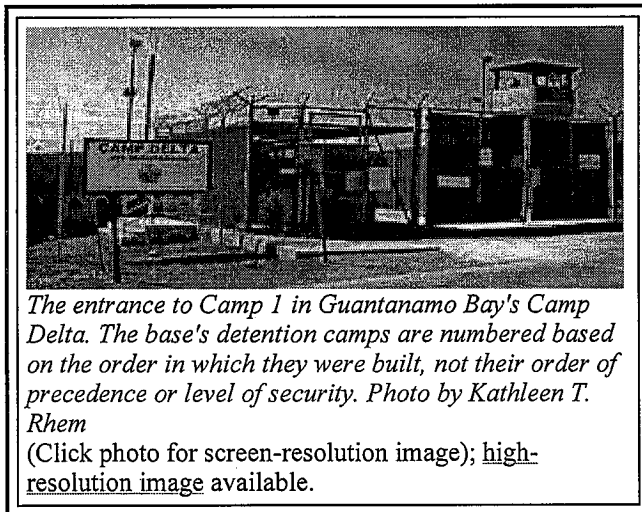
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Detainees Living in Varied Conditions at Guantanamo

By Kathleen T. Rhem
American Forces Press Service

NAVAL BASE GUANTANAMO BAY, Cuba, Feb. 16, 2005 -- The detainee population at the U.S. naval base here is a diverse group. The roughly 545 detainees hail from some 40 countries and speak at least 17 different languages.



The entrance to Camp 1 in Guantanamo Bay's Camp Delta. The base's detention camps are numbered based on the order in which they were built, not their order of precedence or level of security. Photo by Kathleen T. Rhem
(Click photo for screen-resolution image); [high-resolution image](#) available.

But nearly as diverse as the individuals themselves are the conditions in which they're held.

Since U.S. officials began holding enemy combatants here in January 2002, an elaborate system to manage those detainees in a humane manner, protect guards and maximize intelligence has evolved here.

Today, prisoners are divided into four levels, based on how well they comply with camp rules, explained a senior Navy petty officer serving

here.

Navy Master Chief Petty Officer Tracy Padmore, an aviation maintenance technician from Naval Air Station Jacksonville, Fla., explained that detainees are placed in levels based solely on how well they cooperate with guards' instructions. "(The levels) have nothing to do with what a detainee's (intelligence) value is or what he might say or do in an interrogation booth," he said.

"Humane" and "consistent" seem to be watchwords for members of the joint task force here. Anyone working with detainees uses these words right off the bat when describing what they do. Guards and officers at Guantanamo consistently appear genuinely offended when asked about allegations in the civilian media about detainee abuses at Guantanamo Bay.

"I'm not here to say we're all perfect," Padmore said. "But these young men and women carry out their duties in a highly professional manner." He added that when minor

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infractions of the rules by guards have occurred, they've been punished swiftly.

"Detainees here at Guantanamo are treated in a humane manner at all times by the security folks and the intelligence folks who work with them," Army Brig. Gen. Jay Hood, commander of Joint Task Force Guantanamo, said.

He said all JTF members are strongly focused on their mission, "the safe, secure, humane custody of the detainees under our charge."

Hood explained that information collected since the detainees have been held here has helped officials learn how best to handle the detainees' continued detention and to design suitable facilities.

Level 1 detainees wear white "uniforms" and share living spaces with other detainees. At the other end of the spectrum, Level 4 detainees wear orange, hospital scrub-type outfits and have fewer privileges.

Padmore, who is assigned to Joint Task Force Guantanamo based on prior corrections experience, described a typical Level 1 detainee as "compliant and willing to follow camp rules." Whereas, Level 4 detainees generally "have a litany of offenses," from threatening other detainees or guards to hurling bodily fluids at guards or refusing to come out of the cell when ordered.

To a certain extent, the level a detainee is placed in determines where he is housed, as well. Most Level 1 detainees are afforded extra privileges in Camp 4. (Camps are numbered based on the order in which they were built, not their order of precedence or level of security.)

Gone are the days of concrete slabs and open-air chain-link enclosures in Camp X-Ray. Hood explained that Camp X-Ray was a hastily built structure to deal with a rapidly changing situation in the war on terrorism and that the facilities there were never meant to be used for long-term detention. Engineers began construction on Camp Delta, which replaced Camp X-Ray in April 2002, shortly after detainees began arriving here, he said.

In Camp 4, part of Camp Delta, detainees live in 10-man bays with nearly all-day access to exercise yards and other recreational privileges.

Sgt. 1st Class Todd Rundle, an Army Reserve military police officer, explained that Camp 4 is Camp Delta's only medium-security facility. Doors in the camp are normally opened with keys, but a mechanical override can be controlled from inside the centrally located "Liberty Tower," the camp's command post, in an emergency.

Detainees generally are allowed out in exercise yards attached to their living bays seven to nine hours a day. Exercise yards include picnic tables under cover and ping-pong tables. Detainees also have access to a central soccer area and volleyball court.

Rundle said the large amount of outdoor time is a huge incentive for detainees to want to be transferred to Camp 4, which is based on good behavior. "The increased incentive of the additional time out here, that's a big thing for detainees to be able to come out for that duration of time over the course of every single day of the week," he said.

Part of the rationale behind the living arrangements at Camp 4 is to rebuild detainees' social skills, "which might have been lost over time," Rundle said. Detainees are provided games -- chess, checkers and playing cards are the most requested items -- and are responsible for keeping their own living areas clean.

They also eat meals together within their cellblocks. Food-service personnel bring the food, always culturally sensitive, and detainees apportion it among themselves at mealtime. Padmore said a guard always supervises so "Detainee A is not getting three plates while Detainee B gets none."

Books and other reading material are available during periodic visits from a designated librarian. A security official explained Agatha Christie books in Arabic are very popular and that camp officials are working to get copies of the Harry Potter books in Arabic.

Also in Camp 4, detainees are issued a full roll of toilet paper each week. In other camps detainees have to ask guards to apportion toilet paper when they need it. Padmore said many people take toilet paper for granted and that the detainees in Camp 4 value having their own supplies.

Other privileges unique to Camp 4 include electric fans in the bays, ice water available around the clock, plastic tubs with lids for the detainees to store their personal items, and the white uniforms. White is a more culturally respected color and also serves as an incentive to detainees in other camps.

"It's almost like a status symbol," he said. "Detainees come past and see detainees from Camp 4 playing volleyball, playing soccer or in white uniforms. The hope is that other detainees will play by the rulebook and aspire to get to Camp 4 to get those privileges afforded to them."

Not too far away, in Camp 1, some detainees are just one step away from being moved to Camp 4. They wear tan uniforms and are afforded such comfort items as prayer rugs and canvas sneakers. Many of these detainees are being considered for transfer to Camp 4, Rundle said.

Detainees in Camp 1 are housed in individual cells with a toilet and sink in each cell. They have 30 minutes in one of two exercise yards at the end of each cellblock twice a week, Padmore explained. Showers are allowed in outdoor shower stalls after exercise periods.

There are 10 cellblocks with 48 cells each, but guards generally don't fully populate the cellblocks to minimize the guard-to-detainee ratio.

Movement into and within the camp is funneled through "sally ports," entrances and passageways with two gates. One gate must be closed before the next can be opened. Military police officers man each sally port from inside.

Each detainee gets basic items such as a "finger toothbrush" -- short and stubby so it can't be used as a weapon -- toothpaste, soap, shampoo, plastic flip flops, and cotton underwear, shorts, pants and a shirt.

Guards are not allowed to remove basic items, but comfort items can be taken away for

behavior infractions. Comfort items can include such simple things as Styrofoam cups and caps to the water bottles.

Some seemingly innocent items are kept from detainees to prevent them from harassing guards. For instance, sport tops on water bottles can make it easier for detainees to shoot bodily fluids onto guards, Padmore said.

The most recently completed detention facility, Camp 5, is a state-of-the-art prison that many states would envy. The \$16 million facility, completed in May 2004, is composed of four wings of 12 to 14 individual cells each.

The two-story maximum-security detention and interrogation facility can hold up to 100 people and houses Level 4 detainees and those deemed to be the most valuable intelligence assets. The camp is run from a raised, glass-enclosed centralized control center that sits in the middle of the facility, giving the MPs a clear line of sight into both stories of each wing. Army National Guard Maj. Todd Berger called the control room "the nerve center of the camp."

Berger, who in civilian life is a state trooper in New Jersey, explained that all detainee movement in Camp 5 is monitored and controlled through touch-screen computers in the control center.

Thick steel airlock doors clang shut with a hiss and an echo as guards move through the cellblocks. In Camp 5, media and other visitors are not permitted to tour occupied cellblocks. The modern facility features some cells equipped with overhanging sinks and grab bars on the toilets for detainees with a physical disability and 10-foot-by-20-foot outdoor exercise yards that detainees generally have access to for an hour every day.

Camp rules are posted in four languages -- Arabic, Farsi, Urdu, and Pashto -- in the exercise yards in each of the camps. Recently, the enclosed bulletin boards have also featured posters with information about the Afghan elections. "It talks about the fact that 10 million Afghans freely elected their own government," Rundle said. "So it's a bit of news from home ... for a chunk of the detainee population here."

Cultural sensitivity is consistently practiced in each of the camps. Respect for Islam is evident in many of the policies. For instance, in each cell in Camp 1, a Koran is stored hanging in a surgical mask from the cell wall. The purpose of the surgical mask is to hold the Muslim holy book "in a place of reverence," Padmore said.

In each cell block a painted arrow points toward Mecca, Saudi Arabia, so the detainees know which way to face during their daily prayers. During Ramadan, detainees were allowed to break their daily fast with water and dates at the appropriate time, and prayer calls are broadcast over loudspeakers five times a day.

Regardless of his assigned level or camp, no detainee is considered to be more or less dangerous than another. "I can't say who's dangerous and who's not," Padmore said. "I consider them all dangerous people because they're here."

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[Joint Task Force Guantanamo](http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Feb2005/n02162005_2005021604.html)