

Pentagon Chief Calls for Gitmo Closure under Obama, States Oppose Detainee Transfers

By [RT](#)

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Closing Guantanamo is not something that we should leave for the next president, but Obama is running out of time, said Defense Secretary Ashton Carter. The Pentagon's process of moving the camp to inside US borders is proving to be difficult.

As long as this detention facility remains open, it will remain a rallying cry for jihadi propaganda," Carter told reporters on Thursday. Obama promised to close the notorious prison, presently holding 116 detainees, at the beginning of his tenure and has been reiterating the pledge through his time in the office.

Closing the detention facility in Guantanamo is not something, in my judgment, that we should leave to the next president, whether Republican or Democrat," he said, adding that he strongly supports President Obama's plan for bringing a "responsible end" to ending detention at Guantanamo.

"It's expensive for this department and not something the president wants to leave for his successor," he said.

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Out of 116 detainees some are eligible for transfer to other countries, and the defense secretary said that he approved the transfer of several detainees and "will continue to do so when appropriate."

The second category of detainee includes those who are not eligible for transfer, and Carter insisted that Guantanamo cannot be closed until a solution for these detainees is found. He said that these detainees should remain held within the "law of war detention" in the interest of national security. Carter said that he therefore wanted to complete a "responsible, realistic and security-focused plan for an alternative detention facility" for this second group of detainees.

The defense secretary added that he made a "concrete step" in the direction of fulfilling this plan by ordering the evaluation of potential sites for relocation in Fort Leavenworth, Kansas and Charleston, South Carolina for the detention of prisoners and that other sites would be examined in coming weeks.

Carter ended his oration by calling on Congress to give the Department of Defense “*budget certainty*” when they vote on the national budget in September.

While the defense secretary focused on the administration’s progress in fulfilling the promise of closing the camp, there is new opposition against the plan to close Guantanamo on the state level.

South Carolina governor Nikki Haley held a news conference to announce her opposition to any plans to bring Guantanamo detainees to her state. The governor mentioned that South Carolina would do whatever it takes to stop the relocating, adding that the transfer “*is a violation of federal law.*”

Kansas lawmakers also voiced their opposition, pushing back against any plan that would use the Fort Leavenworth military prison to house detainees. Kansas Senator Pat Roberts said in a [statement](#) that he considers the shutting down of Guantanamo bay an “*egregious overstep*” by the Obama administration.

He will hold up the nomination for the next secretary of the Army, like he did in 2009, if the administration begins to make plans to bring Guantanamo detainees to Fort Leavenworth.

“I shut down this administration’s nominee for secretary of the Army in 2009 to prevent moving any detainees to Kansas and will do it again if necessary,” Roberts said. *“Not on my watch will any terrorist be placed in Kansas.”*

The Guantanamo Bay detention camp was opened in 2002 to hold suspected terrorists and is located outside of the US border in a US Navy-controlled part of Cuba. It has faced criticism for the treatment of the detainees, who are held without trial indefinitely and often face torture. Current and former detainees have made allegations of practices such as forced drugging and sexual humiliation. President Barack Obama’s promise to close the camp was a part of his 2008 campaign.

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